Fugitives from Justice: An Examination of Felony and Misdemeanor Probation Absconders in a Large Jurisdiction

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PROBATION IS THE most widely used alternative to incarceration (Phelps, 2013); therefore, the majority of the responsibility of monitoring criminal offenders in the community falls on probation officials. One of many concerns for probation officers is offenders who abscond from supervision—that is, avoid contact with correctional supervisory agencies. According to the state oversight agency for community supervision in Texas, the term *absconder(s)* is defined as:

> persons who are known to have left the jurisdiction without authorization or who have not personally contacted their community supervision officer within three months or 90 days, and either: (a) have an active Motion to Revoke (MTR) or Motion to Adjudicate (MTA) filed and an unserved capias for his or her arrest; or (b) have been arrested on an MTR or MTA, but have failed to appear for the MTR or the MTA hearing and bond forfeiture warrant has been issued by the court. (TDCJ-CJAD Standards, 2015, p. 25)

Absconders pose a potential threat to community safety because their behaviors, including drug and alcohol abuse, cannot be monitored by the courts. It is unknown what types of criminal activities they engage in unless otherwise apprehended for a new crime, and generally absconders are located by accident (Parent et al., 1994), through a random traffic stop where law enforcement officers discover there is an active warrant for the person's arrest.

Findings from an earlier research project in the jurisdiction pertaining to felony technical probation revocations were the impetus for this current study, and revealed that 51 percent of revoked felony technical offenders were absconders (Stevens-Martin, Oyewole, & Hipolito, 2014). After comparing a sample of 359 revoked felony technical offenders to a sample of 359 felons who completed supervision successfully, Stevens et al. found that outcomes revealed "no significant associations between absconding supervision and race, gender, marital status, employment, income level, prior criminal record, prior supervision, prior revocations, or age at first arrest" (Stevens-Martin et al., 2014, p. 19). Furthermore, it was hypothesized that those with substance use/abuse issues would be more likely to abscond than those without these issues for fear of going to jail; however, this was not the case. "Those with substance use/abuse issues were 59 percent less likely to abscond than those with no substance/use issues, and those identified with mental health issues were 56 percent less likely to abscond than those without mental health issues" (Stevens-Martin et al., 2014, p. 19). Last, the previous study in the jurisdiction found that employed felony offenders are 10 times more likely to complete supervision successfully. Further exploration of the absconder population in the jurisdiction was warranted.

A dearth of literature exists pertaining to adult probation absconders and we could not find any research pertaining to adult misdemeanor probation absconders. There have been very few research studies on absconders since the late 1990s and early 2000s. These earlier studies focused on examining factors associated with felony absconders, including criminal history variables and predicting and locating probation (Taxman & Byrne, 1994) and parole absconders (Williams, McShane & Dolny, 2000), mainly felony offenders. Some studies posited that the increased punitiveness of the criminal justice system at that time may have led to an increase in probation absconders (Byrne, Lurigio, & Baird, 1989; Byrne & Pattavina, 1993; Clear & Cole, 1990). Schwaner (1997) analyzed a group of parole absconders in Ohio and found that the common predictive variables for absconding were mainly criminal history factors such as prior adult and juvenile arrests and convictions and probation and parole supervision revocations.

Following Schwaner's lead, Williams et al. (2000) examined the issue of predicting parole absconders in California. They wanted to determine if there were any significant differences in results based on geographic area of study and to create a prediction instrument

for absconders using data from both studies. Findings revealed that (lack of) stable housing and employment were the best predictors of absconding. Furthermore, in 2012, a study by Pyrooz involved developing a risk assessment tool designed to predict absconding for juvenile parolees. Results of this study showed that gender differences matter in predicting absconding with this population and that "absconding can be modeled empirically."

In reviewing the extant literature, we could not find any studies that examined both felony and misdemeanor offenders, the length of time offenders were on supervision prior to absconding, or the duration of absconding, nor could we find any research that specifically reviewed any differences between misdemeanor and felony absconders and which group was more likely to abscond based on a variety of variables. Because probation is the most widely used sanction in the criminal justice system, with nearly 4 million people on supervision at year-end 2014 in the U.S. (Kaeble, Maruschak, & Bonzcar, 2015), this research is crucial to understanding the probation population, including those that fail to report to probation authorities as directed.

This study addresses the gap in the literature by investigating the entire adult probation absconder population, both felons and misdemeanants, in a large urban Texas jurisdiction to develop a profile of absconders and to determine what factors, demographic and offense-related, if any, may be associated with absconding from supervision by examining comparison groups of offenders who completed supervision successfully. Additionally, the study sought to answer the following questions: (1) Are there any differences between felony and misdemeanor absconders? (2) Which group is more likely to abscond, felons or misdemeanants? (3) What is the average amount of time an offender was under supervision prior to absconding? and (4) How long had offenders been fugitives? Investigating these issues could provide useful information to correctional officials to assist in devising strategies to reduce the incidences of absconding and help law enforcement officials understand absconders that may still be in the jurisdiction.

