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At a time in which the citizen in his role as consumer of publicly supplied and regulated services commands increasing attention from scholars, public officials, and political activists (Aberback and Walker, 1970; Campbell and Schuman, 1968), it comes as no surprise to discover in a recent issue of New York Magazine (December 1970) a piece entitled "A Guerrilla Guide for Consumers." A prominent feature of this guide is a section called "How to Complain," which includes a detailed listing of phone numbers and addresses of city, state, and federal agencies responsible for various services and regulatory functions.

As the reader scans the list, visions of Kafkaesque corridors and frosted glass doors in anonymous buildings leap to mind, and one recalls his own trying adventures which inevitably seem to accompany attempts to lodge complaints with bureaucrats and other public officials. In New York City the problems of making contact with the bureaucracy often approach the absurd. For example, to complain about the sale of unsanitary food the guide offers a telephone number to call at the Department of Health. But to notify the proper official that one has become ill from the unsanitary food he bought, one must call a different number at the same department. And if the food is unsanitary because it has remained on the shelf too long, the hapless shopper must call still a third number, this one at the Department of Consumer Affairs, Consumer Complaints Division. Such chaotic arrangements have been common in New York City: when John Lindsay became mayor, he discovered that three different bureaus and agencies were responsible for dealing with problems of residential water supply, depending upon whether one had insufficient water, no hot water, or no water at all (Lindsay, 1969:79).

Not only must the citizen confront a baroque structure in his search for the proper place to lodge a complaint, but once he finds the responsible authority, his chances of getting redress are not always good. To cite one extreme example, in the first 59 years of existence of the Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission, a board empowered to hear citizen complaints about police conduct, no individual patrolman has ever been tried as a result of a citizen accusation. The laws of probability make it unlikely that not one complaint in this century of difficult police-citizen relationships was sufficiently justified to warrant a trial.

Complaining to public agencies about unjust or inadequate public or private services is only one form of contact the individual citizen might initiate with officials in government. A more common type of contact involves sending an expression of opinion or a plea for action to one's elected representative or executive. Here the target for contact is easy to identify. Yet even in this case the probability of satisfaction is frequently low, as those who have sent messages protesting the conduct of the Asian war during the past decade can readily attest.

The examples cited above warrant the tentative conclusion that for citizens to attempt to contact their government often means to embark on a difficult and frustrating course. To do so requires a substantial effort of will, great persistence, and limited expectations of gratification. Yet it is striking that in spite of all this, great numbers of citizens do manage to contact their government about one thing or another, and even greater numbers are able to contemplate doing so in the event they have something to complain about or communicate. Nevertheless, there is a self-selection process, and, as a result, certain types of people are more visible to public

officials than others. That contact involves difficulty--and thus prevents many from attempting to contact--and that it serves as one type of feedback which public officials receive from their constituents make the patterns of contact inherently interesting for the political scientist as well as for the policymaker. It is the broad purpose of this article to explore these patterns in some detail as they occur among the inhabitants of one American city.

To begin with we should be clear about the meaning and dimensions of the notion of citizen contact. In this paper we are concerned with contact with government officials initiated by individuals acting in their capacity as private citizens and not as group spokesmen. The extent to which individuals contact officials in their various governments was determined in a survey conducted in Milwaukee during the summer of 1970. The respondents, residents of the city age 18 and over, were selected by block cluster techniques. The sample was stratified by race such that black respondents comprise a much larger proportion of the total than they do in the population. In all, 313 white interviews and 241 black interviews were completed, constituting two separate samples of each racial group. In each case the race of the interviewer and that of the respondent were matched.

Respondents were asked if, "within the last couple of years," they had personally written a letter, sent a telegram, or spoken to any of a variety of different types of public officials on a list which was handed to them. These officials ranged from the President of the United States to the mayor of Milwaukee to "any person at all who works for the City of Milwaukee." If any contact was made, the interviewers determined the identity of the target and the nature of the contact.

Our first task will be to discover who the contacters are and how they differ from the non-contacters. Then we shall explore the various dimensions of contact--the nature, the content, and so on of each instance of contact. Finally, we shall discuss the implications of the patterns of contact for the idea of political representation.

The Basic Patterns of Contact

Americans are a self-confident people when it comes to assessing their individual capacity to influence political affairs--or at least they were ten years ago. Almond and Verba (1965:188) reported at that time that a substantial majority of citizens in this country believed not only that they would bring influence to bear on political officials under certain circumstances, but that they stood a high chance of success in doing so.

Yet if the Milwaukee respondents possess this same high sense of "subjective competence," their behavior does not reflect it in full measure. The number of people who have actually initiated any sort of contact with government officials at any level in this sample is relatively low. Not only are those who make contact a distinct minority of the city's residents, but they are also overwhelmingly white. In certain crucial ways, the contacters are unrepresentative of the city's population.

Of the 313 whites in the sample, 103 (32.7%) had made a total of 254 contacts with all levels of government, or nearly 2.5 contacts per contacter. Among the 241 blacks, however, only 27 had initiated contact with public officials (11.1%), and 23 of those had made only one contact.

The total number of black contacts amounted to 32, a figure low enough to inject considerable caution into the succeeding discussion.

Milwaukeeans, especially those who are black, are not confident that they could gain the ear of the local government even if they tried. While Almond and Verba found in their nationwide sample that approximately 65 percent thought they could successfully influence local government (1965:188), only 20 percent of the Milwaukee blacks and 36 percent of the whites agreed with the following statement: "If a group of people have problems here in Milwaukee, it's pretty easy to get somebody in the city government to listen to them." Fewer than half the blacks (44.8%) but nearly three-quarters of the whites (72.8%) said that they would feel free to talk to someone in the government about getting something done for their neighborhood.

