Telling Stories in the Supreme Court: Voices Briefs and the Role of Democracy in Constitutional Deliberation

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Telling Stories in the Supreme Court: Voices Briefs and the Role of Democracy in Constitutional Deliberation

Linda H. Edwards†

ABSTRACT: On January 4, 2016, over 100 women lawyers, law professors, and former judges told the world that they had had an abortion. In a daring amicus brief filed in Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt, the women spoke publicly about one of the most private decisions a woman can make. Their participation in this brief, which captured national media attention, marked their “coming out” to their clients and to all of their former, present, and future supervisors and colleagues; to the judges for whom they have clerked; and to the Justices of the Supreme Court.

The past three years have seen an explosion of such “voices briefs.” Sixteen were filed in Obergefell v. Hodges alone and seventeen were filed in Whole Woman’s Health. These briefs can be powerful, but their use is controversial. They tell the stories of non-parties—strangers to the appellate case—with no vetting by cross examination or the rules of evidence. Yet, despite their unconventional nature, they have thus far received little academic attention.

The time has come to ask some tough questions: Are these briefs legally permissible? Theoretically legitimate? How do they compare with other sources consulted regularly by the Court, including factual internet research performed by judges themselves and experiments orchestrated in chambers? Are they really so different from the policy arguments we have accepted without blinking for over a hundred years?

These foundational questions quickly take us into even murkier waters—legal and constitutional theory; narrative theory; framing; and cognitive science.

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Voices briefs prompt us to look at constitutional decision making in a new way. Soon we find that voices briefs are interrogating long-accepted assumptions rather than the other way around. The analysis produces some surprising reasons why voices briefs can play an important role in constitutional interpretation and some realistic ideas about handling the undeniable concerns that still haunt their use.

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INTRODUCTION

On January 4, 2016, more than 100 women lawyers, law students, law professors, and former judges filed an amicus brief in Whole Woman’s Health v.
Hellerstedt. The brief received immediate national attention. In it, these women told the world, perhaps for the first time, that they had had an abortion.

The women spoke publicly about one of the most private decisions a woman can make. The brief marks their “coming out” to their clients; to all of their former, present, and future supervisors and colleagues; and to the judges before whom they will appear or for whom they have clerked. But the brief is more than a disclosure to the wide world. These women are speaking directly and personally from inside the Justices’ own rhetorical circle. As one of the brief’s authors explained: “It’s the Justices’ community—it’s their colleagues and people who have argued before them and former law school classmates and co-clerks.” The Justices would recognize many of the names in the brief’s ten-page list of signatories.

The brief shares the women’s stories. A woman who has argued multiple cases before the Court described two medically dangerous pregnancies, telling the Court that its decisions protecting her right to choose had been indispensable to her life, both as an attorney and as a wife and mother. A former clerk for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals described her situation at age twenty-two, when she was studying to apply to law school and found herself pregnant after a contraceptive failure. She was single and waiting tables for a living. A litigation partner at a large law firm explained that her abortion as a teenager had given her “the ability to be the first person in my family to graduate from high school, the first person to graduate from college, and the first person to achieve a post-graduate degree.” A law professor described being seventeen years old, pregnant, and desperate. At that young age, she kept coming back to only two options: self-abortion by clothes-hanger or suicide. The overarching theme of all these stories


4. Brief of MacAvoy et al., supra note 1, at 32.

5. Id. at 15-17.

6. Id. at 10-11.

7. Id. at 23.
is that without reproductive choice, women—these women—could not have participated fully in the same professional community in which the Justices have lived and thrived.  

Though among the bravest, this brief was not the first "voices brief" relating stories of individuals who were strangers to the appellate case. The first such brief was filed in 1986, but until recently, they were rare. Times have changed, however. *Obergefell v. Hodges* brought an explosion of amicus filers telling their own stories. A total of sixteen voices briefs were filed in that case alone. And the phenomenon continues. After the dust settled in *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*, seventeen briefs had related stories of non-parties. On deeply personal constitutional issues such as marriage equality and reproductive rights, voices briefs are now de rigueur.

These briefs can be powerful, even heart-wrenching, but their use has so far received little academic attention. The time has come to take them seriously, and that means asking some tough questions: Are they legally permissible? Theoretically legitimate? How do they compare with other sources consulted by appellate courts, including internet explorations performed by judges at their own computers? Are voices briefs really so different from the policy arguments we have accepted without blinking for over a hundred years? These foundational questions quickly take us into even deeper waters—legal theory, traditional forms of legal reasoning, narrative theory, framing, and cognitive science.

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8. One sentence sums up the brief’s message: “To the world, I am an attorney who had an abortion, and, to myself, I am an attorney because I had an abortion.” Id. at 3.


11. Only four voices briefs had been filed over a span of twenty-five years. Then four more were filed in just the two years of 2011 and 2012, perhaps signaling a tipping point. These four briefs included three in *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius*, 567 U.S. 519 (2012), and another in *United States v. Windsor*, 133 S. Ct. 2675 (2013). See Appendix.


13. See Appendix.


15. See Appendix.

16. Ruth Petchesky pointed out and praised the original voices brief. Petchesky, supra note 9. A few other articles have referred to these briefs while making other interesting points. See e.g., Ruth Colker, Feminist Litigation: An Oxymoron?—A Study of the Briefs Filed in William L. Webster v. Reproductive Health Services, 13 HARV. WOMEN’S L.J. 137 (1990) (analyzing the arguments in Webster from a feminist perspective); Nancy Levin, supra note 9, at 22-23, 33 (pointing out the need for litigators to develop narratives with which courts and wider audiences can personally identify). None has yet analyzed the legitimacy of the phenomenon itself.

17. Policy arguments based on social science have been accepted forms of argument since the iconic "Brandeis Brief" filed in *Muller v. Oregon*, 208 U.S. 412 (1908). See discussion infra Part II.
Voices briefs prompt us to look at constitutional deliberation in a new way. Soon we find that voices briefs are interrogating long-accepted assumptions rather than the other way around.

This Article argues that voices briefs continue a legitimate tradition of citizen input on issues before the Court. This is not to say that constitutional decisions should be made either by polling citizens or by emotional reactions to tearful stories. Far from it. But neither should they be made in a hermetically sealed environment—a sterile setting uncontaminated by input from the very citizens whose lives will be profoundly shaped by the Court’s decisions. There is little to lose and much to gain by allowing amicus filers to share their stories.

Parts I through III of this Article set these questions in their relevant context. Part I examines how voices briefs have been used. It questions whether they are as radically new, at least in function, as they first appear. Continuing that question, Parts II and III explore the Court’s surprisingly unfettered use of non-record material, arguing that voices briefs differ little from these non-record sources long and freely used by the Court.

Having established the relevant context, the Article then places voices briefs within it. Part IV examines the cognitive and behavioral science of how voices briefs seek to persuade. The science shows that, far from introducing bias to a neutral process, voices briefs may be the only way to counter the preexisting values bias that accompanies human deliberation. In fact, stories may encourage a values-committed decision maker to rely more, not less, on traditional merits reasoning.

Further, as Part V argues, it is not only the parties who will learn whether they can marry the person they love or whether they will have control over their own bodies. Voices briefs provide nonparties a crucial right to be heard on deeply personal questions that will decide their own futures. And irrespective of outcome, voices briefs can encourage the Court to write opinions that respect and value all sides of an issue, thus modeling better public discourse in today’s polarized public square.

Voices briefs may serve all of these important practical functions, but do they run afoul of commonly accepted legal theories or principles of constitutional interpretation? Part VI argues that they do not. But that is not to say that voices briefs prompt no misgivings. Part VII recognizes some understandable concerns and proposes normative practices to improve the briefs’ reliability and utility.

I. VOICES BRIEFS

Amicus briefing has long been an accepted practice in the Supreme Court, but in the modern era, amicus filings have increased dramatically. One scholar

18. For the history and current practice of amicus filings in the Supreme Court, see generally Helen A. Anderson, Frenemies of the Court: The Many Faces of Amicus Curiae, 49 U. RICH. L. REV. 361 (2014-
documented an astounding 800% increase in a span of fifty years. The record in United States v. Windsor\(^\text{20}\) included seventy-nine amicus briefs.\(^\text{21}\) Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt\(^\text{22}\) saw 86 amicus briefs.\(^\text{23}\) In perhaps the apex to date, Obergefell v. Hodges\(^\text{24}\) produced 144 amicus briefs.\(^\text{25}\) The vibrancy of this amicus practice reflects an increased desire for connection between the Court and those it governs. Voices briefs—a new form of amicus advocacy—may be among the most telling signs of these democratic pressures. It is time for a closer look at these voices briefs.