Methodology

A case-control design was used to compare felony and misdemeanor absconders with groups of felony and misdemeanor offenders who had successfully completed their community supervision term in fiscal year 2013. In October 2014 a complete list of *all* active felony and misdemeanor absconders was compiled from department data to develop a profile of absconders and to determine what factors, demographic and offense-related, might be associated with absconding supervision. Next, a sample of 354 offenders was randomly drawn from the total population of felony absconders (N=764), and a comparison sample of 353 felony offenders was drawn from those who successfully completed supervision in fiscal year 2013 (N=1,416). For misdemeanor offenders, a sample of 401 absconders and a sample of 570 successful completers were randomly drawn from their respective populations (N=1,260 and N=4,663).

Variables

All felony and misdemeanor offenders classified as absconders were identified and basic demographic and offense information was extracted from the probation department's system in order to create a profile of absconders based on the total population.

Three types of variables were collected for samples from the absconder population and those who completed probation successfully during the time frame of interest: demographic, probation supervision, and criminal justice variables (prior criminal record information). New offense arrests were not examined because if absconded offenders had been arrested for a new offense, they would typically no longer be classified as absconders in the department's case management system. Demographic variables examined included age, gender, race, ethnicity, marital status, education level, employment status, and annual income and were used to create a profile of the typical absconder for both groups. Age was categorized into four groups: 17 to 25; 26 to 35; 36 to 45; and 46 or older. Employment status was classified into four groups: unemployed; student/disabled/retired/homemaker[1]; part-time employment; and full-time employment. Annual income was categorized into five groups: income less than $10,000; $10,000, but less than $20,000; $20,000, but less than $30,000; $30,000, but less than $40,000; and more than $40,000. Supervision variables included offense type (drug, alcohol, theft/property/fraud, violent, sex offense, and "other"), offense level, court of jurisdiction, length of time under supervision before absconding, and length of time absconded from supervision. In the regression model the outcome variable was categorized as "absconding supervision" or "completing supervision."

[1] These categories are set forth by the state oversight agency.

Data Analysis

The general landscape of the department's population was examined in order to get a sense of the number of individuals being supervised in this jurisdiction, including absconders. Around 9 percent of the total adult probation population in the jurisdiction was classified as absconders as of the end of September 2014. (See Table 1, next page.)

Based on study objectives, comparative analyses involved identifying factors related to absconding supervision for various groups and comparing demographic characteristics of felony and misdemeanor absconders to determine if there were any significant differences. The main outcome of interest was absconder status, and our study groups were identified as either absconded supervision or completed supervision within the two main populations of felony and misdemeanor offenders. Techniques of logistic regression analysis were used to determine factors associated with absconding supervision.

Techniques of univariate analysis were performed to determine which factors have effects on absconding without adjusting for other covariates. Those factors were included in a multiple logistic regression model to examine factors that would significantly affect absconding, controlling for other covariates for both felony and misdemeanor offenders. Furthermore, in order to compare the differences of demographic characteristics and offense information between felony and misdemeanor absconders, we performed Chi-square tests and two independent sample t-tests.

We used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21 version to analyze data. Descriptive results were presented as means, ± standard deviations for quantitative variables and as percentages (%) for categorical variables. For each statistical analysis, a significance level of 0.05 was set.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

Table 2 (page 44) describes the demographic characteristics and offense information for the entire population of felony and misdemeanor. The average felony absconder is a single,

TABLE 1.
Monthly Community Supervision & Corrections Report[1] – September, 2014

Description	Felony	Misdemeanor	Total
Adult Receiving Direct Supervision	9,630	5,451	15,081
Maximum Level Supervision	1,860	1,019	2,879
Medium Level Supervision	4,026	2,297	6,323
Minimum Level Supervision	3,744	2,135	5,879
Adults on Indirect Status	3,067	3,112	6,179
Intrastate Transfers	1,110	645	1,755
Interstate Transfers	132	23	155
Absconders	764	1,260	2,024
Report by Mail	16	128	144
Pretrial Services	47	160	207
Pretrial Supervision	26	2	28
Pretrial Diversion	21	158	179
Supervision Placements	275	479	754
Supervision Terminations	395	613	1,008
Early Termination	33	17	50
Expired Term	103	356	459
Total Revocations	145	110	255

1 Not all figures from the report are presented in the table.

white, non-Hispanic, unemployed male with no high school diploma (HSD) and an average monthly income of less than $1,000; 56 percent of felons made less than $10,000 a year. The typical misdemeanor absconder was a single, white, non-Hispanic male, but only 28 percent were unemployed compared to 54 percent of felons. While felony absconders were typically on probation for drug or property crimes, 40 percent of misdemeanor absconders were on probation for an alcohol-related offense (driving while intoxicated). Close to one-third of absconders for both groups were Hispanic.