As with any form of political self-assertion, contacting public officials is associated with social class indicators (Lane, 1959:67). The strength of the relationships of socioeconomic variables and contact among the Milwaukee respondents is generally not remarkable except for education. Table 1, which includes selected demographic variables, summarizes the nature of these relationships.

Table 1 indicates that the educated population in the city is over-represented among the contacters of both races. The higher one's education, the more likely he is to make contact. For whites there are slight positive relationships between contact and occupation and income. For blacks the income-contact relationship is stronger. Age and length of residence seem to have little association with contact, although blacks who have lived in the city longer are apparently slightly more inclined to make contact.

Table 1

Relationship of Contact to Socioeconomic Status, Age
and Length of Residence in Milwaukee (Gamma)

	Whites	Blacks
Education	.46	.70
Occupation	.26 (NS)	.23
Income	.23 (NS)	.47
Age	.06 (NS)	.02 (NS)
Length of residence	.02 (NS)	.24 (NS)

X^2: $p \leq .01$

NS denotes not significant.

While the strength of the relationship between education and con-
tact is approximately the same for both races, a pattern worth noting
is revealed when we observe the relationship between race and contact
controlling for education (Table 2). Combining the two racial samples
in this way does not allow us to generalize to the larger population
since blacks are overrepresented in the total. Nevertheless, the pat-
tern that emerges is suggestive.

The strongest and most significant relationship occurs among those
of limited education. The negative value of the coefficient suggests
that uneducated whites are more likely to contact public officials than
are uneducated blacks. The strength of the relationship diminishes as
we go up the educational scale, but at each level blacks appear to labor
under a disability that cannot be attributed to educational achievement.
We may draw two conclusions from this table. First, it would seem that
education is more important in predicting black contact than it is for
predicting white contact. To put it another way, education provides a
more important resource for blacks: it serves as a means for overcoming
the disability of race. Education is less important for whites. Being
white confers an advantage in attempting contact. We may guess that these
racial differences are related to the degree of confidence an individual
brings with him in his dealings with society. Thus uneducated whites find
it easier to contact government than uneducated blacks, making the latter
group badly underrepresented among the contacters. Second, race appears
to have an independent effect, apart from education, in predicting contact.
Those blacks who have achieved high educational status are still less likely
to have contacted government than are whites at the same level.

Table 2

Relationship Between Race and Contact Controlling
for Education

	Gamma	x^2: p =
Less than high school	−.70	.001
High school graduate	−.57	.01
More than high school	−.27	.10

To summarize, the voices of the relatively well-off in terms of socioeconomic status are heard disproportionately by public officials through the process of individually initiated contact. And within the population, the better-off whites are heard in greater proportion than the better-off blacks.

The Dimensions of Contact

For our purposes we may identify at least five important dimensions of any instance of contact: (1) the nature of the contact; (2) the content of the contact; (3) the referent for whom the contact is made; (4) the level of government at which contact is made; and (5) the target to whom contact is directed.

1. Empirically, there are several different types of contact with public officials. We have already had occasion to note that one type is the grievance or complaint. Such contacts may be included in a broader category which we may call request contacts.

This category covers all those cases in which the contact is meant to provoke action on the part of the target by providing him an opportunity to do so. That is to say, in such instances the contact provides the occasion for action, if the target so desires. In many cases this form of contact involves a complaint about some injustice or difficulty the contacter has suffered or anticipates suffering. He seeks to have the injustice rectified by public authorities or he calls upon them to obviate the threat. Examples would be the complaint about a landlord's refusal to provide customary services or the grievance lodged when one believes he has been mistreated by the police.

Another form of request contact is the communication seeking help
or a favor or a service from a public official or agency to which the
contacter believes he or some referent is rightfully entitled. Seeking
information about zoning laws or making known the need for a traffic
light on a busy corner are examples of this type of request contact.
This communication is not occasioned by the sense that one has suffered
injustice.

Finally, we may classify as a form of request contact those communi-
cations directed to a public official asking him to "do something" about
a problem that is viewed by the contacter in genearlized terms. Such a
contact is not designed as a comment on what the contacter believes is
the preferable option among an array of options already being considered
by an official. Nor is it an expression of opinion regarding some ex-
plicit aspect of existing policy. Thus a request contact of this type
would be the call to "do something" about job discrimination or ghetto
problems or pollution. This form of contact is void of references to
particular options open to the official; rather its purpose is to call
attention to an area of concern in the hopes of initiating action. Un-
like the other two types of request contacts, an appeal to "do something"
offers only the vaguest sort of mandate or opportunity for the public
official to act. The opportunities supplied by a complaint or a request
are much more explicit.

Another category of contacts are communications expressing an opin-
ion. In one category of opinion contacts the individual is engaged in
the act of throwing his weight on the side of one of several options for
action already explicitly open to the public official. A decision is

pending or action is being considered. To ask one's congressman to vote against a new weapons system is an apt example.

A second type of opinion contact is the comment on an existing state of affairs or the communication of support or opposition for actions already taken. Congratulatory messages and pledges of support for a position taken fall in this group.

Opinion contacts are generally reactions to policy decisions or possibilities, while request contacts are designed to initiate consideration of policy or problems. To make an opinion contact is not to present the target of the contact with an opportunity to act. Rather it is to express an opinion about actions taken or pending or considered when such action is not dependent upon the stimulus of the citizen's contact. Hence, we may classify the nature of citizen communications to public officials as request contacts or opinion contacts, depending upon whether they provide an opportunity for the target or whether they offer support or opposition for an opportunity already before or taken by a target.