\textbf{A. What Are Voices Briefs?}

Voices briefs relate stories drawn from the lives of individuals who are strangers to the case. These stories appear for the first time on appeal, sidestepping trial court evidentiary standards. They introduce the Court to some of the individuals who have lived the issues firsthand. For example, the first voices brief, filed in Thornburgh v. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists,\(^\text{26}\) explained the stories and introduced the speakers:

As part of this action, people wrote letters describing why they or people they knew chose to have abortions. The letters came from people from all walks of life. Many writers described themselves in their letters:

\begin{quote}
I am a Christian. I have a college degree and am a registered nurse. I am a 32 year old Black female. I am a Baptist by faith . . . .
I was a nice Irish Catholic girl dating a nice Irish boy from Queens. I was born in Puerto Rico, and I grew up and went to school there . . . .
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item 19. Kearney & Merrill, supra note 18, at 752 (noting that the filing of Supreme Court amicus briefs has increased by 800% over fifty years).
\item 22. 135 S. Ct. 2594 (2015).
\item 24. 476 U.S. 747 (1986).
\end{itemize}
I have been married 38 years; I am the mother of 5 wanted and thoroughly loved children and grandmother of 3...27

On some issues, Justices’ need for this kind of introduction may be significant. Consider, for example, the widely reported conversation between Justice Powell and one of his clerks during the pendency of Bowers v. Hardwick, a case involving the constitutionality of a Georgia sodomy law criminalizing oral and anal sex in private between consenting adults.28 Justice Powell, the crucial and vacillating swing vote in the case, sought out one of his law clerks to discuss the case.29 He told the clerk that he did not think he had ever met a homosexual.30 Powell “was struggling to understand a phenomenon totally alien to him.”31 He asked why gay men did not date and marry women.32 When the clerk explained that many gay men could not achieve an erection during intimate contact with a woman, Powell was confused because sodomy requires an erection.33 The clerk had to explain that gay men do achieve erections during sexual contact with men.34 Describing the conversation, the clerk recalls, “What struck me... is that the concept of homosexuality had no content for him. He had no frame of reference.”35

The irony, of course, was that the law clerk to whom Justice Powell was speaking was a gay man.36 In fact, Justice Powell had hired many gay clerks in the past.37 But because most gay men were closeted, Powell had little way to understand homosexuality on a human level.38 Ultimately, Powell provided the fifth vote for the opinion that refused to recognize a right to privacy for intimate sexual contact occurring at home between consenting adults.39

32. Id.
33. Id. at 274.
34. Id.
35. Id.
36. Id. at 272.
37. Id. at 272, 275.
38. JEFFRIES, supra note 29, at 521. Subsequently, Justice Powell regretted his decision to be the majority’s fifth vote. When asked about the Bowers v. Hardwick decision four years later, he said, “I think I probably made a mistake in that one.” Id. at 530. Had Justice Powell made a different choice, the right to privacy in intimate relationships would have been established in 1986, seventeen years before Lawrence v. Texas, 539 U.S. 558 (2003).
That kind of well-intentioned naiveté can limit the worldview of good people like Justice Powell, for it is a common human characteristic to associate primarily with and listen primarily to those we perceive to be like us. That cultural tendency increasingly operates in today’s polarized public debates.40 Recently, for example, Linda Greenhouse reported a conversation with the late Justice Scalia in which he said that he got his news from the car radio and from skimming two conservative newspapers. He said that he had stopped reading the Washington Post because it had become too liberal.41 The point here is not to criticize either Justice Powell or Justice Scalia. In this age of MSNBC and Fox News, people who lean left and people who lean right are perhaps equally inclined to listen primarily to those with whom they already agree.

Even if the Justices routinely associate with a diverse set of individuals and groups, they cannot fully understand the impact of the issues before them without either personal experience or exposure to the perspectives of those with personal experience. For example, one of the stories set out in the Thornburgh NARAL brief explained a part of the pro-choice perspective that likely would be outside the experience of at least eight42 of the Thornburgh Justices:

Women are fertile from, approximately, the age of 15 to 45. Most women will spend the majority of these 30 years trying not to get pregnant. But no contraceptives are one hundred percent safe and effective and they often fail despite conscientious use:

I was a married woman using the birth control methods available at the time; a diaphragm and a spermicide jelly. My first child was planned and I was very happy. Slightly more than two years later I had another planned child. Then I found myself pregnant with a child that would be only 17 months younger than the second child. I had used my birth control methods assiduously but to no avail. I accepted the fact of that child and loved it. Then I got pregnant again. This one would be only 13 months younger than the third child. I was faced with the unpleasant fact that I could not stop the babies from coming no matter what I did . . . . [The abortion] was a tremendous relief and I have never regretted it. My husband then had a vasectomy . . . . You cannot possibly know what it is like to be the helpless pawn of nature. I am a 71 year old widow.43

42. At the time of the Thornburgh opinion, eight of the Justices were men: Chief Justice Burger and Justices Brennan, White, Marshall, Blackmun, Powell, Rehnquist, and Stevens. See Thornburgh v. American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists, 476 U.S. 747 (1986).
43. NARAL Brief, supra note 27, at 19 (citations omitted).
When Justices understand the experience of some groups but not others, the ideal of equal treatment before the Court may be in jeopardy. Voices briefs help to fill the inevitable gap between a Justice’s personal experience and the realities of other lives and other perspectives.

B. Recent Examples

The stories in voices briefs come from a variety of sources, including testimony before legislative or other regulatory bodies, news coverage, op-eds, books, interviews, studies, affidavits, emails, and letters collected by organizations. Several examples taken from opposing briefs in Obergefell demonstrate the strategy. The Obergefell brief filed by PFLAG in support of marriage equality includes eight first-person stories, each told at some length and most including a picture. For example, the story of Tom and Jan Harry, parents of a lesbian daughter, is told as a conversation, part of which is set out here:

Tom: I was born and raised in Ohio. Jan and I married in 1971.... We are both pastors in the United Methodist Church....

Jan: We have two children, our daughter Sonya and our son Chris.... Growing up, Sonya always dreamt of getting married and having two kids....

Tom: Sonya came out to us an adult....

Jan: What I mainly recall about her coming out is my fear for [her].... But.... by 2002, she was in a committed relationship with Alison, and they wanted to affirm their commitment in a ceremony before family and friends. So we put up two big tents in our yard....

[The following picture appears at this point in the brief.]

44. No court rule requires that each individual file a formal consent for a brief’s inclusion of her story. However, most of the individuals have already shared their stories in other public fora, such as in legislative and agency processes, books, interviews with a journalist, and court documents. Organizational collection projects and social science studies customarily explain the purpose of the collection request. To date, there is no indication that any private story has been shared without informal consent.


46. Id.
Sonya and Alison are now parents of two boys, fulfilling Sonya’s childhood dream of being a mom. We are fortunate to live just three blocks away from our grandchildren. Having witnessed their journey as parents, we can say, without hesitation, that Sonya and Alison are conscientious and nurturing parents.

Jan: We are heartened to see growing acceptance of same-sex couples in our community. But Ohio’s laws still fail to recognize Sonya and Alison as a married couple. . . . Not only Sonya and Alison, but our grandchildren deserve better than that. . . . Our grandchildren deserve to know that their family is worthy of the same respect as other families.47

On the other side of the issue, the Obergefell brief filed by Same-Sex Attracted Men and Their Wives includes first-person stories offered to argue that “man-woman definitions of marriage” do not foreclose the institution of marriage to gay men and lesbians.48 Portions of these stories are interspersed throughout the brief. For example, we meet Danny Caldwell:

When Danny Caldwell reached puberty, he realized “that I had something a little bit different that I didn’t think the other kids had to deal with.” As a young adult, Danny “started looking a lot on the Internet for help with this, and all I could find were things saying you just need to

47. Id. at 5-9. The use of such stories has been a subject of dispute even within the LGBTQ community. See, e.g., Charlton C. Copeland, Creation Stories: Stanley Hauerwas, Same-Sex Marriage, and Narrative in Law and Theology, 75 L. & CONTEMP. PROBS 87, 105-13 (2012).
accept... who you are... Deep down I knew that wasn't going to make me happy. What I really wanted was a wife and kids...