For felons, the average time on supervision before absconding was 24 months (+ S.D. 34.84), while the average duration of *having been* a fugitive from felony supervision was 38 months (+ S.D. 49.36). For misdemeanors, the average time an offender was on community supervision before absconding was 8 months (+ S.D. 14.06), and the average duration of having absconded from supervision was 55 months (+ S.D. 54). The high standard deviations for average duration of absconding for both groups are due to some offenders having been fugitives since the late 1980s.

Statistical Analyses

Two logistic regression models were generated to investigate the association between a series of factors and the probability of absconding from supervision for both felony and misdemeanor offenders.

Felonies

The results of the univariate analysis for felony offenders indicated that the following factors were significantly related to the probability of absconding from felony supervision without controlling for other covariates: age, education level, employment status, income level, and marital status. These factors were included in the subsequent logistic regression model to analyze their effects on the probability of absconding from supervision, adjusting for other covariates. (See Table 3, page 45.)

Multiple logistic regression analyses revealed that education level, current employment status, annual income less than $10,000, and annual income between $10,000 but less than $20,000 were highly associated with the probability of absconding felony supervision. Offenders with an annual income of less than $10,000 were at the highest risk of absconding. Compared to probationers with more than $40,000 annual income, probationers with less than $10,000 annual income had 4 times greater odds of absconding, and probationers with an annual income between $10,000 but less than $20,000 had 3 times greater odds of absconding, controlling for age, current employment status, marital status, and education level.

In the area of education, probationers with no high school diploma had 2 times higher odds of absconding from community supervision, adjusting for age, current employment status, annual income levels, and marital status. However, various employment statuses—full-time, part-time, student/disabled/retired—served as a protective factor against absconding from felony supervision. There was no evidence that age and marital status affected the probability of absconding from felony supervision after controlling for education level, employment status, and annual income levels. (See Table 4, page 46.)

Misdemeanants

The results of univariate analysis revealed that the following factors were significantly related to the probability of absconding from misdemeanor supervision: gender, education level, employment status, annual income level, and offense category. These factors were then included in a logistic regression model to estimate their influences on the probability of absconding from misdemeanor supervision. (See Table 5, page 50.)

We found that education level, employment status, annual income of less than $10,000, annual income between $10,000 but less than $20,000, annual income of $20,000 but less than $30,000, and offense categories were statistically significant regarding the probability of absconding from misdemeanor supervision ($p < 0.05$). With regard to gender and offense level there was no statistically significant effect on the probability of absconding from misdemeanor supervision ($p > 0.05$).

Offense categories showed some significance associated with the probability of absconding from misdemeanor supervision. The violent offense group has 4 times higher odds of absconding when controlling for gender, education level, employment status, offense level, and annual income. Moreover, the drug offense category had 2 times greater odds and both the alcohol and theft/property fraud groups had 3 times greater odds of absconding when compared to the "other" offense category for misdemeanor offenders and controlling for gender, education level, employment status, offense level, and annual income.

Different annual income levels were the second highest predictor of absconding from misdemeanor supervision. Misdemeanor offenders with an annual income level between $10,000, but less than $20,000 showed the highest risk, 8 times greater than misdemeanants with an annual income level higher than

TABLE 2.
Descriptive Statistics for Felony and Misdemeanor Populations (N=2,024)

Felony Variables	Mean ± Standard Deviation/Percentage %	Misdemeanor Variables	Mean ± Standard Deviation/Percentage %
Age (N=764)	36.3 ± 12.2	Age (N = 1,260)	36.9 ± 12.2
Monthly Income (N=737)	942.6 ± 1789.8	Monthly Income (N = 1,052)	1185.7 ± 2372.6
Race (N=764)		Race (N = 1,260)	
White	68.9	White	73.9
Black	30.0	Black	25.1
Asian	1.1	Asian	0.6
		Native American Indian	0.4
Ethnicity (N=764)		Ethnicity (N = 1,260)	
Non-Hispanic	67.5	Non-Hispanic	73.2
Hispanic	32.5	Hispanic	26.7
		Unknown	0.1
Gender (N=764)		Gender (N = 1,260)	
Male	68.8	Male	73.7
Female	31.2	Female	26.3
Marital Status (N=764)		Marital Status (N = 1,260)	
Married	20.3	Married	22.0
Divorced	8.0	Divorced	8.6
Single	70.1	Single	65.4
Separated	1.5	Separated	0.5
Widowed	0.1	Widowed	3.5
Highest Education Level (N=764)		Highest Education Level (N = 1,260)	
6th grade & below	4.3	6th grade & below	8.3
7th-11th grade (no HSD)	46.5	7th-11th grade (no HSD)	35.2
HSD or GED	38.6	HSD or GED	42.0
Some college	4.7	Some college	10.0
College Degree & above	5.9	College Degree & above	4.5
Employment Status (N=764)		Employment Status (N = 1,260)	
Unemployed	54.2	Unemployed	28.0
Student/Disabled/Retired/Homemaker	4.5	Student/Disabled/Retired/Homemaker	4.3
Employed PT	9.7	Employed PT	10.9
Employed FT	31.5	Employed FT	40.2
Unknown	0.1	Unknown	16.6
Offense Category (N=764)		Offense Category (N = 1,203)	
Drug Defined	31.2	Drug Defined	12.4
Alcohol Defined	8.5	Alcohol Defined	41.8
Theft/Property/Fraud	35.9	Theft/Property/Fraud	22.6
Violent	12.3	Violent	15.5
Sex Offense	6.4	Sex Offense	1.1
Other	5.7	Other	6.6
Offense Level (N=764)		Offense Level (N = 1,260)	
1st Degree Felony	6.0	Class A misd	33.5
2nd Degree Felony	20.5	Class B misd	66.4
3rd Degree Felony	28.5	Class C misd	0.1
State Jail Felony	45.0		