In Milwaukee the two races exhibit very different patterns in the nature of their contacts. Looking at instances of contact made at all levels of government, we find that whites made opinion contacts more frequently than request contacts. Of the contacts that were codable (only 5 percent were not), 52.3 percent communicated opinions while 42.5 percent were requests. Blacks, however, divided their contacts overwhelmingly in favor of request contacts (84.3 percent).

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the different types of contact by race at all levels of government. Two figures are of special interest in this table. The number of white contacts which fall in the "comment"

Table 3

Types of Contact by Race, All Levels of Government

		White		Black	
Request Contacts	Complaints	15%	(38)	22%	(7)
	Ask for help	15%	(39)	28%	(9)
	Do something	12%	(31)	37%	(12)
Opinion Contacts	Urge position on pending action	14%	(37)	9%	(3)
	Comment	38%	(96)	6%	(2)
	Uncodable	5%	(13)	--	--
	Totals	99%	(254)	102%	(32)

Note: Percentages do not always total 100 due to rounding.

category would seem to indicate both a degree of political awareness and self-confidence not manifested in the black sample. To send a public official one's comment on some aspect of existing public policy or to communicate one's judgment about a position taken by that official presupposes that the contacter keeps abreast of public affairs to some extent. In addition, to send such a communication requires a certain degree of self-confidence, a sense that one's evaluation is worth a public official's time. That blacks are poorly represented in this category hints at the relative absence of these qualities in the Milwaukee sample.

The second figure of note is the concentration of blacks in the "do something" category. The plea to "do something" about a problem understood in general terms is the most ambiguous of requests. The target of such a contact is hard pressed to know exactly what the contacter wants, and this makes a satisfying response difficult. While the number of black contacts is extremely small, necessitating a certain caution in interpreting the patterns we find, it is nevertheless interesting to speculate that if the same pattern prevails in the larger black population, it may do much to explain why public officials often appear unresponsive to black demands. Some well-intentioned officials simply may not know what is being asked of them. On the other hand the ambiguity of many individually initiated black contacts may also provide an excuse for officials not to respond. For some officials it may be convenient not to understand exactly what is being asked of them.

In Table 4 the type of contact is broken down according to whether the target was a city official or an official at another level of government. It is apparent that on this dimension blacks relate similarly to local government and the other two levels. That is, their contacts with all officials and agencies are prompted by needs to which they expect a public response. Contact of this sort plays neither a supportive or non-supportive role.

Individuals of both races seldom stir themselves, individually, to take positions in city conflict over public policy. When factions and interests coalesce on the various sides of an issue, as they inevitably must, there appears to be little spontaneous expression of support or opposition by members of the mass public. When conflicts occur in the various arenas of city government, individual citizens appear largely in the role of spectators rather than participants in the pageant.

In conflicts at other levels of government, whites actively take sides through their expression of support, opposition, or comment. As a summary judgment about this table, however, it can be said that blacks in no way appear to make a significant contribution to the body of public opinion, at least insofar as that opinion is generated by individuals acting in their private capacity rather than as group spokesmen.

2. Another dimension of citizen contacts is their content. What are people moved to communicate to public officials? What sorts of problems provoke spontaneous expressions of opinion?

To make contact is to provide an important kind of feedback for public officials. We know, for example, that Congressmen rely heavily on

Table 4

Nature of Contacts by Target and Race

	White				Black			
	City Contacts		State and Federal Contacts		City Contacts		State and Federal Contacts	
Requests (complaints, ask for help, do something)	67%	(61)	29%	(47)	93%	(13)	78%	(14)
Opinions (urge position, comment)	27%	(25)	66%	(108)	7%	(1)	22%	(4)
Uncodable	5%	(5)	5%	(8)	--	--	--	--
Totals	99%	(91)	100%	(163)	100%	(14)	100%	(18)

contact initiated by constituents, despite its admittedly unrepresenta-
tive quality. Bauer, Pool, and Dexter (1963) write:

> To our surprise, we found many congressmen looking to mail
> and personal contacts as sources of information on vital
> issues. . . . Visitors and telephone callers . . . are lis-
> tened to as indicators of feeling back home. (434, 436)

Other scholars found that a high proportion of a sample of upper-
level administrators at the national level depended on newspaper com-
ment, letters of complaint, and clients' grievances for their informa-
tion about constituency attitudes (Friedman et al., 1966:196). And
David J. Olson (1969) discovered in his study of citizen grievance let-
ters received by the governor of Wisconsin that such communications are
perceived by the state chief executive as some indication of agency per-
formance and provide him with a control device to wield against agencies
accordingly.

In short, the content of citizen contacts presumably serves in large
measure to shape the pictures of constituent opinion and needs that pub-
lic officials form, and these contacts help to set the agenda of priori-
ties by informing officials of areas of concern and sensitivity.

An analysis of the content of citizen request contacts in Milwaukee,
however, throws into some doubt the utility of using individually gener-
ated contacts as indicators of special problems, except perhaps in extra-
ordinary cases. At the most general level one may say that what normally
concerns contacters in Milwaukee, regardless of race, is the quality and
scope of public services. Poor sanitation pickup, inadequate traffic con-
trol, the absence of decent housing, and the failure of the city to regu-
late citizen behavior (for example, landlords who violate housing codes

or juveniles who vandalize neighborhood shops) are the types of concerns which comprise the major portion of citizen contacts at this level. While Gellhorn found that complaints about housing dominated the content of citizen letters to a New York City borough president (1966:164) and Campbell and Schuman found that dissatisfaction over park and recreation facilities outranked negative feelings about other services in fifteen large cities (1968:40), the Milwaukee whites complained most frequently about faulty garbage collection and snow removal. Data for black service-related contacts are too scanty to discern patterns.

