Police Contact
Grade 7 /Year 8
Fast Track Project Technical Report
Cynthia Rains
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Citation

Instrument
    Huizinga, D. (1991). *Denver Youth Survey: Youth Interview Schedule.* Boulder, Colorado: The University of Colorado, Institute of Behavior Sciences, available from the author, David.Huizinga@colorado.edu

Report
    Rains, C. (2004). *Police Contact* (Fast Track Project Technical Report). Available from the Fast Track Project website, http://www.fasttrackproject.org

Data Sources

Unscored: C8AH

Scored: POL8

I. Scale Description

Police Contact is a 41-item tool used to interview middle and high school students about their encounters with the police and the justice system during the previous year. Police contact was adapted from the Youth Interview Schedule used in the Denver Youth Survey (Huizinga, 1991).

Police Contact asks a student how many times he or she was arrested during the year, what the charges were for each arrest, and whether the student actually committed the offense. Detailed information is then solicited for the first three arrests, including: Was the student warned and released? Were parents and/or school officials notified? Was the student referred to counseling or sent to a treatment program? Did the case go to court?

If the first arrest resulted in a court appearance, the student was asked several questions, such as: "Were you put on probation?" and "Did you have to pay a fine?" For a second or third arrest that went to court, the student was only asked about probation and whether he/she was sent to a juvenile center.

A student who had a first arrest was asked if his/her friends found out about the arrest. The student was also asked if he or she developed different friends after the arrest, and if so, were the new friends more delinquent than the old friends, less delinquent, or about the same. (Note: the information about the new friends is structured as three separate questions; thus, a respondent could have answered yes to all three.)

A final question inquires whether, except for the arrest(s), the student had been questioned by the police at any other time during the past year, and if so, how many times. Response choices for all items are "yes (1)" and "no (0)," except for the total number of arrests, arrest charges, and number of times questioned.

II. Report Sample

This report contains data collected on cohort 1 of the high-risk control sample (n=155) and the normative sample (n=387, N=463 with overlap) from the eighth year of the study. Of these, 81 are missing all data, including 70 from the normative group (14 from Durham, 22 from Nashville, 14 from Pennsylvania, and 20 from Washington), and 26 from the control group (6 from Durham, 6 from Nashville, 7 from Pennsylvania and 7 from Washington), with overlap between the normative and control groups. None of the missing data was used in the analyses.

III. Scaling

Police Contact contains no subscales. The students who were not arrested in the past year included 299 students from the normative group and 115 students from the control group (with overlap). Students with no arrests had a score of zero for item 1: "How many times in the last year were you arrested?"

In Year 8, 23 students from the normative and control groups combined (with overlap between normative and control samples) had a record of one or more arrests.

The data on consequences of arrests were analyzed based on a second dataset with each arrest providing an observation, rather than each child. There were a total of 36 arrests, with 23 children providing data.

Finally, a new dichotomized variable, *Arrest*, was created from the first item (the number of times you were arrested last year) to reflect whether the student had been arrested at least once in the past year.

IV.   Differences Between Groups

A series of independent t-tests were conducted to assess differences between the normative sample and the high-risk control sample for the continuous variables. Results indicated that there were no significant differences between the samples for the two items. Item c8ah1 (number of times arrested in the past year) approached significance (p=0.06) with the control sample scoring higher than the normative sample.

Police Contact T-Tests—Normative vs. Control Items

Police Contact T-Tests for Variables							
	Normative		Control				
Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev	DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
# of Times Were You Arrested Last Year? (C8AH1)	0.09	0.44	0.18	0.63	180	1.89	0.0600
# Times Questioned by Police in Past Yr (C8AH41)	1.42	0.61	1.57	0.90	42	0.37	0.7143

Chi-square tests of response frequency on the child level data for the normative group and the control group resulted in significant values for both items: c8ah40 (were you questioned by police in the past year) and *Arrest* (were you arrested at least once in the past year). Students from the control group were more likely than those in the normative sample to have been questioned by the police in the past year and to have been arrested at least once in the past year.