Danny wrote a letter to his mom, explaining his feelings. "She helped me realize what I really did want and that I wasn't going to be happy settling for something less..." Not long after, he met his wife Erin. Eight years, and two boys, later, Danny reflects: "I can't imagine what life would be like without Erin and without my boys. Some people would probably say, 'You're not happy; you're just suppressing things.' They can think what they want but... I wouldn't want it any other way."49

Some Justices might routinely hear the perspectives shared in one of these briefs but not those shared in the other. If so, and if the Court is considering issues that will deeply affect the lives of these citizens and others like them, we would do well to assist the Court in understanding what is at stake.50

C. Kinds of Cases

To date, voices briefs have been used almost entirely in abortion rights and marriage equality cases.51 These cases share two important, overlapping characteristics: (1) the outcome will have a direct personal impact on the intimate lives of those affected; and (2) the storytellers’ experience is likely outside the Justices’ experience. Abortion rights and marriage equality cases share the first characteristic because they challenge a woman's control over her own body52 or affect the deepest and most intimate of human relationships. The briefs filed in these cases also offer perspectives far outside the personal experiences of many judges—the perspectives of those who needed or who now regret an abortion or those with personal experience with committed same-sex relationships.

A search of Supreme Court cases since Thornburgh has revealed only three cases outside the abortion or marriage equality context in which voices briefs were filed. In two of those cases, abortion and contraception nonetheless figured

49. Id. at 7, 10-11.
50. As Judge Posner has observed, "[A]ppellate lawyers would be more effective if... [they] emphasized the practical stakes in the case and thus the consequences of the decision." Richard A. Posner, The Role of the Judge in the Twenty-First Century, 86 B.U. L. Rev. 1049, 1067 (2006).
51. See Appendix.
52. This characterization of abortion cases is described from the perspective of those seeking reproductive freedom. I cannot attempt to characterize the deeper levels of the pro-life perspective. Some pro-life advocates clearly speak from their experience of regretting their own abortions or from the experience of having had children and now imagining aborting those children. Some may speak from their experience of the pain of not being able to have children. These perspectives are directly related to the advocate's own body. But some pro-life advocates without those personal experiences speak from other perspectives—moral or religious beliefs or perhaps even a desire, conscious or not, to maintain power and protect a gendered hierarchy. At least from a pro-choice perspective, all abortion motivations relate either to the desire to protect choice over one’s own body or the desire to exert control over someone else's body.
prominently. Only one case with a voices brief was completely unrelated to abortion or marriage equality.

Voices briefs have not been filed routinely because they would have little or nothing to offer in many cases. For instance, in Obergefell’s term, the Court also held that Medicaid providers do not have a cause of action to challenge a state’s reimbursement rates and that a bankruptcy court’s order denying confirmation of a proposed repayment plan with leave to amend is not a final order enabling immediate appeal. Voices briefs would serve no purpose in cases such as those. However, while voices briefs have been used primarily in two kinds of cases, they may soon be making appearances in others as well. For example, many judges have little understanding of the realities of the lives of capital defendants and convicted felons. Voices briefs also may prove useful for immigration issues, police shootings, or other issues of race, class, or power disparity. It is likely that creative advocates will continue to explore the use of nonparty stories to help the Court understand the experience of those unlike themselves.

Since the use of voices briefs is likely to continue or even increase, we may well wonder whether and to what degree voices briefs influence judicial outcomes. The next section tackles that question.


D. Assessing Influence

The influence of any form of amicus briefing is a subject of robust debate. In another form of opinion gathering, several studies have assessed amicus influence on the basis of interviews with judges, lawyers, and law clerks. One scholar has argued that the Court’s policy of allowing nearly unlimited leave to file is itself an indication that the Court finds amicus briefs useful. Another study compared “matched cases” in which

one case included no amicus support while the other case had amicus support for only one side. Other studies have counted and analyzed cases in which the Court has cited to amicus briefs or counted the number of amicus briefs filed for each side (and by whom) and compared outcomes. A recent study used plagiarism detection software to identify cases in which the Court used language likely taken from an amicus brief.

These comments and studies are valuable, providing important information about today's amicus practice, but all of them are subject to one or more methodological limitations. An unsupported opinion, even that of a well-known judge, is, in the final analysis, one person's view. Compiling interview responses from judges, lawyers, and clerks uses a larger sample size but still suffers from the subjectivity of opinion-gathering. The Court's liberal filing policy was more likely adopted because of the Court's workload rather than in spite of it, for it would take far longer to go through a serious process of pre-filing assessment than it currently takes a law clerk to sort through a stack of filed amicus briefs to making process. If they did not view amicus briefs as useful tools... the Court would likely deny permission to file...” Id.

62. Songer & Sheehan, supra note 58. Songer and Sheehan paired cases that (1) were decided in the same term; (2) involved parties of the same status; and (3) involved the same subject matter categories. They found no evidence of amicus influence. Id. at 341-45.

63. Kearney and Merrill compared outcomes with disparities in amicus support. Their study, by far the largest to date, analyzed a database of 6,141 cases spanning nearly fifty years, categorized them by whether the decision below was set aside, and compared those results to the number of amicus briefs filed in support of each party. The study also tracked amicus filings by the Solicitor General, the American Civil Liberties Union, The AFL-CIO, and the States. The study concluded, in part, that amicus briefs overall do appear to affect Supreme Court success rates. See Kearney & Merrill, supra note 18, at 750, 787-801.

64. See e.g., Sarah F. Corbally, Donald C. Bross & Victor E. Flango, Filing of Amicus Curiae Briefs in State Courts of Last Resort: 1960-2000, 25 JUST. SYS. J. 39, 53 (2004) (counting citations by state courts of last resort to amicus briefs as an "indirect indicator of the influence of amicus briefs" and finding that amicus briefs were cited in about a third of the relevant state court cases); Larsen, supra note 18, at 1777-79 (finding 606 citations to amicus briefs from 2008 to 2013, 124 of which were cited for assertions of legislative fact, and concluding that "Justices treat amici as experts, not as a research tool"). Some scholars have analyzed the Court's opinions in specific cases or a specific line of cases. See e.g., Matthew L.M. Fletcher, The Utility of Amicus Briefs in the Supreme Court's Indian Cases, 2 AM. INDIAN L.J. 38 (2013); Dan Schweitzer, Fundamentals of Preparing a United States Supreme Court Amicus Brief, 51 APP. PRAC. & PROCESS 523 (2003) (pointing to the oral argument in Grutter v. Bollinger, in which questioning expressly referred to the amicus brief filed by L. Gen. Julius W. Becton, Jr., et al., which later became known as the "military brief"); Sylvia H. Walbott & Joseph H. Lang, Jr., Amicus Briefs Revisited, 33 STETSON L. REV. 171 (2003) (analyzing the Grutter military amicus brief).

65. See, e.g., Collins, supra note 38 (comparing the number of amicus briefs with results in the cases); Kearney & Merrill, supra note 18, at 769-71 (citing Steven Puro, The Role of Amicus Curiae in the United States Supreme Court: 1920-1966, (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo) (on file with the University of Pennsylvania Law Review)); id. at 788.

decide which warrant further attention. Matching cases based simply on pro-
cedural and subject matter similarities is surely a dicey undertaking, 67 and com-
paring outcomes to amicus filings fails to account for the content of opinions 68 and
may reflect the respective strength on the merits rather than the influence of the
amicus briefs.

Conclusions drawn from analyzing Supreme Court opinions are also inher-
ently limited. A judge does not write an opinion to tell us how he or she became
persuaded of the opinion’s outcome. The influences that account for that decision
happened before the opinion was written and largely in private. The purpose of
the opinion, rather, is to justify the decision in a public document. Thus, the opin-
ion will cite to sources the judge believes will be most persuasive to the opinion’s
readers. 69 The number of citations to amicus briefs likely tells us less about the
briefs’ influence than about the opinion-writer’s strategic persuasive choices. 70

Finally, “influence” is a much larger and more multifaceted concept than
studies have yet captured. A brief might influence whether a party wins or loses
or the scope of the decision rendered in the case. It might influence the legal path
the Court selects to justify that outcome, such as the selection of a particular
standard of review. Or it might influence a key policy argument on which the
Court relies or a particular assessment of the facts. It might even influence the
tone of respect or disrespect with which the opinion is written. 71 All of these
kinds of influences are both likely and important, but none is especially suscep-
tible to qualitative or quantitative analysis.

Comprehensively assessing amicus influence, then, is probably impossible,
and that is especially true for amicus voices briefs. It is possible only to speculate
by reading the tea leaves after an oral argument or reading between the lines in
an occasional opinion.