Yet in general for both races the request contacts range fairly evenly across the spectrum of city services, providing little sense of areas of special concern. As a source of information, a tabulation of these complaints and pleas for help or service would provide little aid for officials responsible for assessing the performance of particular municipal services or agencies. What does emerge simply is that a moderate level of dissatisfaction exists, voiced by a small minority of the city's residents. One suspects that if large numbers of people are ever moved to contact a city agency about its service, it is likely that such contact must be prompted by a crisis. (The case comes to mind of the failure of New York City to plow the streets of Queens, stranding commuters in their homes in 1968, an oversight which stimulated an outpouring of angry mail.)

As we noted in Table 4, blacks almost exclusively made request contacts, regardless of the level of government, while whites tended to send expressions of opinion or comment to officials outside of local government.

The content of the white opinion contacts primarily concerned the war in Asia and the Middle East crisis. Other controversial issues--gun control, birth control, sex education, the ABM system, and state aid to parochial schools--elicited messages from the white sample in relatively even measure. The distribution of the white opinion contacts seems a better gauge than that of the request contacts for measuring the degree of public concern and for spotting areas of sensitivity.

3. When people contact public officials, they do so on behalf of some referent. That is, they hope by their contact to elicit some decision or action by a target in relation to someone or in order that someone will benefit or pay.

In coding the instances of contact we may identify three principal referents: the individual or his primary groups, the secondary or social group, and the community at large. For example, a contacter may complain to government about something done to him or that he wishes done for him or his family for which some public agency or official has reponsibility. Many of the Milwaukee contacts of this type concerned requests to legislators for military deferments, pleas for help in obtaining social security and veterans' benefits, and requests for information on licensing and zoning laws. In these cases the citizen pursued the contact on behalf of his own interests or those of his family.

A citizen may also initiate contact, still in his capacity as an individual, to request that government do something to or for a particular social group (e.g., black people, the poor, young people), a client group (e.g., for welfare mothers, veterans), or a neighborhood.

Finally, he may make contact to elicit action for the community at large, defined in this case as the entire body of the undifferentiated citizenry of the jurisdiction in which the public official serves. To call for lower state sales taxes, to support the ABM system, to decry the state of community relations, or to seek action on pollution are all examples of contacts in which the community—city, state, or nation—is the referent. That is, whatever response is elicited, it will affect everyone. Naturally, if one's son obtains a job on the public payroll because of a contact with an alderman or if Congress votes for money for summer jobs for young people in the inner cities, all taxpayers and citizens eventually pay in some sense. Hence we qualify our classification by asking who pays or who benefits in the most immediate way.

The idea of contacters' referents is important theoretically because contact is a demand for attention. By making contact the citizen directs attention to his referent. If demands are never made on behalf of some possible referent, then that group or individual is unlikely to occupy a very prominent place in a public official's mind. For example, it is reasonable to speculate that some neighborhoods house vociferous contacters whose referent is often the neighborhood. These are the good citizens who notice dangerous street intersections, monitor street cleaning operations, and complain to the police about the lax handling of juvenile loiterers. It is often necessary to call such problems to the city's attention in order to have them treated. As a result of frequent contact, officials will develop images of vocal neighborhoods, as Lindsay has done with regard to the areas of Queens whose streets were not plowed. These vocal neighborhoods can attract attention in the press and perhaps cause

political trouble for elected officials. In other neighborhoods the population is silent and passive, and thus invisible. Those neighborhoods are never referents of individual citizen contacts.

The notion of contact referents is also important in that it invites a very limited test of the Banfield and Wilson public-regarding versus private-regarding ethos theory (Banfield and Wilson, 1963). Briefly, the theory posits two competing views as to whose interests the city government is designed to serve, those of the community or public or those of particular sub-communities or groups within the city. The public-regarding view is the province of the white middle class, while the private-regarding view is generally held by people of lower class immigrant stock. While numerous problems of measurement and conceptualization attend this theory (Hennesy, 1970; Wolfinger and Field, 1966), it suggests in its largest outlines that different groups have very different notions as to the purposes to which government might appropriately be put. What the Milwaukee data provide is an opportunity to compare whites and blacks in this regard according to the referents for whom the two racial groups seek benefits from government.

Table 5 shows that both races almost invariably contact city government on behalf of some group or individual referent. The bulk of contacts with local government reflect little concern for broader, community-wide interests at the city level. Except in the few instances in which contacters called for city officials to "do something" about community relations or about pollution, contacts were made primarily

Table 5

Contact Referents

Referents	White				Black			
	City Government Only		All levels of government		City Government Only		All levels of government	
Individual, primary group	38%	(35)	26%	(65)	21%	(3)	22%	(7)
Secondary group, neighborhood	42%	(38)	28%	(71)	79%	(11)	66%	(21)
City, nation, community at large	11%	(10)	28%	(72)	--	--	6%	(2)
Uncodable	9%	(8)	18%	(46)	--	--	6%	(2)
Totals	100%	(91)	100%	(254)	100%	(14)	102%	(32)

on behalf of neighborhood or family. If we collapse group and individual concerns into the private-regarding category, as Banfield and Wilson do (1963:46) we find that there is little difference between the races. Insofar as using the referents of contacts measures some sense of which interests government ought to serve, the Milwaukee sample is mostly private-regarding at the city level.