$40,000 after controlling for gender, education level, employment status, offense category, and offense level. Compared to those with an annual income higher than $40,000, misdemeanor offenders with an annual income level of $20,000, but less than $30,000 had 3 times higher odds of absconding when holding gender, education level, employment status, offense category, and offense level constant.

Compared to misdemeanor offenders who have a high school diploma, those without a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma (GED) are twice as likely to abscond after controlling for gender, employment status, offense categories, offense level, and annual income. Similar to the finding with felony absconders, employment is a protective factor against absconding from misdemeanor supervision, after controlling for gender, high school status, categories of offense, offense level, and annual income level. (See Table 6, page 48.)

Statistical analysis was conducted to compare differences of demographic characteristics and offense information between felony and misdemeanor absconders. Education level, employment status, annual income level, offense categories, number of months before absconding, and numbers of months absconded were statistically significantly different for felony absconders and misdemeanor absconders ($p < 0.05$). However, factors of age, race, ethnicity, gender, and marital status did not show any significant difference between felony absconders and misdemeanor absconders ($p > 0.05$). (See Table 7, page 49.)

We performed multiple logistic regression analysis to investigate whether the probability of absconding from supervision differed for felony and misdemeanor offenders, but no significant difference was found ($p>0.05$) when accounting for the other covariates. (See Table 8, page 50.)

Discussion

A previous study in the jurisdiction pertaining to felony technical revocations of probation revealed that 51 percent were absconders, employed felony offenders were 10 times more likely to complete supervision successfully, and felons assessed with substance abuse issues were 59 percent less likely to abscond from supervision, which was a surprising finding (Stevens-Martin, et al., 2014). Thus,

TABLE 3.
Univariate Analysis of the Association between Potential Risk Factors and the Probability of Absconding Felony Supervision

Variables	Coef.	p-value	Crude OR	95% C.I. for Odds Ratio
Current Age	-0.024	*<0.001	0.976	(0.96, 0.99)
Age Group (Reference=46+)				
17-25	0.945	*<0.001	2.572	(1.60, 4.15)
26-35	0.492	*<0.014	1.635	(1.106, 2.417)
36-45	0.171	0.439	1.187	(0.769, 1.832)
Race (Reference=Asian)				
White	-1.472	0.189	0.229	(0.025, 2.067)
Black	-1.234	0.274	0.291	(0.032, 2.65)
Ethnicity				
Hispanic v. Non-Hispanic	-0.93	0.589	0.911	(0.649, 1.278)
Gender				
Female v. Male	0.271	0.09	1.312	(0.959, 1.794)
High School Diploma (No v. Yes)	0.888	*<0.001	2.431	(1.79, 3.29)
Highest Education Level				
(References=College Degree & above)				
6th grade and below	2.42	*<0.001	11.25	(2.88, 43.947)
7th-11th grade	1.75	*0.002	5.76	(1.864, 17.783)
HSD or GED	1.00	0.082	2.71	(0.88, 8.351)
Some college	0.75	0.24	2.11	(0.607, 7.325)
Employment Status (Reference=Unemployed)				
Student/Disabled/Retired/Homemaker	-2.43	*<0.001	0.09	(0.05, 0.17)
Employed PT	-1.62	*<0.001	0.20	(0.12, 0.33)
Employed FT	-1.99	*<0.001	0.14	(0.09, 0.20)
Annual Income (Reference=>$40,000)				
<$10,000	2.23	*<0.001	9.31	(4.88, 17.75)
$10,000>$20,000	1.30	*<0.001	3.68	(1.93, 7.01)
$20,000>$30,000	0.14	0.71	1.15	(0.54, 2.45)
$30,000≥$40,000	-0.58	0.31	0.56	(0.19, 1.71)
Marital Status (Single v. Married)	0.65	*<0.001	1.91	(1.34, 2.71)
Offense (Reference=Other)				
Drug	-03.73	0.25	0.70	(0.37, 1.30)
Alcohol	-0.72	0.06	0.49	(0.23, 1.03)
Theft/Property/Fraud	-0.18	0.57	0.83	(0.45, 1.55)
Violent	-0.82	0.03	0.44	(0.22, 0.90)
Sex Offense	0.71	0.21	2.02	(0.68, 6.04)
Offense Level (Reference=State Jail Felony)				
1st Degree Felony	0.21	0.60	1.23	(0.57, 2.67)
2nd Degree Felony	0.27	0.18	1.31	(0.88, 1.96)
3rd Degree Felony	-0.02	0.90	0.98	(0.69, 1.39)