67. Kearney and Merrill observed that the Songer-Sheehan study “has potentially serious limita-
tions,” in part because the study’s matching methodology was “very crude,” for example, “all cases in-
volved ‘labor management disputes’ were regarded as presenting the ‘same issue,’ as were all cases in-
volving ‘judicial power.’” Kearney & Merrill, supra note 18, at 771 n.95.
68. Collins, Corley & Hamner, supra note 66, at 918 (noting that most studies “do not address the
content of the Court’s opinions, which is the most significant means by which the Court contributes to
legal and social policy”).
69. Left for another day is the question of whether and to what degree the Justices understand their
own analytical processes and the unconscious frames that influence their own decision making.
70. One study ventures beyond analysis of amicus influence to draw conclusions about models of
Supreme Court judging. Kearney & Merrill, supra note 18. The article identifies three possible models:
(1) the traditional legal model, which attributes a Justice’s decisions to his or her views of the authoritative
sources of law, such as governing text, precedent, and policy arguments; (2) the attitudinal model, which
would attribute a Justice’s decisions to his or her preexisting political beliefs; and (3) the interest group
model, which would attribute a Justice’s decisions to his or her desire to satisfy particular organized
groups. Id. at 774–87. The study concludes “cautiously” that its results “provided more support for the
legal model than for either the attitudinal or interest group models.” Id. at 750. Interestingly, the interest
group model is strikingly similar to the concept of “response involvement” identified by Elaboration Like-
lihood Model (ELM) theorists in which a decision maker is influenced by what others may think of the
decision. See infra note 183.
71. See infra notes 220–223 and accompanying text.
For example, we can infer possible influence of voices briefs in the abortion context. The first two voices briefs were filed in 1985 (on the pro-choice side in *Thornburgh*) and 1989 (on the pro-choice side in *Webster*). These voices briefs shared grim stories from hundreds of women who had sought illegal abortions out of desperation, or whose abortion had allowed them to escape appalling circumstances or enabled them to fulfill existing responsibilities to dependent family members. Then, in 1992, the Court took up *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*. One scholar has identified a key portion of Justice Kennedy’s *Casey* opinion, where we find echoes of the pro-choice voices briefs. Justice Kennedy wrote:

Her suffering is too intimate and personal for the State to insist, without more, upon its own vision of the woman’s role, however dominant that vision has been in the course of our history and our culture. The destiny of the woman must be shaped to a large extent on her own conception of her spiritual imperatives and her place in society.

Justice Kennedy’s understanding of women’s “intimate and personal suffering” may have come in part from the stories women had shared with the Court.

Then, following the filing of a pro-life voices brief with affidavits from women who later regretted their abortions, Justice Kennedy famously wrote in the 2007 *Carhart* opinion: “While we find no reliable data to measure the phenomenon, it seems unexceptionable to conclude some women come to regret their choice to abort the infant life they once created and sustained.” Again, we must wonder whether these comments were influenced by the voices briefs filed in *Thornburgh*, *Webster*, and *Carhart*.

At least one other Justice may have been influenced as well. Justice Ginsburg described the abortion issue as a matter of full citizenship, just as the *Thornburgh* NARAL brief had framed the issue:

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75. Voices briefs undoubtedly are intended primarily for Justices like Justice Kennedy—those perceived to be swing voters on the issue. Confirmed pro-life or pro-choice Justices are unlikely to re-think their votes after reading nonparty stories. They might, however, moderate the tone they adopt in writing either the opinion of the Court or their own concurring or dissenting opinions. *See infra* notes 220-223 and accompanying text.
79. Given Justice Ginsburg’s well-known commitment to reproductive rights, it is unlikely that the voices brief influenced her to change her opinion. Rather, we are here speaking of the kind of influence that affects the writing of the opinion. *See supra* text accompanying note 71.
80. *See supra* note 27 and accompanying text; *infra* notes 101, 227-235 and accompanying text.
As Casey comprehended, at stake in cases challenging abortion restrictions is a woman’s “control over her [own] destiny.” . . . Women, it is now acknowledged, have the talent, capacity, and right “to participate equally in the economic and social life of the Nation.” Their ability to realize their full potential, the Court recognized, is intimately connected to “their ability to control their reproductive lives.” Thus, legal challenges to undue restrictions on abortion procedures do not seek to vindicate some generalized notion of privacy; rather, they center on a woman’s autonomy to determine her life’s course, and thus to enjoy equal citizenship stature.  

As recently as Obergefell, we may have seen signs of influence. In Obergefell, nine voices briefs were filed in support of marriage equality. The briefs vividly recounted stories of the love, struggle, and suffering of committed same-sex couples and their children. As they told their stories, the couples explained why marriage is important to them, what it brings or would bring to their lives, to their relationships, and to their families. They wanted to marry for all the reasons that prompt any couple to want to marry. Those themes were eloquently reflected in the final paragraph of Justice Kennedy’s opinion:

No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they were. As some of the petitioners in these cases demonstrate, marriage embodies a love that may endure even past death. It would misunderstand these men and women to say they disrespect the idea of marriage. Their plea is that they do respect it, respect it so deeply that they seek to find its fulfillment for themselves. Their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization’s oldest institutions. They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right.

The paragraph’s text mentions only “the petitioners,” but it may not be too much of a reach to think that Justice Kennedy had others in mind as well.

Even Justice Scalia seemed to credit some of the Obergefell voices briefs, at least the seven filed in opposition to marriage equality. Those briefs had told stories in which same-sex relationships were said to have caused harm to children. In oral argument, when Solicitor General Verrilli was rebutting the States’ concern about the welfare of children, the following exchange occurred:

General Verrilli: All of the evidence so far shows you that there isn’t a problem, and . . . the States’ argument really is quite ironic in this respect that it’s going to deny marriage, the State --

Justice Scalia: That -- that’s quite a statement. All of the evidence shows there is no problem. . . .

General Verrilli: I -- I think all of the leading organizations that have filed briefs have said to you that there is a consensus in that, and --

Justice Scalia: Well, I think some of the -- some of the briefs contradicted that. 83

Of course, all this speculation is merely that—speculation. But such inferences may be the best we can do to assess influence. And even if we cannot evaluate their direct influence on any particular Justice, it is nonetheless important to preserve a place for voices briefs. As Part IV will explain, cognitive theory shows that stories may be the only way to counter the effects of unconscious preexisting schemas that inevitably influence human decision making. And as Part V will remind us, the ability to be heard is fundamental to effective government, especially when the affected citizen does not prevail.

E. Voices Briefs and Traditional Amicus Roles

Over the years, Supreme Court amicus filers have served multiple important roles, including these:

- Adding legal sources or traditional legal arguments not made by the parties;
- Supplementing the record with policy facts such as economic and social science studies;
- Raising policy matters and other possible implications of the Court’s decision;
- Providing the benefit of special expertise;
- Underscoring by their very participation the importance of the issues to be decided;
- Demonstrating the scope and variety of affected persons or entities;

• Representing marginalized groups that might not otherwise be heard;
• Taking a position on behalf of the public interest;
• Advocating on behalf of litigants in related cases; and
• Offering input from affected industries or enterprises.84

Voices briefs fulfill many of these traditional amicus roles. The *Obergefell* voices briefs listed in the Appendix provide examples. Some take positions on behalf of the nation’s common interest. For example, one set of stories argued for “a country where all gay men and lesbians are constitutionally guaranteed the right to marry and are able to access the same dignity, status, and responsibility” as other married couples.85 Another set used their stories to argue that constitutional protection for same-sex marriage would “inexorably result in additional violations of free speech rights,” and that the court should “reaffirm the importance of free debate and free inquiry in this democratic Republic.”86

The briefs added sources and arguments not made by the parties. For example, the brief on behalf of Same-Sex Attracted Men and Their Wives added the arguments that “man-woman marriage laws do not . . . exclude same-sex attracted men and women from the institution of man-woman marriage.”87 A brief in support of marriage equality added the long history of “a culture and language of animus against LGBT Americans.”88

The briefs raised policy arguments and possible implications of the Court’s decision. For example, one brief argued for the importance of biological parenting.89 Several briefs offered stories to show that children benefit from marriage equality and are harmed by its denial.90 Other voices briefs offered stories to

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show the opposite. They also demonstrated the scope and variety of affected persons or entities, including litigants in related cases. Others shared the stories of marginalized groups that might not otherwise be heard. For example, one brief offered the stories of individuals who had been subjected to sexual-orientation change therapies.

Finally, voices briefs can supplement the record with what are essentially social and policy facts. The stories play a role much like that played by the social science information in the historic "Brandeis Brief" or the Appellants' brief in Brown v. Board of Education. The policy role is the primary role of voices briefs, but the current role of social science information in the appellate process is both complex and controversial. Social science has played a recognized appellate role for over a century, but, even aside from possible jurisprudential objections, common beliefs about social science’s judicial role may be naïve. They may be based, in part, on inaccurate assumptions about the nature of the information offered in today’s briefs and relied upon by today’s Court. As Parts II and III will show, a closer look at current practice leads to the perhaps surprising conclusion that individual narratives may be more similar to today’s social science information than it would appear.