The pattern changes when the referents of contacts made at all three levels of government are taken into account. Whites achieve more balance among the three types of referents, but still remain weighted on the private-regarding side. Blacks almost exclusively remain private-regarding: government at all levels is perceived as an instrument to serve group and individual interests rather than some notion of the general or community interest.

Such a finding is not surprising: "blacks" comprise a somewhat more cohesive social category than do "whites." While black communities show cleavages similar to those found in white communities, blacks are still an easily identifiable group. Blacks also inhabit segregated neighborhoods, tend to cluster at the low end of the socioeconomic scale, and comprise large portions of the client groups dependent upon supportive services administered by the various levels of government (e.g., welfare, antipoverty, public housing, manpower programs). Blacks also believe that their neighborhoods receive poorer treatment from the city in comparison with white neighborhoods. Poverty, discrimination, and heavy dependence on public services may do much to explain black tendencies to contact government on behalf of group and individual rather than community referents.

4. A fourth dimension of citizen contact of some concern involves
the level of government to which contact is directed. Americans express
greater interest in national and local politics than in state politics
and tend to follow more faithfully the activities at the former two levels
(Jennings and Zeigler, 1970:525). Indeed, Table 6 shows that the high
salience of national and local politics is associated with a much greater
propensity for both races to make contact here rather than at the state
level. State government is especially free of the sort of scrutiny repre-
sented by individually initiated citizen contacts brought to bear by blacks.

5. A final dimension of citizen contacts concerns the specific tar-
gets of the contacters. Hypothetically, a citizen making contact pursues
his objective with a minimal expenditure of personal resources. A calcu-
lation to this effect which includes in the equation an attempt to ensure
the highest probability of success with a minimal expenditure of time and
energy leads the citizen in the vast majority of cases to contact elected
rather than bureaucratic officials. Well over 80 percent of the contacts
made by both blacks and whites were directed at elected figures.

Such a strategy is a rational one. To contact an elected official
is by far the easier course. The elected official is normally more visi-
ble than the civil servant or the appointed administrator. Much less
information must be gathered as to where to direct a contact. In addition,
if a citizen request requires action which only a bureaucrat may handle,
then by contacting one's elected representative first, the citizen may hope
to expedite such action by having this official intercede on his behalf.
Indeed, to contact an elected official in the hopes that he will intercede
with the bureaucracy is often to enlist a powerful ally in one's bout with
the government. To call upon the bureaucracy alone may be to go naked and
unarmed into the lion's den.

Table 6

Level of Government at Which Contact Is Made

	Whites		Blacks	
National	44%	(112)	47%	(15)
State	18%	(46)	3%	(1)
City	36%	(91)	44%	(14)
Other (county, special district)	2%	(5)	6%	(2)
Totals	100%	(254)	100%	(32)

On occasion the contacter may call upon an elected official simply to enlist his aid as a pathfinder by relegating to him the difficult task of discovering which bureaucratic agency has the authority to satisfy the contacter.

There is some evidence that contacting elected officials rather than administrators increases the chances of success and speed of response in having a request contact satisfied. Olson found that the governor was much more likely to respond favorably to citizen requests (and more promptly) than were agency administrators, even, apparently, if the requests were similar in content (Olson, 1969:746). In a related vein, Gellhorn reports that complaints which pass through governors' offices usually receive prompter attention by higher level officials than if they had been sent to administrators (Gellhorn, 1966:136-7).

If elected officials are more responsive than bureaucrats, there is a resonable explanation. The former depend for their jobs on a satisfied constituency, and in satisfying those who make contact, the elected official is less bound than the bureaucrat by standards of professional public administration. The congressman who makes a special plea for a constituent about to be inducted into the military has greater freedom to devise a rationale for making an exception than the bureaucrat in the draft board does, bound as he is by the necessity for impersonal uniform administration. If this is the case, then elected officials more than bureaucrats lend the political system flexibility, the obvious possibilities for administrative discretion notwithstanding.

In Table 7 the tendency to contact elected officials is graphically illustrated. When citizens contact elected officials, it is clear from

Table 7

Targets of Contact

	White		Black	
All targets				
Elected official	84%	(213)	88%	(28)
Bureaucratic official	14%	(36)	6%	(2)
Other, unspecified	2%	(5)	6%	(2)
Totals	100%	(254)	100%	(32)
Specific targets				
President	6%	(15)	--	--
U.S. Representative	18%	(45)	28%	(9)
Senator	20%	(50)	19%	(6)
U.S. bureaucrat	1%	(2)	--	--
Governor	4%	(10)	3%	(1)
State legislator	13%	(34)	--	--
State bureaucrat	1%	(2)	--	--
Mayor	3%	(7)	6%	(2)
Alderman	20%	(52)	31%	(10)
City bureaucrat	12%	(32)	6%	(2)
Other	2%	(5)	6%	(2)
Totals	100%	(254)	99%	(32)

this table that they tend to contact their representatives to the various legislative bodies rather than the more visible chief executives. This pattern holds true at each level of government. While people are normally more aware of the identity and behavior of their chief executives than that of their representatives, the data here indicate a greater willingness to rely upon the latter.

At all levels citizens virtually ignore the bureaucracies. In view of the arguments made in favor of contacting elected officials, this is rational behavior. There is some evidence, however, to indicate that the likelihood of contacting a bureaucracy depends upon the nature of the issue. When all the respondents, both contacters and non-contacters, were asked first whom they would contact about getting a traffic light in their neighborhood, a majority of both races named elected officials. But when they were later asked whom they would contact about getting better police protection, a majority named various officials in the police bureaucracy. The willingness or ability to contact bureaucratic officials is probably a function of the salience of the particular bureaucracy and the ease with which people can identify the locus of bureaucratic responsibility. The source of responsibility for traffic lights and stop signs is relatively obscure, while that for the police is not.