**p<0.05 level of significance*

TABLE 4.
Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis of the Association between Potential Risk Factors and the Probability of Absconding Felony Supervision

Variables	Coef.	p-value	Adjusted OR	95% C.I. Odds Ratio
Current Age	-0.01	0.42	.99	(0.98, 1.01)
High School Diploma (No v. Yes)	0.71	*<0.001	2.03	(1.43, 2.89)
Employment Status (Reference=Unemployed)				
Student/Disabled/Retired/ Homemaker	-1.98	*<0.001	0.14	(0.07, 0.29)
Employed PT	-1.38	*<0.001	0.25	(0.14, 0.44)
Employed FT	-1.43	*<0.001	0.24	(0.15, 0.38)
Annual Income (>$40,000)				
<$10,000	1.46	*<0.001	*4.29	(2.11, 8.71)
$10,000>$20,000	1.24	*<0.001	*3.44	(1.74, 6.80)
$20,000>$30,000	0.11	0.79	1.12	(0.51, 2.46)
$30,000≥$40,000	-0.50	0.40	0.61	(0.19, 1.93)
Marital Status (Single v. Married)	0.26	0.23	1.30	(0.85, 1.99)

*p<0.05 level of significance

further investigating fugitives from probation was merited.

Employment, education level, and annual income statuses were all significant in relation to the probability of absconding from either felony or misdemeanor supervision. It stands to reason that the more education a person has, the higher the likelihood of having better employment and a higher income (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2016). Felony offenders with less than $10,000 annual income have 4 times greater odds of absconding compared to felony offenders with more than $40,000 annual income, while misdemeanor offenders with less than $10,000 annual income have 8 times greater odds of absconding compared to those with annual incomes greater than $40,000. From a simplistic point of view, employed offenders have "more to lose" than unemployed offenders (e.g. their jobs, cars, residences, reputations, etc.), but they are also more likely to have the ability to pay their probation fees, fines, and other court-ordered costs.

Probation generally places on offenders the responsibility for paying for their supervision. Offenders may be required to pay a monthly probation administration fee, fines, court costs, court-appointed attorneys' fees, drug-testing fees, counseling/education programming costs, restitution, and so on (Reynolds et al., 2009). A 2014 poll conducted by National Public Radio in conjunction with New York University's Brennan Center for Justice and the National Center for State Courts investigated the most common types of fees courts charge defendants and offenders. An overwhelming majority of states charge offenders electronic monitoring fees, probation supervision fees, public defender or legal costs, and room and board (for those offenders employed inside or outside of a residential facility). All but three states have increased their fees since 2010 (Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/2014/05/19/312455680/state-by-state-court-fees on August 25, 2016).

An American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) report pertaining to the collection of probation fees questioned whether the fees and fines increase or decrease the effectiveness of community supervision (Duffie & Hughes, 1986), and found there is little evidence to support either conclusion. The authors of the report went on to outline two general viewpoints with respect to collection of probation fees. Proponents argue that revenues from probation fees help supplement department budgets and place financial responsibility for supervision on offenders rather than taxpayers (Duffie & Hughes, 1986). Those opposed argue that fees place an undue burden on offenders. And, "…even those who do not commit new crimes may abscond as a result of their real or perceived inability to pay. Revocations for new crimes or for failure to report may simply mask fee overload" (Parent, 1990).

Contrary to growing concerns by advocacy groups that the criminal justice system, especially community supervision, is creating "debtors' prisons," offenders are not routinely revoked merely for being impoverished (Ring, 1988). A 1983 Supreme Court ruling, *Bearden v. Georgia,* states that probationers cannot be incarcerated solely for the inability to pay financial obligations. In the case of offenders in the jurisdiction of this study who are revoked for technical violations, they have other violations of community supervision in addition to failure to pay fee violations, including failure to report as directed, positive drug tests, failure to perform community service restitution, failure to attend treatment and/or education programs, and so on (Stevens-Martin et al., 2014), with positive drug tests being the most common violation. If offenders cannot afford to pay court-ordered fees, how can they afford to buy illegal drugs and alcohol? Community corrections officials, defense counsel, and other criminal justice actors must relay the message to offenders to report to their supervision officers even if they do not have the money to pay court-ordered fees and fines. They should also openly discuss their financial situation with their probation officers, who can make referrals for assistance or, in some cases, ask the court to reduce or waive fees, which may help reduce the incidences of absconding.