II. POLICY FACTS IN THE FORM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

The use of social science information on appeal rests, in part, on the sometimes misunderstood distinction between adjudicative (evidentiary) facts and legislative (policy) facts. Adjudicative facts are the case-specific facts about the events and the named parties. Adjudicative facts are determined at the trial court


92. Brief of Ninety-Two Plaintiffs in Marriage Cases in Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota and Texas as Amici Curiae in Support of Petitioners, Obergefell, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (Nos. 14-556, 14-562, 14-571, 14-574), 2015 WL 1022702; Brief for Kristin M. Perry et al., supra note 85.


94. See infra notes 104-110 and accompanying text.


96. For instance, the "balls and strikes" view of the judicial role at least purports to reject social and policy considerations of what the law should be rather than what it is. As Chief Justice Roberts famously declared, "It's my job to call balls and strikes and not to pitch or bat." John Roberts, My Job Is To Call Balls and Strikes and Not To Pitch or Bat, CNN, (Sept. 12, 2005), http://www.cnn.com/2005/POLITICS/09/12/roberts.statement/.
level, using the rules of evidence. Legislative facts, however, are facts that provide context for understanding the interpretive issues raised by the case.\textsuperscript{97} Legislative facts can and often are raised for the first time on appeal and are not subject to evidentiary rules. The distinction between legislative facts and adjudicative facts has long been accepted as part of traditional legal method.\textsuperscript{98} Legislative facts are used to establish social context, such as the harmful effects of racial segregation on educational achievement.\textsuperscript{99} Social science information is one of the most common sources for legislative (policy) facts, and the Court has often relied on social science to support its decisions.\textsuperscript{100}

Voices briefs offer non-party stories as legislative facts, not as adjudicative facts. The original voices brief filed in \textit{Thornburgh} explained how the stories related to record evidence:

While these letters do not constitute sworn testimony or record evidence, they do provide an invaluable source of information about the lives of women who choose to have an abortion. When abortion is examined in the context of women's lives, the constitutional foundations for a woman's right to decide "whether or not to terminate her pregnancy" become obvious. What also becomes clear is that this Court's decision in \textit{Roe v. Wade} is firmly rooted in our nation's most fundamental traditions of personal integrity and human dignity.\textsuperscript{101}

The stories shared in a voices brief are not social science, of course. At its best, social science presents empirically verified information compiled and analyzed by a researcher who is as close to neutral as possible. The best studies use double-blind processes and well-crafted instruments. They compile information from large data sets. They account for outliers and otherwise unreliable re-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{97} See generally Paul J. Kirman, \textit{Better Living Through Judicial Notice}, 36 LITIGATION 43 (2009). Judge Posner has identified a number of factual categories:
\begin{itemize}
\item [(O)]ften what is left out of a brief is background material . . . that would . . . reassure us that we understood the real-world setting of the case. Those are not "adjudicative facts," which if contested can reliably be established (it is believed) only by the adversary process of a trial . . . . Besides adjudicative facts, . . . there are . . . also "legislative facts," which are facts that bear on the design or interpretation of legal doctrines.
\end{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{101} NARAL Brief, supra note 27, at 5 (internal citations omitted).
\end{itemize}
sponses. They minimize inherent subjectivity. They use techniques such as multiple regression analyses to exclude other potentially causal relationships.\textsuperscript{102} Non-party stories offered in voices briefs do not use these methods.

But neither do many of the social science studies offered in Supreme Court briefs.\textsuperscript{103} The first social science brief was the celebrated "Brandeis Brief"\textsuperscript{104} filed in \textit{Muller v. Oregon}.\textsuperscript{105} The issue in \textit{Muller} was whether Oregon could constitutionally restrict working hours for women based on a state interest in protecting women's health.\textsuperscript{106} The Brandeis Brief's 101 pages consisted almost entirely of non-legal information, such as statements by doctors, academics, anonymous government employees, and co-workers relating observations of and opinions about the lives of women workers. Virtually all of the named sources were men telling stories about women they had known. The brief includes page after page of entries such as these:

\textit{Mr. B—, a foreman of a printing establishment:}

"Girls must sit at the 'case.' I never knew but one woman, and she a strong, vigorous Irishwoman, of unusual height, who could stand at the case like a man. Female compositors, as a rule, are sickly, suffering much from backache, headache, weak limbs, and general 'female weakness.'"\textsuperscript{107}

\textit{A male mule-spinner (a man who operated a spinning machine in a cotton mill), describing the women he worked beside:}

"I have noticed that the hard, slavish overwork is driving those girls into the saloons, after they leave the mills evenings ... good, respectable girls, but they come out so tired and so thirsty and so exhausted .... Wherever you go ... near the abodes of [overworked employees], you will always find the sign of the rum-shop."\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{102} Social scientists disagree about the degree to which social science should aspire only to the methods used by the physical and natural sciences rather than embracing the more interpretive methods of some researchers. Robert P. Burns, \textit{Social Science and the Ways of the Trial Court: Possibilities of Translation}, in \textit{Elizabeth Mertz, William K. Ford & Gregory Matossian, Translating the Social World for Law: Linguistic Tools for a New Legal Realism} 212 (2016). This Article does not take a position on those questions. Rather, the point is to show that these more interpretive methods have long and often been presented to the Court as part of constitutional argument.

\textsuperscript{103} See generally Michael Rustad & Thomas Koenig, \textit{The Supreme Court and Junk Social Science: Selective Distortion in Amicus Briefs}, 72 N.C. L. REV. 91 (1993); Larsen, \textit{supra} note 18.


\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Muller v. Oregon}, 208 U.S. 412 (1908).

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Id.} at 417.

\textsuperscript{107} Brief for Defendant in Error, \textit{supra} note 104, at 38.

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Id.} at 45.
An anonymous source quoted in a report from the Maine Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics:

“Many saleswomen are so worn out, when their week’s work is ended, that a good part of their Sundays is spent in bed, recuperating for the next week’s demands. And one by one girls drop out and die, often from sheer overwork. This I know from observation and personal acquaintance.”

Another anonymous speaker at a legislative session:

“The woman wage-earner, gentlemen, does not always live at the mill-gates; she is therefore obliged to make a half or three-quarters’ hour journey before she arrives; consequently she will leave home at half-past five in the morning, only to return at half-past eight or nine o’clock in the evening. Is that living? Under such circumstances can a woman truly care for her children and her home?”

Only two paragraphs quote a woman describing her own experience, her own health, her own family, or her own economic situation. The other 101 pages consist of quotations from anonymous speakers or from speakers whose expertise is absent or impossible to discern and whose reliability and neutrality are unknown. Nearly all the quoted sources are speaking entirely out of their own subjectivity. On the question of reliability, the “social science” information in the iconic Brandeis Brief cannot be considered more reliable than the non-party stories of today’s voices briefs.

While social science research has improved since 1908, the social science information in modern Supreme Court briefing does not hold itself to those improved standards. In fact, it often differs little from stories presented in voices briefs. The two social science amicus briefs filed in Citizens United are instructive. The first of two briefs for the Institute for Justice presented “empirical information” purporting to show that disclosure requirements chill political

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109. Id. at 30.
110. Id. at 51.
111. An exception is the Obergefell brief filed on behalf of the American Sociological Association (ASA), a professional organization of sociologists. The ASA publishes nine peer-reviewed journals and is bound by state-of-the-art standards of research methodology and objectivity. See Brief of Amicus Curiae American Sociological Association in Support of Petitioners at 1, Obergefell v. Hodges, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015) (Nos. 14-556, 14-562, 14-571, 14-574), 2015 WL 1048442. The ASA’s brief presents social science research that meets those standards and critiques the social science arguments made by other filers.
speech.\textsuperscript{112} The brief relied on a 2007 study by Dr. Dick Carpenter,\textsuperscript{113} who happens to serve as the amicus-filer’s very own “Director of Strategic Research.”\textsuperscript{114} Dr. Carpenter gathered individuals (we have no idea how) and questioned them about whether they feared retribution for their political speech. We do not know how the questioning was conducted or what instrument, if any, was used. Dr. Carpenter described the interviewees’ statements to show that they did indeed fear retribution. The results he reported from these interviews congenerously supported his organization’s legal arguments. As part of its social science presentation, the brief also provided what it called “anecdotal evidence” taken largely from newspaper articles relating the stories of third parties.\textsuperscript{115} These newspaper reports were offered to show that the fear of retribution is “real and reasonable.”\textsuperscript{116}

The first of two briefs filed by the Center for Competitive Politics provides another example of a brief that relies on newspaper stories as part of its social science analysis.\textsuperscript{117} The brief relates media coverage of stories of alleged retribution for political donations, presenting this media coverage as objective fact, not subjective narrative. Yet these stories differ little from stories told in voices briefs.