A curious variation on this finding appears when contacters and non-contacters are compared. Contacters of both races—but especially those who are black—reveal a greater tendency to predict that they would contact elected officials than do the non-contacters. That is, in both the case of the traffic light and that of better police protection, non-contacters are more likely than the contacters to predict that they would

call upon bureaucratic officials. Such a pattern seems to reflect a kind of innocence on the part of the non-contacters: their assumption is that to get action, one goes to the source of administration. Contacters, however, apparently acquainted with the difficulties of finding the locus of bureaucratic responsibility, prefer to go to elected officials.

Table 7 showed that the degree of contact with individual citizens varies for different types of public officials. In Table 8 data are presented which suggest at least for whites that the referent of the contacter determines to some extent the target of his contact. City aldermen and bureaucrats are more likely than any other officials to be the recipients of contacts made on behalf of individual or group interests. National political figures—especially senators and representatives—are most likely to be the targets of contact made on behalf of public or community interests.

In summarizing the basic patterns of contact, the following points stand out:

1) Contacters are better off than non-contacters in terms of social well-being.

2) Citizens tend to make request contacts in the city rather than opinion contacts.

3) Complaints in the city range across the spectrum of public services, offering little aid in spotting areas of special concern.

4) In the city contacters of both races—but especially blacks—are private-regarding, at least insofar as we have measured this orientation by the use of the contacters' referents.

Table 8

Referents of Contacters by Specific Targets

	White				Black			
	Individual and Group interests		Public or Community Interests		Individual and Group interests		Public or Community Interests	
President	1%	(1)	13.8%	(10)	---	---	---	---
U.S. Representative	12%	(16)	25%	(18)	29%	(8)	50%	(1)
U.S. Senator	15%	(20)	29.1%	(21)	18%	(5)	50%	(1)
U.S. bureaucrat	1%	(1)	1.3%	(1)	---	---	---	---
Governor	4%	(5)	4.1%	(3)	3%	(1)	---	---
State legislator	12%	(17)	11.1%	(8)	---	---	---	---
State bureaucrat	1%	(2)	---	---	---	---	---	---
Mayor	2%	(3)	5.5%	(4)	7%	(2)	---	---
Alderman	31%	(42)	2.7%	(2)	36%	(10)	---	---
City bureaucrat	21%	(29)	6.9%	(5)	7%	(2)	---	---
Totals	100%	(136)		(72)	100%	(28)	100%	(2)

Uncodable: 46   Uncodable: 2

5) The races differ little in their tendency to contact local and national government targets rather than state officials.

6) Citizens tend to contact elected officials rather than bureaucratic officials at all levels of government, although predictions of contact seem to vary with the problem.

Political Participation and Contact

Contacting public officials is a form of political participation (Milbrath, 1965:18). All of the forms of contact are ways of making demands for a particular allocation of rewards and resources in the society. Taken as an isolated act, an instance of contact poses little threat to a public official or to the society. Failure to meet the demands posed by any particular contacter seldom results in the loss of the official's job, nor does failure to satisfy a single contacter generally have grave consequences for the social order.

Yet to understand the act of contact as an isolated form of individual political participation would be a mistake. Indeed, contact reflects expectations which can be backed up by the use of political sanctions. This is not to say that contacters as contacters possess sanctions inherent in the act of contact itself. Contact, as we have conceived it, is a solitary act. Rather, contacters possess political resources like any other citizen which may be used as sanctions against unresponsive public officials. These include the vote, party and campaign efforts, protest tactics, appeals to higher authority, and in some cases the ability to create unfavorable publicity. If contacters never used their political resources, public officials would be under little constraint to satisfy their individual demands. What will be

made clear in this section is that the contacters are members of the politically active stratum in the society and that contacters are more active in politics generally than non-contacters.

To say that contacters participate in other forms of political activity is not to argue that they explicitly seek to back up the demands they make as individual contacters through political action. Rather it is to argue that contact is simply one aspect in a syndrome of behavior. Experiences in one form of participation may, of course, determine action taken in another form: the man who is rebuffed by the alderman to whom he complains may not vote for him for that reason in the next election. But the relationship between contact and behavior is probably not always so direct; contact does not always precede participation or cause participation in other forms of activity.

What is clear, however, is that contacters provide the public official with one indication of what some activists are thinking and working for. For one thing, the object of contact is a potential rallying point. Less specifically, the contacter may be a bellwether, a representative of the politically attentive and active citizenry. Insofar as elected officials are dependent on a satisfied and supportive constituency and insofar as bureaucrats attempt to serve a clientele satisfactorily, the voice of the contacter is important because he is a political activist.

In every case in Table 9, there is a substantial positive relationship between contacting public officials and participation in conventional electoral and party politics. What the simple coefficients of association obscure, however, is the extent to which contacters are

Table 9

Relationship Between Contacting Public Officials
and Political Participation (Gamma)

	White	Black
Vote for president 1968	.57	.85
Vote for mayor 1968	.21 (NS)	.69
Talk to anyone about presidential election	.60	.63
Talk to anyone about mayoral election	.57	.52
Persuade someone to vote for any candidate	.47	.64
Help in an election campaign	.74	.87
Give money to party or candidate	.46	.61

x^2: $p \leq .01$

NS denotes not significant.

active in each of the forms of participation in comparison with the non-contacters. While the exigencies of space preclude showing each table, it is sufficient to note the average percentage difference between contacters and noncontacters in each instance of political activity is 19.3 for whites and 31.7 for blacks. That is, on the average, one-fifth fewer noncontacter whites and one-third fewer noncontacter blacks participate in any given act of political participation. For both races contacters are substantially overrepresented in the politically active stratum.