In this particular jurisdiction, budgeting classes, fee dockets, reduced fees for some individuals, and special payment plans are offered for offenders struggling to meet financial obligations. In some cases, officers can request that supervision fees be waived if they are indigent. In addition, there are a variety of other resources to help offenders with employment issues. One special project that includes programming and classes for offenders seeking employment, Project Key, was developed by an ex-offender to assist offenders with how to discuss their background with prospective employers. Another community resource, called the Offender First-Stop Reentry Center, is an initiative designed to help offenders returning to the community from jail or prison and those released on probation. Offenders attend orientation classes and are given access to "a myriad of free resources spanning the continuum of related services such as obtaining proper identifications and critical documents, housing, education, employment and healthcare." In addition, navigation sessions are held on each of these topics (www.tcreentry.org). The program also incorporates use of successfully reintegrated former offenders, referred to as neighbors, who serve as mentors for newly released offenders. The overall unemployment rate in the jurisdiction is only 4.0

TABLE 5.
Univariate Analysis of the Association between Potential Risk Factors and the Probability of Absconding Misdemeanor Supervision

Variables	Coef.	p-value	Crude OR	95% C.I. for Odds Ratio
Current Age	0.01	0.18	1.01	(0.99, 1.02)
Age Group (Reference=46+)				
17-25	-0.22	0.26	0.08	(0.54, 1.18)
26-35	-0.24	0.20	0.79	(0.55, 1.14)
36-45	0.08	0.71	1.08	(0.72, 1.64)
Race (Reference=Asian and Native American Indian)				
White	-4.52	0.44	0.64	(0.20, 1.99)
Black	-0.02	0.97	0.98	(0.31, 3.14)
Ethnicity				
Hispanic v. Non-Hispanic	0.23	0.14	1.26	(0.93, 1.70)
Gender				
Female v. Male	-0.33	*0.02	0.72	(0.54, 0.95)
High School Diploma No v. Yes	0.81	*<0.01	2.24	(1.69, 2.97)
Highest Education Level (References=College Degree & above)	0.81	*<0.01	2.24	(1.69, 2.97)
6th grade and below	2.52	*<0.01	12.38	(4.90, 31.28)
7th-11th grade	1.43	*<0.01	4.19	(2.44, 7.20))
HSD or GED	0.85	*<0.01	2.33	(1.39, 3.91)
Some college	0.86	0.01	2.37	(1.29, 4.34)
Employment Status (Reference = Unemployed)				
Student/Disabled/Retired/Homemaker	-1.47	*<0.01	0.23	(0.12, 0.45)
Employed PT	-0.92	*<0.01	0.40	(0.25, 0.62)
Employed FT	-0.64	*<0.01	0.53	(0.39, 0.72)
Annual Income (Reference≥$40,000)				
<$10,000	1.23	*<0.01	3.41	(1.94, 6.00)
$10,000>$20,000	2.25	*<0.01	9.49	(5.26, 17.14)
$20,000>$30,000	1.13	0.001	3.08	(1.60, 5.93)
$30,000≥$40,000	0.91	0.03	2.47	(1.12, 5.47)
Marital Status Single v. Married	-0.10	0.53	0.90	(0.65, 1.25)
Offense (Reference=Other)				
Drug	0.87	*0.002	2.39	(1.39, 4.12)
Alcohol	1.30	*<0.01	3.68	(2.29, 5.91)
Theft/Property/Fraud	1.15	*<0.01	3.17	(1.92, 5.24)
Violent	1.58	*<0.01	4.86	(2.70, 8.75)
Sex Offense	2.13	0.02	8.39	(1.46, 48.27)
Offense Level				
Class A v. Class B	0.15	0.28	1.17	(0.89,1.53)

*p<0.05 level of significance

TABLE 6.
Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis of the Association between Potential Risk Factors and the Probability of Absconding Misdemeanor Supervision