These examples raise the question of just how different voices briefs are from today’s social science briefs. Newspaper articles, op-eds, and statements made in focus groups are no more reliable when presented as social science than when presented as stories. Nor is it more reliable to hear someone’s story through the voice and perspective of a third party rather than directly from the person who lived that experience herself.\textsuperscript{118}

Further, for voices briefs offered to provide social context, reliability in the classic evidentiary sense may not be the most important question. The point of the stories in a voices brief is not to establish evidentiary facts but rather to share the experience and human perspective of the speaker.\textsuperscript{119} As one scholar has ob-


\textsuperscript{114} Id. at 8. See also Dick M. Carpenter Biography, INST. FOR JUST., http://ij.org/staff/dick-m-carpenter-ii-ph-d/.

\textsuperscript{115} Brief of the Institute for Justice, supra note 112, at 14.

\textsuperscript{116} Id. at 13.

\textsuperscript{117} Brief of Amicus Curiae Center for Competitive Politics in Support of Appellant, Citizens United, 558 U.S. 310 (No. 08-205), 2009 WL 132719.

\textsuperscript{118} In fact, in at least some legal settings, third-party reporters are excluded in favor of the speaker herself. The evidentiary rule of hearsay is based on the belief that, generally, first-person statements are more reliable than third-party descriptions of those statements. FED. R. EVID. 801.

\textsuperscript{119} This role is to be distinguished from the reporting of false or unsupported social science or evidentiary facts (“fake news”), such as President Trump’s original claim that he won the popular vote by a landslide, see Glenn Kessler, Trump’s Repeated Claim That He Won a ‘Landslide’ Victory, WASH. POST (Nov. 30, 2016), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2016/11/30/trumps-repeated-claim-that-he-won-a-landslide-victory/?utm_term=.7b9d0772017c, or that he would have won the popular vote had not millions of unauthorized immigrants voted illegally, see Michael D. Shear & Emmanu
served in another context: “Helpfulness cannot be reduced to ‘reliability’ understood in the ways in which Daubert at least seemed to imply. . . . There is no categorical reason why social scientific perspectives cannot contribute to the interpretive enterprise and the evaluative enterprise as well.”120 The same may be said of the personal stories related in a voices brief.

Voices briefs, then, may not be functionally different from commonly accepted social science briefs that rely on stories from focus groups, newspaper articles, legislative testimony, and third-party reports describing someone else’s experience. The point here is not to argue that the flaws in social science briefs render them unhelpful. It is instead to point out that voices briefs should be compared to an accurate understanding of modern amicus briefing, not a fantasy of social science briefing in a utopian world.

III. OTHER FORMS OF POLICY FACTS

New law students may imagine a pristine form of appellate deliberation in which judges rely solely on constitutional and statutory text, judicial precedent, and policy arguments in the form of reliable social science. But legal realists know that judges also rely on a limitless batch of other information, some presented in the briefs and some completely absent from the litigants’ arguments. A survey of judicial opinions shows the variety of such facts and their sources,121 many of which were not included in the litigants’ briefs but rather were the product of independent factual research by the Court.122 One scholar has noted, over a span of 15 years, more than 100 Supreme Court opinions that cite to one or multiple factual sources not found in the record or the briefs.123 Examples include:

- Google, Wikipedia, and other websites;124

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120. Burns, supra note 102, at 212 (referring to Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, 509 U.S. 579 (1993), which decided the standard for admitting expert testimony at trial).

121. This quest for facts may not be surprising, given the reality that the Court’s work is set in a relatively low-information environment. See Ryan Saltzman, Christopher J. Williams & Bryan T. Calvin, The Determinants of the Number of Amicus Briefs Filed Before the U.S. Supreme Court, 1953-2001, 32 Just. Sys. J. 293, 296, 298 (2011).

122. “It is a matter of common knowledge that courts occasionally consult sources not in evidence, ranging anywhere from dictionaries to medical treatises.” Johnson v. United States, 780 F.2d. 902, 910 (11th Cir. 1986).


124. See, e.g., Flava Works, Inc. v. Gunter, 689 F.3d 754, 757 (7th Cir. 2012) (citing a Wikipedia article about YouTube); United States v. Ford, 683 F.3d 761, 768 (7th Cir. 2012) (citing a Wikipedia article about DNA profiling); Prode v. Clarke, 675 F.3d 732, 734 (7th Cir. 2012) (citing a Wikipedia article about anal fissures). Citation to Google searches and Wikipedia has prompted considerable commentary. See, e.g., Daniel J. Baker, A Jester’s Promenade: Citations to Wikipedia in Law Reviews, 2002-
books, magazines, and pamphlets; 
articles in academic journals;
medical treatises;
a personal survey of violent video games;
Gallup Poll results (not cited in the resulting opinion);
historical sources;
updating an incomplete study by letters from the Court to state officials in three states;
newspapers; and
photographs from the web.


125. See infra notes 147-155 and accompanying text.
127. See, e.g., Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113, 129-62 (1973); see also supra note 159-160 and accompanying text.
128. Brown, 564 U.S. at 816-21 (Alito, J., concurring). Justice Alito wrote:

These games feature visual imagery and sounds that are strikingly realistic . . . In some of these games, the violence is astounding . . . The objective of one game is to rape a mother and her daughters; in another, the goal is to rape Native American women. There is a game in which players engage in “ethnic cleansing” and can choose to gun down African-Americans, Latinos, or Jews.

Id. at 816-819. Justice Alito’s opinion was peppered with citations to websites like slashgear.com and popularmechanics.com.

130. For example, Justice Thomas cited to fifty-seven extra-record sources to show that the Founders believed that parents had complete authority over their children’s development. Brown, 564 U.S. at 822-35 (Thomas, J., dissenting); see Larsen, supra note 123, at 1261-62.
132. Id.; Larsen, supra note 123, at 1271 (noting the Court’s citation to newspaper articles from local counties reporting sentences of juvenile offenders).
Judge Richard Posner has become the poster-child for extra-record research. In Rowe v. Gibson, for example, an inmate argued that prison officials were deliberately indifferent to his medical condition. The opinion prompted a kerfuffle among the panel itself and in public commentary. In Grayson v. Schuler, a case arguing for a prisoner’s right to wear his hair in dreadlocks, Judge Posner included a web photograph along with the comment, “Dreadlocks can attain a formidable length and density, as shown in this photograph of the late Jamaican musician Bob Marley (a Rastafarian).”

(finding a significant recent increase in citation of non-legal sources in judicial opinions); Jeremy Patrick, Beyond Case Reporters: Using Newspapers To Supplement the Legal-Historical Record (A Case Study of Blasphemies Liber), 3 DREXEL L. REV. 539, 539-40 (2011) (finding increased citation of non-legal sources); Frederick Schauer & Virginia Wise, Nonlegal Information and the Delegalization of Law, 29 J. LEGAL STUD. 495, 495 (2000) (same); William R. Wilkerson, The Emergence of Internet Citations in U.S. Supreme Court Opinions, 27 JUST. SYS. J. 323 (2006); see also Barger, supra note 124 (finding same phenomenon in the context of formal judicial notice).

134. Rowe v. Gibson, 798 F. 3d 622 (7th Cir. 2015).
135. Id. at 623-24, 626-27.
136. Id. at 635 (Rovner, J., concurring); id. at 635-36 (Hamilton, J., concurring in part and dissenting in part).
138. 666 F. 3d 430 (7th Cir. 2012).
139. Id. at 452.
Judge Posner has even argued for a variety of appellate fact investigation.\footnote{140} For instance, he recently used his staff to perform in-chambers experiments. \textit{Mitchell v. JCG Industries, Inc.} raised the question of whether time spent “donning and doffing” safety equipment entitled employees to overtime pay.\footnote{141} Apparently unsatisfied with the trial court record on how much time was at issue, Judge Posner purchased the safety equipment and videotaped his office staff as they proceeded to “don” and “doff.”\footnote{142} Based in significant part on his own in-chambers experiment, Judge Posner concluded that employers need not pay for time spent donning and doffing work-required clothing.\footnote{143}

If appellate courts can perform private in-chambers experiments directly pertaining to the evidentiary facts at issue—experiments unknown to the parties and therefore not subject to refutation or response—surely policy facts offered in publicly available briefs, which are subject to rebuttal by any party or other amicus filer, should constitute acceptable argument.\footnote{144}