Police Contact Y8						
	0=No/Did not occur 1=Yes/Did occur			**Chi Square Statistic**		
Variable	**Normative Proportions**	**Control Proportions**	**DF**		**P-value**	**N**
Questioned by Police in the Past Year? (C8AH40)	0.08	0.18	1	7.61	0.006	382
Were You Arrested at Least Once in Past Year? (Arrest)	0.04	0.11	1	8.04	0.005	382

Chi-square tests of response frequency were run using the arrest data for the normative group and the control group and resulted in significant values for several variables: whether a child had to go to court, whether a child had to pay a fine, whether a child had to make restitution, and whether a child was diverted to a treatment program. Students in the normative sample were more likely than those in the control sample to pay a fine, make restitution, and be diverted to a treatment program. Students in the control sample, on the other hand, were more likely than those in the normative sample to go to court for their arrests. Three other variables approached significance. These were whether the child was referred to counseling (p=0.08), whether the child had to perform community service (p=0.06), and whether the child was put on probation (p=0.06). For each of these three variables, the students in the normative sample were more likely than those in the control sample to be referred for counseling, to perform community service, and to be put on probation.

Police Contact Y8 Arrest Data for Youth Arrested at Least Once in Last Year						
	0=No/Did not occur 1=Yes/Did occur			**Chi Square Statistic**		
Variable	**Normative Proportions**	**Control Proportions**	**DF**		**P-value**	**N**
Police Contact Actually Commit Offense? (POL8COM)	0.67	0.67	1	0.00	1.000	36
Police Contact Referred for Counseling (POL8COU)	0.40	0.14	1	3.09	0.079	36
Police Contact Had to Go to Court (POL8CRT)	0.27	0.71	1	7.03	0.008	36
Police Contact Perform Community Service? (POL8CSV)	1.00	0.47	1	3.68	0.055	19
Police Contact Group of Friends Change After Arrest? (POL8FCH)	0.13	0.19	1	0.21	0.650	36
Police Contact Friends Find out About Arrest? (POL8FFO)	0.73	0.76	1	0.04	0.845	36
Police Contact New Friends Less Delinquent than Old? (POL8FLD)	1.00	0.75	1	0.31	0.576	5
Police Contact New Friends More Delinquent than Old? (POL8FMD)	0.00	0.75	1	1.88	0.171	5
Police Contact Sent to a Juvenile/Correctional Center (POL8JCT)	0.00	0.33	1	1.81	0.179	19
Police Contact New Group of Friends Same as old Group? (POL8NGS)	0.00	0.25	1	0.31	0.576	5
Police Contact Pay Fine? (POL8PFN)	1.00	0.40	1	4.56	0.033	19
Police Contact Parents Notified (POL8PNF)	0.80	0.86	1	0.21	0.650	36
Police Contact Put on Probation (POL8PRB)	1.00	0.47	1	3.68	0.055	19
Police Contact Make Restitution? (POL8RES)	1.00	0.27	1	6.97	0.008	19
Police Contact School Officials Told (POL8SCH)	0.40	0.52	1	0.54	0.463	36
Police Contact Diverted to Treatment Program (POL8TRT)	0.33	0.00	1	8.13	0.004	36
Police Contact Child Warned and Released (POL8WRL)	0.80	0.62	1	1.35	0.245	36

V. Recommendations for Use

Analysts should note that a second dataset had to be created, using the original data, in order to accurately reflect the concern with the missingness of the follow-up items for each arrest. Depending on the construct under investigation, information about encounters with the police and the court system collected with the Police Contact tool should be useful to analysts.

VI. Item and Scale Means and SDs

Police Contact contains no subscales. Item means are summarized previously in the count tables.

VII. Item and Subscale Correlations

No correlations are available for these data.