Voting and donating money may be done anonymously, but talking to people about an election, persuading people to vote in a particular way, and helping out in a campaign are necessarily group or social activities. The latter forms of participation offer opportunities for interpersonal influence on a face-to-face basis. Although we have no way of knowing how much conventional political activity is a function of experiences in contacting government, it is still probable that impressions gained in contact carry over into other areas of political behavior. (The reverse is also true: political activity provides incentives and opportunities to initiate contact.) The point to make is that contacters are active in these social forms as well as in the more private ones. That this is the case indicates the potential importance to an elected public official of the way he handles contacts over time. If he is unresponsive in general, he not only alienates people who are likely to vote, but also people who are likely to be in a position to influence others. In regard to the white population this seems especially important. Among the whites the average percentage difference between contacters and noncontacters is greater for the group context political activities (22.8) than for the

private ones (14.3). White contacters differ from white noncontacters
especially in their tendency to participate in politics in social set-
tings. However, for blacks there are no such differences between con-
tacters and noncontacters when we control for social and private forms
of political participation.

Contacters also demonstrate a greater familiarity than the non-
contacters with the personnel of Milwaukee city government, thereby
indicating not only a higher awareness of the details of local govern-
ment but also the ability to identify potential targets of contact. If
the energy involved in gathering information as to where to make a con-
tact represents one of the costs of this form of activity, then contac-
ters appear to possess a distinct advantage over noncontacters. Respon-
dents were shown a list with the names of the mayor, the president of the
common council, the school superintendent, the head of the city welfare
department, the chief administrator of the city housing authority, and
the head of the Model Cities agency. They were then asked what job each
person held. Except for the case of the Model Cities director, where
only one person in the entire sample was able to identify him correctly,
contacters of both races invariably identified the names with greater
accuracy than the noncontacters. Black contacters were more aware than
the white contacters of the identity of the heads of welfare and housing,
while whites were more accurate in placing the president of the common
council. Black competence here may probably be explained by the racial
makeup of the clientele of the two bureaucratic agencies. The obscurity
of the president of the common council for black citizens (over half the

total white sample placed him correctly while only 6 percent of the

black sample could do so) is less easily explained. The fact that

the man represents a white ethnic constituency and is not outspoken

on racial matters undoubtedly are contributing factors.

Contacters, then, comprise a significant portion of the city's

politically active stratum. Contact is a part of the entire syndrome

of political activity. As such it is possible to argue that the con-

tact experience and participation in other forms of activity interact

to influence, lead into, or reinforce one another. The public offi-

cial is not dealing in most cases with an isolated individual when

he responds to an individually generated contact. Rather he has come

into contact with a citizen who demonstrates a willingness to partici-

pate in group forms of political activity and who exhibits an aware-

ness of government that signifies the potential to make more contacts.

Conclusions

Individually initiated citizen contact with public officials may

best be understood as an aspect of the relationship inherent in the

structure of political representation. In her book The Concept of

Representation (1967:209) Hanna Pitkin writes that representing "means

acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner reponsive to

them." A citizen contact, understood in the context of this defini-

tion, is a demand on the part of the represented for consideration of

some interest in which he has a perceived stake. Contact is made

necessary in cases in which political society has delegated to govern-

ment the authority to regulate, protect, or advance certain interests.

When the individual citizen is unable to further or protect his
interests by his solitary private initiatives, he calls upon those
who have the publicly accorded power and resources to do so. Some
interests concern the welfare of the individual citizen which he can-
not promote or protect by his own efforts. When a landlord refuses
to make repairs required by building safety codes or when a draft
board is unsympathetic about a special need to avoid military ser-
vice, the only means a citizen has for redress is to appeal to those
who represent his interests. Other interests are of a collective
nature. Individuals identify in varying degrees with a variety of
social collectivities, ranging on occasion from a racial group to a
neighborhood to the nation-state. For each of these collectivities
the individual identifies what he conceives to be certain interests
and preferred states of being. In many cases the disposition of the
interests of these various groups are dependent upon government behav-
ior. Frequently the citizen delegates the task of protecting these
interests before the councils of government implicitly or explicitly
to group spokesmen, but at other times he seeks to foster what he
conceives his group interests to be by his own initiative. Such action
may occur, of course, in conjunction with attempts by his group spokes-
man to pursue the same ends. Thus the citizen may petition the presi-
dent for an end to the war at the same time that spokesmen for an org-
anization to which he belongs are doing so. In short, individually
initiated citizen contact is one means of activating the representation
relationship between the individual and those to whom he, as a member of
political society, has granted authority to act in regard to interests
which the citizen cannot foster by his own devices.

This study of citizen contacts provides some data on who takes advantage of this opportunity for representation and suggest at the same time some elaboration of a theory of representation. On the first point the most outstanding pattern revealed by the data is the differential rate at which blacks and whites initiate individual contacts with public officials.