Though some of Judge Posner’s independent factual research is, perhaps intentionally, more striking, such extra-record explorations are not new and are not limited to circuit courts.\footnote{145} Supreme Court Justices have long relied on extra-record factual research.\footnote{146} Here are just a few unremarkable examples:

- In \textit{Kumho Tire Co., Ltd. v. Carmichael}, Justice Breyer described steel-belted radial tires at some length, even including a drawing of tire construction.\footnote{147} He relied on this 1998 softback book still easily available for a popular market from Amazon Books.\footnote{148}

\footnote{140}{Judge Posner has criticized a norm against judicial research into the facts. \textit{Richard A. Posner, Reflections on Judging} 136-143 (2013).}
\footnote{141}{745 F.3d 837, 842 (7th Cir. 2014).}
\footnote{142}{Id. at 842.}
\footnote{143}{Id. at 845-46.}
\footnote{144}{For example, Fed. R. Evid. 201(e), the related rule on judicial notice, requires that parties be permitted the opportunity to be heard when the court is inclined to take judicial notice of a fact. Professor Barger has observed that taking judicial notice “without observing the niceties of due process [giving the other party notice and an opportunity to be heard] may constitute an abuse of discretion.” \textit{Barger, supra} note 124, at 68. \textit{See also Garcia, supra} note 78, at 347 (arguing that information provided in amicus briefs is preferable because it is visible).}
\footnote{145}{\textit{See, e.g., United States v. Bari, 599 F.3d 176, 180 (2d Cir. 2010):}}
\footnote{146}{Twenty years ago, to confirm an intuition about the variety of rain hats, a trial judge may have needed to travel to a local department store to survey the rain hats on offer. Rather than expend that time, he likely would have relied on his common sense to take judicial notice of the fact that not all rain hats are alike. Today, however, a judge need only take a few moments to confirm his intuition by conducting a basic Internet search.}
\footnote{147}{\textit{Id., quoted in Barger, supra} note 124, at 43.}
\footnote{148}{See generally Lanser, supra note 18.}
Chief Justice John Roberts relied on Matthew Levitt’s book on Hamas\textsuperscript{149} in the majority opinion in \textit{Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project}.\textsuperscript{150} Roberts quoted Levitt’s book as proof that “investigators have revealed how terrorist groups systematically conceal their activities behind charitable, social, and political fronts.”\textsuperscript{151}

In \textit{Safford Unified School District No. 1 v. Redding}, a case declaring unconstitutional the strip-search of a middle-schooler, Justice Thomas dissented.\textsuperscript{152} He relied on a magazine article titled \textit{Get Teens off Drugs}\textsuperscript{153} to justify “a search extending to any area where small pills could be concealed.”\textsuperscript{154} He declared that

\textsuperscript{149} Matthew Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad (2006).
\textsuperscript{150} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{151} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Id.} at 395 (citing Ken Schroeder, \textit{Get Teens Off Drugs}, EDUC. DIG. 75 (Dec. 2006)).
\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Id.} at 398.
the middle-schooler "would not have been the first person to conceal pills in her undergarments. . . . Nor will she be the last after today's decision, which announces the safest place to secrete [sic] contraband in school."155

Judges are not only influenced by sources they locate outside the briefs. Legal realists know that judges are influenced also by their own cultural knowledge and life experience. Personal experiences have left their footprints in some of the Court's most influential opinions. Justice Stewart's famous pornography test articulated in Jacobellis v. Ohio ("I know it when I see it"156) likely was influenced by his World War II experience as a Navy lieutenant.157 Woodward and Armstrong describe Stewart's experience of the varieties of pornography:

He had seen it during World War II, when he served as a Navy lieutenant. In Casablanca, as watch officer for his ship, he had seen his men bring back locally produced pornography. He knew the difference between that hardest of hard core and much of what came to the Court. He called it his "Casablanca Test."158

In another well-known example, Justice Blackmun traveled to the Mayo Clinic to conduct his own medical research before writing his opinion in Roe v. Wade.159 He wrote to the Mayo Clinic librarian to inquire whether "your well-equipped library [would] have anything about the history of abortion. You can imagine why I ask."160

We know about these examples because they have been the subject of investigation, and of course they are but speculations about a complex process. But the speculations are reliable enough to serve as the visible tip of a massive iceberg. Virtually unknown, and therefore unavailable for refutation and response, are the influences on judges of standard cultural products such as the books they have read; the movies they have seen; the experiences of their friends and family and of themselves; and the attitudes and opinions of social and political groups with whom they associate and identify.

The Introduction to this Article asserted that constitutional decisions should not be made in a hermetically sealed environment. As this Part has observed and as the next section more fully explains, we need not worry. There is no such thing

155. Id. at 390.
158. Id.
as a hermetically sealed judicial environment. As it turns out, the problem may not be too much information, but rather too little. Voices briefs do their work in the midst of extra-legal judicial fact-finding and in the context of a judge’s preexisting cultural knowledge and life experience. The advocacy process must be able to supplement or challenge that extra-record information, for it is otherwise unreachable. It is time to explore just what voices briefs seek to do and how they seek to do it.

IV. HOW NON-PARTY STORIES PERSUADE

We inhabit a nomos—a normative universe. We constantly create and maintain a world of right and wrong, of lawful and unlawful, of valid and void. . . . For every constitution there is an epic, for each decalogue a scripture.

-Robert Cover

Robert Cover was among the first to point out the world-creating role of narrative, but in his era, little cognitive work explained how this normative universe works. Such is not the case today. As Steven Winter writes:

There is a virtual revolution going on within the cognitive sciences. . . . [New cognitive science research] alters the contours of entire debates in disciplines such as law . . . . The promise of cognitive theory lies precisely in its ability to make explicit the unconscious criteria and cognitive operations that structure and constitute our judgment. It is by laying bare these cognitive structures and their impact on our reasoning that we can best aid legal actors—whether advocates or decision-makers—who wish to understand the law better so that they can act more effectively.

These unconscious operations take the form of schemas—preexisting cognitive patterns providing interpretive frameworks through which we perceive and judge the world. A schema organizes people, places, and events into roles the schema has made familiar. The resulting perceptions seem to be natural and

164. The term “schema” can have different meanings in different disciplines. Here, the term is used in its rhetorical sense as an embedded knowledge structure rather than, for instance, as an “expert” schema referring to a heuristic or framework used as a shortcut by experts in a specific field. Richard K. Sherwin, The Narrative Construction of Legal Reality, 18 VT. L. REV. 681, 700-01 (1994); see generally Linda L. Berger, How Embedded Knowledge Structures Affect Judicial Decision Making: A Rhetorical Analysis of Metaphor, Narrative, and Imagination in Child Custody Disputes, 18 S. CAL. INTERDISC. L.J. 259 (2009).
165. Berger, supra note 164, at 265.
true—simply an objective observation of the state of affairs. Once within the frame of such a cognitive structure, escape is difficult. The schema both highlights information that seems consistent with the schema, and hides inconsistent information. Thus, the structure reinforces its own inherent cultural values and perspectives.

A culture’s master stories provide the most common and effective schemas. We are hard-wired to organize the world into stories, and there is reason to suspect that deductive reasoning processes arise derivatively from such preexisting frames. Cultural stories mediate new events, infusing them with shared social meaning. They channel new events into that well-worn path. The outcome will seem both true and inevitable.

Critical theorists have observed schema in action for years. What may be less well-known, however, is the startling finding that a schema does its world-creating work before we become aware of the information it organizes. In other words, as a matter of biology, it may not be possible to perceive a schema-free set of new facts. Research by University of Texas neurobiologist Dr. David Engleman demonstrates the point:

Engleman’s research has shown that the brain lives just a little bit in the past. A human brain collects a lot of information and then pauses for a moment to organize it before releasing the processed information to the conscious mind. “Now” actually happened a little while (several milliseconds) ago.

166. GEORGE LAKOFF & MARK JOHNSON, METAPHORS WE LIVE BY 10–11 (1980); see generally WINTER, supra note 163.
171. WINTER, supra note 163, at 106–13; Steven L. Winter, Making the Familiar Conventional Again, 99 MICH. L. REV. 1607, 1629 (2001); see also Berger, supra note 164, at 268 (analyzing how familiar knowledge structures impact custody decisions).
To demonstrate this for yourself, tap your finger on a tabletop at arm’s length. Light travels faster than sound. So the sight actually reached you a few milliseconds before the sound. However, your brain synchronized the two to make them seem simultaneous. The same thing happens when you watch someone’s lips move as they speak. During these microsecond pauses the brain/mind constructs a plausible story to make the incoming information make sense. Sensory impressions enter the brain; stories exit to the conscious mind for interpretation and action. A significant part of what the brain does for the conscious mind is structure experience into story.\(^{174}\)

In other words, at the moment we become aware of a set of facts, we have already adopted a perspective. The question is not whether we see the situation through a lens, but which lens focuses our view. The danger is, of course, that we are often oblivious to our own unconscious frames. If a judge does not understand that there is more than one “true” story, the judge will remain unconsciously captive to a set of unexamined assumptions based on preexisting narrative schema.