Variables	Coef.	p-value	Adjusted OR	95% C.I. Odds Ratio
Gender Females v. Males	0.25	0.13	0.78	(0.56, 1.08)
High School Diploma (No v. Yes)	0.59	*<0.001	1.81	(1.32, 2.48)
Employment Status (Reference=Unemployed)				
Student/Disabled/Retired/ Homemaker	-1.38	*<0.001	0.25	(0.13, 0.50)
Employed PT	-1.05	*<0.001	0.35	(0.21, 0.57)
Employed FT	-0.94	*<0.001	0.39	(0.27, 0.57)
Annual Income (≥$40,000)				
<$10,000	0.96	*<0.002	2.60	(1.42, 4.77)
$10,000>$20,000	2.09	*<0.01	8.04	(4.36, 14.84)
$20,000>$30,000	0.99	*<0.01	2.71	(1.38, 5.33)
$30,000≥$40,000	0.67	0.12	1.93	(0.85, 4.40)
Offense (Reference=Other)				
Drug	0.66	*0.03	1.93	(1.07, 3.45)
Alcohol	1.24	*<0.001	3.45	(2.06, 5.80)
Theft/Property/Fraud	1.06	*<0.001	2.88	(1.67, 4.97)
Violent	1.40	*<0.001	4.06	(2.14, 7.70)
Sex offense	2.14	*0.03	8.47	(1.30, 55.22)

*p<0.05

percent (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2015); however, offender unemployment rates are much higher.

The federal government has invested millions of dollars in reentry initiatives for offenders, which include focus on employment and career training for those returning to the community, because much research supports the fact that employment is critical to reintegration (Duran et al., 2013; Hicks, 2004; Latessa, 2012; Pager & Western, 2009; Petersilia, 2003; Stafford, 2006; Travis, 2005). Morenoff and Harding found that higher risks of offenders absconding and returning to incarceration were associated with release back to more disadvantaged neighborhoods—and employment considerably reduced the risk of all recidivism outcomes (2014). Closely associated with employment is the level of education.

Both felony and misdemeanor offenders with no high school diplomas were twice as likely to abscond from supervision compared to those with a high school diploma. It is not a standard condition of supervision in this jurisdiction for either felony or misdemeanor offenders to obtain a high school diploma or GED if they do not have one. This would be considered a "special condition" of supervision. However, probation officers may submit a request for an amendment to conditions of supervision to add this stipulation, or it may be recommended by the Assessment Unit once the offender is placed on supervision and undergoes all initial screening and testing. In Texas, offenders are only required to be referred to literacy classes if they have a below-sixth-grade level of education. Even if offenders obtained a high school diploma or GED, they would still face hardships in obtaining employment due to their criminal records (Burks, 2011).

As for the type of crime for which offenders were under supervision, there was no significant difference between felony groups, but there was for misdemeanor offenders. Those misdemeanants on supervision for an assaultive offense had 4 times higher odds of absconding, adjusting for gender, education level, employment status, offense level, and annual income. Those receiving probation for domestic violence or assault are required to undergo testing and/or attend anger management, batterer intervention programs, and a variety of other special conditions that may present a financial challenge for offenders. Moreover, the drug offense category has 2 times greater odds and both the alcohol and theft/property fraud groups have 3 times greater odds of absconding when compared to the "other"[2] offense category for misdemeanor offenders, after controlling for gender, education level, employment status, offense level, and annual income.

Misdemeanor offenders receive short jail sentences upon revocation compared to felony offenders, as well as shorter periods of community supervision, due to the nature of these crimes. This does not explain why some misdemeanor offenders are more likely to abscond from supervision compared to those convicted of other offenses, but it does shed light on the fact that "doing the time" may be a shorter and less expensive alternative for the individual than probation. In a previous study on felony technical revocations, findings revealed that when faced with revocation and given options other than incarceration such as residential treatment or extension of the probation term with additional interventions and sanctions, 20 percent of offenders chose incarceration in lieu of continuing their community supervision sentence (Stevens-Martin et al., 2014). Close to half of the felony probation population in the jurisdiction are state jail felons, the lowest-level felony, and most receive an average of 8 months in a state jail facility upon revocation (Stevens-Martin et al., 2014). Short sentences provide little motivation (or may actually discourage offenders) for continuing on probation, where they are held accountable for their actions and are required to participate in programming designed to address their criminogenic needs.

Last, we consider analyses conducted to compare the differences among demographic characteristics and offense information between felony and misdemeanor absconders. In comparing felony and misdemeanor absconders, education level, employment status, annual income level, offense categories, number of months before absconding, and the duration (in months) of the absconding from supervision are statistically significant (p<.05). More misdemeanor offenders had a high school diploma compared to felons; more felons were unemployed and, therefore, had lower income levels compared to misdemeanants. However, there were no statistically significant differences between felons and misdemeanants regarding age, race, ethnicity, gender, and marital status. These findings

[2] Offenses in the "other" category included, but were not limited to, crimes such as unlawful carrying of a weapon, interfering with emergency call, and violation of a protective order.