Not only are whites much more likely to make contact, but they are also more likely to do so in a sustained fashion. Many among the one-third of the white sample who had made contact did so several times, while blacks were largely one-time contacters. To the extent that visibility in the public official's eye is a function of frequent contact, whites, in their capacity as individual private citizens, are more visible than blacks. Other factors, to be sure, contribute to visibility: the severity of the problems people face and the extent to which these impose costs on the society are two related factors. Blacks in the city suffer more severely than do whites in matters affecting life style and opportunities, and this deprivation does much to gain public attention. In addition, there exist a number of organizations to protect racially defined interests, and these have few acceptable or strong counterparts in the white community. Blacks as a group, then, are not without visibility. Yet black private citizens are comparatively silent about their individual or collective condition. What direct communication is done with public officials is apparently left to organization spokesmen. In contrast, white individuals are vocal: in sheer volume white demands for attention through the device of citizen contact literally drown out those of individual blacks.

For both races there are moderate positive relationships between the tendency to initiate contact and education, occupation, and conventional political activism. Politically, contacters constitute a segment of the population with considerable resources, experience, and willingness to participate actively.

The data on education suggested (but did not necessarily demonstrate) some degree of independent effect of race on propensity to initiate contact. To the extent that blacks do not contact public officials because they are black, the explanation lies in a host of factors. These would certainly include the fear of being rebuffed or refused a hearing because of racial prejudice, the lack of black public officials to whom one might appeal, and the sense that appeals are futile.

To summarize, those who use individual contacts as a means of activating the representational relationship are likely to be middle class whites who are active in politics. Contacters represent a favored segment of society, both in socioeconomic and racial terms, and it is their concerns and their versions of problems to which public officials are exposed through this means of communication.

One conclusion that may be drawn relative to a theory of representation is that only an unrepresentative few take advantage of the opportunities for representation through the device of citizen contact. Yet the data provided here take us beyond this observation to more fertile areas. In a recent article on the political representation function of city councils, Kenneth Prewitt and Heinz Eulau (1969:427) speak of "the unresolved tension between the two main currents of contemporary thinking about representational relationships."

> On the one hand, representation is treated as a relationship
> between any one individual, the represented, and another indi-
> vidual, the representative--an _inter-individual_ relationship.
> On the other hand, representatives are treated as a group,
> brought together in the assembly, to represent the interest of
> the community as a whole--an _inter-group_ relationship.

While Prewitt and Eulau do not entirely reject the inter-individual

formulation, they embrace the notion of representation as an inter-group

phenomenon as the more crucial to an empirical theory of representation.

Representation in this sense is understood as a system property: thus,

they write (428), "representation as well as other variables we consider

are group rather than individual properties; thus we make statements

about governing bodies and not individual public officials." The inter-

group relationship is one in which the governing group responds to or

represents politically organized viewpoints among the citizenry (430).

As we have seen, however, individual contacts are also demands for repre-

sentation and the contacters themselves are not necessarily organized.

What an analysis of individual citizen contacts, understood as

demands for representation, suggests is that the tension between these

views of the representational relationship is resolvable and that both

views are important to an understanding of representation. The pattern

of contacts studied here indicates that citizens call upon different

public figures at different levels of government to perform different

sorts of representational tasks. There is, in other words, an implicit

division of the labor of representation, and this division may be under-

stood in part in terms of the individual-collective formulations.

To understand how this is the case, it must be made clear first

that all of the public officials dealt with in this study as targets

of contact have a representative function. The Prewitt-Eulau conception

of representation focuses narrowly on city councilmen as Edward Mueller
(1970:1150) points out, "legislative bodies are not the only loci of
representational linkages in political systems." The presidency--and
by extension, other chief executives--and the bureaucracies at all
levels also perform representative functions in the sense that Pitkin
defines representation.

That there exists a division of labor simply in terms of whom
private individuals contact among representatives is clear from a re-
view of the data. People tend to contact elected officials rather
than bureucrats. Among elected officials, they generally call upon
legislators rather than executives at each level of government. In-
sofar as _individual_ citizens demand representation, they do so mainly
through legislative representatives. Executives and bureaucrats per-
form representative functions, but their representational relationship,
we may infer, is largely with group spokesmen. Bureaucracies must
respond to organized clientele groups, and chief executives must deal
with a variety of interest collectivities as well as attempt to repre-
sent some conception of the public interest.

Not only do individuals tend to contact certain types of public
officials more frequently than others, but they also make different
kinds of contacts according to their target. Opinion contacts are
directed largely at national and state government officials, while re-
quest contacts dominate the communications to city officials. The role
of private citizens is to contribute some measure of support or opposi-
tion for representatives at the two superior levels of government, while
at the local level it is more to initiate opportunities for representa-
tion.

Finally the data showed that people making contact on behalf of individual or group referents communicate primarily with local officials, while those concerned with community referents call upon national officials.

Individual contacts with public officials are inter-individual demands for representation of certain interests as defined or conceived by private citizens. Some of the interests on whose behalf citizens make contact are group or public interests, but the essence of the representational relationship is still the link between the individual and his target, not between the collective represented and the representative body. The notion of individual contact makes clear that the inter-individual component of the representational relationship as well as that component in which representative bodies respond to organized demands are both operative in any structure providing for political representation. Some officials at certain levels are called upon more frequently than others to perform the task of inter-individual representation, while others represent primarily public or organized group interests. By understanding this division of labor of the representation tasks, the tension between the two views of representation is largely resolved. Representation is a complex job, requiring responsiveness to both group and individually generated conceptions of critical interests. Different officials are asked to pay heed to interests defined by these different sources within the public.

The notion of a division of labor appears more important for whites than for blacks. The implication is that to the extent the interests of latter are represented, it is mainly through organized group spokesmen.

The existence of individually forged avenues for representation points

to a means of gaining attention which blacks appear to have left largely

unexploited.

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