TABLE 7.
Comparison Characteristics between Felony and Misdemeanor Absconders (N=1,793)

	Categories of Absconders					
	Felonies (N = 737)		Misdemeanors (N = 1056)		Test values	p-value
Variables	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**		
Age Groups						
17-25	162	(22.0)	271	(25.7)	5.71	0.13
26-35	263	(35.7)	356	(33.7)		
36-45	152	(20.6)	234	(22.2)		
≥46	160	(21.7)	195	(18.5)		
Race						
White	503	(68.2)	765	(72.4)	6.59	0.09
Black	224	(30.4)	279	(26.4)		
Asian	9	(1.2)	7	(0.7)		
Native American Indian	1	(0.1)	5	(0.5)		
Ethnicity						
Hispanic	237	(31.9)	291	(27.5)	5.37	0.07
Non-Hispanic	500	(68.1)	765	(72.3)		
Gender						
Female	234	(31.9)	291	(27.6)	3.69	0.06
Male	503	(68.1)	765	(72.4)		
High School Diploma						
Yes	342	(46.4)	613	(58.0)	23.65	*<0.001
No	395	(53.6)	443	(42.0)		
Employment Status						
Unemployed	391	(53.1)	341	(32.3)	106.41	*<0.001
Student/Disabled/Retired/Homemaker	34	(4.6)	50	(4.7)		
Employed PT	74	(10.1)	129	(12.2)		
Employed FT	237	(32.2)	479	(45.4)		
Unknown/Missing	1		57			
Annual Income						
<$10,000	415	(56.3)	479	(45.4)	21.27	*<0.001
$10,000>$20,000	219	(29.7)	387	(36.6)		
$20,000>$30,000	55	(7.5)	105	(9.9)		
$30,000>$40,000	18	(2.4)	36	(3.4)		
≥$40,000	30	(4.1)	49	(4.6)		
Marital Status						
Single	583	(80.3)	848	(80.3)	0.0	1.00
Married	143	(19.7)	208	(19.7)		
Offense						
Drug	235	(31.9)	140	(13.3)	285.39	*<0.001
Alcohol	63	(8.5)	421	(39.9)		
Theft/Property/Fraud	264	(35.8)	253	(24.0)		
Violent	88	(11.9)	153	(14.5)		
Sex Offense	43	(5.8)	12	(1.1)		
Other	44	(6.0)	77	(7.3)		
Months on supervision before absconding					12.42	*<0.001
Months has been absconded					-7.93	*<0.001

*p<0.05 level of significance

TABLE 8.
Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis of Probability of Absconding Probation Supervision between Felony Absconders and Misdemeanor Absconders

Variables	Coef.	p-value	Adjusted OR	95% C.I. Odds Ratio
Categories of absconders				
Felony vs. Misdemeanor	0.21	0.09	1.24	(0.97, 1.58)

highlight the difficulty for some offenders of obtaining employment and successfully reintegrating into society, and it also provides insight for law enforcement officials tasked with tracking down and apprehending probation absconders. Considering that felony absconder offenders are unemployed and have little income, it is likely they have not fled the jurisdiction, but rather are remaining in the jurisdiction due to limited resources.

One factor not explored in this initial examination of the absconder population in the jurisdiction was supervision variables such as the number of officers offenders have had during their term(s) of supervision prior to absconding and officer supervision styles (Klockars, 1973); both of these may have an impact on successful completion of supervision. Officers with a more punitive approach to supervision may have a higher absconding rate for their caseloads compared to those with a more rehabilitative approach. Research on the officer-offender relationship is sparse, but some available research shows an impact on successful completions of supervision. For example, Clark-Miller and Stevens' study (2011) found that frequently switching probation officers during the term of supervision had a detrimental effect on supervision outcomes. Offenders who were supervised by only a few probation officers during their term were more likely to complete probation successfully than offenders who were supervised by many officers; the impact of officer continuity was dramatic, with chances of successful completion increasing by 58 percent for an offender with one officer during the entire term of supervision. The data also suggested that "offenders supervised by fewer officers were less likely to recidivate than offenders whose time on probation were spread out over a number of officers" (Clark-Miller & Stevens, 2011, p. 17).

Moreover, we did not collect data on the number and types of technical violations offenders had committed prior to absconding, due to incomplete electronic records for many offenders in the study who had been absconders for more than 10 years. Examining the types of technical violations offenders had could provide more insight into absconding patterns. Future studies should take into account variables such as supervision officer styles, departmental policies, court policies, continuity and consistency in supervision practices, and types and frequency of technical violations in determining what role, if any, these play in contributing to absconding rates. An interesting field study might include interviewing apprehended fugitive probationers to obtain feedback regarding their reasoning for failing to report and basically "writing off" their probation stipulations. This might give insight into the cognitions of offenders to help those developing policies and practices to reduce the incidences of absconding, thereby increasing public safety and successful reentry for offenders. And, as mentioned previously, it is important for probation officers to discuss court-ordered financial obligations with offenders and to develop appropriate payment plans considering their level of income, employment situations, and other financial obligations. It may be that offenders agree to probation plea bargains in order to be released from jail with no intentions of actually abiding by the conditions of release or successfully completing supervision.

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