The idea that there exists no neutral moment—no moment when a judge’s perception is unaffected by one cultural frame or another—casts an illuminating light on the purpose of a voices brief. The stories in a voices brief do not attempt to manipulate a previously neutral judge. The question is not whether to impose a partisan frame but rather whether a preexisting, unexamined partisan frame will remain impervious to challenge.

Attempting to counteract the world-creating influence of a preexisting cultural narrative is a difficult task, but it may be critically important. Not only is it necessary to unsettle a preexisting schema before a judge can recognize other possible perspectives, but, ironically, the more we value traditional merits arguments, the more important it may be to find a place for narrative persuasion. To understand why, we need to learn some terms and concepts.

Cognitive studies have examined how human beings evaluate competing arguments. Perhaps the most influential single theory of the persuasive effects of messages is a concept called the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM).\(^{175}\) The

\(^{174}\text{Kendall Haven, Story Proof: The Science Behind the Startling Power of Story}22 (2007).\)

\(^{175}\text{E-mail from Michael D. Slater to author (Feb. 9, 2017) (on file with the author). Dr. Slater is a Distinguished Professor of Social and Behavioral Science and Professor of Communication at The Ohio State University and a recognized ELM scholar whose Google Scholar citation count totaled 8,434 as of March 2017. Michael D. Slater, Google Scholar, https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=1ncvrHAAAAAJ&hl=en. ELM pioneers include Dr. Richard E. Petty (Distinguished University Professor of Psychology at The Ohio State University) and Dr. John T. Cacioppo (Tiffany and Margaret Blake Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Chicago, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience). Drs. Petty and Cacioppo wrote the seminal paper on ELM in 1986. The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion, in 19 Advances in Experimental Social Psychology 123-205 (Leonard Berkowitz ed., 1986). This paper alone had been cited by other scholars more than 7,400 times as of March 2017. The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion, Google Scholar,}
ELM identifies a spectrum for how a message recipient (in our case, a reader) processes an argument. At opposite ends of the spectrum are central route processing and peripheral route processing. Central route processing is marked by careful, critical evaluation of the merits. A reader using central route processing tests the advocate’s arguments and also generates her own thoughts about the merits. Central route processing is the kind of traditional merits analysis we hope a judge will use as the core of judicial decision making.

Peripheral route processing is marked by low(er) elaboration. A reader using low elaboration relies more on familiar attitudes and patterns of thought and less on traditional forms of merits analysis. Professor Kathryn Stanchi, the leading scholar in applying ELM to legal advocacy, describes peripheral processing as “less thoughtful and engaged” and as “often based on heuristics or shortcuts unrelated to the substantive merits of the message.” Peripheral route processing reduces the role of traditional merits arguments, an unappealing result for a judicial system that should rely heavily on authoritative text, precedent, analogy, and policy.

But advocates may be able to move a judge closer to high elaboration. To understand how, we turn to the science of involvement. Reader involvement, as it turns out, affects the impact of an argument. Scholars have studied two kinds of involvement that are especially relevant here. Decision makers experience outcome-relevant involvement when they perceive a personal stake in the issue—for instance, when the decision will affect themselves or those for whom they care. Decision makers experience value-relevant involvement when the

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https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=y4MYDxQAAAAJ&citation_for_view=y4MYDxQAAAAJ:-SnGPu6oF6q8C. In 2012, Drs. Petty and Cacioppo published Communication and Persuasion: Central and Peripheral Routes to Attitude Change, which already had been cited more than 8,100 times as of March 2017. COMMUNICATION AND PERSUASION: CENTRAL AND PERIPHERAL ROUTES TO ATTITUDE CHANGE, GOOGLE SCHOLAR, https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=y4MYDxQAAAAJ&citation_for_view=y4MYDxQAAAAJ:u5HHmVD_uORC.

176. Michael D. Slater, Involvement as Goal-Directed Strategic Processing: Extending the Elaboration Likelihood Model, in THE PERSUASION HANDBOOK: DEVELOPMENTS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE 175 (James Price Dillard & Michael Pflau eds. 2002). While this section will cite to some of the original sources, those sources first came to my attention in Professor Kathryn Stanchi’s work, and she deserves general attribution for this entire section. See generally Kathryn M. Stanchi, The Science of Persuasion: An Initial Exploration, 2006 MICH. ST. L. REV. 411.


179. Id. at 156.

180. Stanchi, supra note 176, at 436.

181. Booth-Butterfield & Welbourne, supra note 177, at 160 (finding that message-recipient involvement can be “situationally induced”).

issue is more distant, impacting instead abstract personal values. A message recipient can be influenced simultaneously and to varying degrees by each kind of involvement.

Studies show that the kind of involvement a reader feels plays a role in how the reader processes information. Outcome-relevant involvement leads to greater central route processing. Thus, readers who feel a personal stake in the matter, perhaps because the outcome will affect individuals they care for, will tend to devote more attention to traditional merits arguments, actively testing the ideas presented and generating their own responses. Value-relevant involvement, however, encourages peripheral processing. Value-relevant readers tend to process information peripherally, in more of a “knee-jerk” response, with less attention to an argument’s strength on the merits. In fact, Michael D. Slater, a nationally-recognized ELM researcher, has commented that an appeal to values may be a way to “short-circuit intelligent debate.”

Here is how that short-circuiting works. When the reader’s pre-existing values are consistent with the advocate’s position, the value-relevant reader is likely to embrace the advocate’s traditional merits arguments with little question. But if the reader’s preexisting values are inconsistent, a strong merits argument actually can be counterproductive. Because it threatens the reader’s values, a strong merits argument can arouse resistance and actually move the reader further away—a kind of boomerang effect. A resistant value-involved reader rejects the merits argument and generates her own counterarguments. Worse yet, the unsuccessful merits argument might even trigger an inoculation effect, in which the reader develops what are essentially antibodies to the argument, making her even more resistant to future merits arguments. Judicial decision making should value traditional merits arguments, not discount them, but a strong

183. Slater, supra note 176, at 177. A third kind of involvement is “response involvement,” which stems from knowing that the decision will be public and that others will form opinions about whether it is correct. Stanchi, supra note 176, at 441. That kind of involvement may well be relevant here, but it has not been sufficiently studied to support speculation about how it might function in a judicial setting.

184. Stanchi, supra note 176, at 441.

185. Id. at 444.

186. Id.

187. Id. at 452.

188. Id. at 441.

189. Id.

190. Id. at 441-42 (referring to the effect as “value-protective processing”).

191. Id.

192. The theory of inoculation posits that an advocate can encourage resistance to opposing arguments by exposing the message recipient to a less effective version of the argument. Inoculation has not been tested in combination with a value-relevant reader who generates counter-arguments, but the two theories may well interact, resulting in an even more negative reaction to traditional merits arguments. See Quentin Brodgon, Inoculating Against Bad Facts: Brilliant Trial Strategy or Misguided Dogma?, 63 TEX. B.J. 443, 447 (2000); Michael J. Saks, Flying Blind in the Courtroom: Trying Cases Without Knowing What Works or Why, 101 YALE L.J. 1177, 1187-1188 (1992) (reviewing ROBERT H. KLONOFF & PAUL L. COLBY, SPONSORSHIP STRATEGY: EVIDENTIARY TACTICS FOR WINNING JURY TRIALS (1990)); see generally Kathryn M. Stanchi, Playing with Fire: The Science of Confronting Adverse Material in Legal Advocacy, 60 RUTGERS L. REV. 281 (2008).
merits argument has exactly the opposite effect on a resistant value-involved reader.

So far these findings are discouraging but not remarkable. Many lawyers would view these findings as consistent with their experience. But one finding is surprising, and it explains why voices briefs can play a useful role. While strong merits arguments may push a value-involved judge further away, arguments that include anecdotal (narrative) messages can trigger central-route processing. Thus, unlike a logically compelling merits argument, anecdotal messages may allow the advocate to counter the effects of negative preexisting bias.\footnote{193}

For instance, one study divided college students into two groups based on the degree to which they were inclined to accept the social use of alcohol.\footnote{194} The study then compared the effects of messages critical of alcohol use. One message relied on statistics supporting the negative message about alcohol use. The other related a short story about the consequences of alcohol use on a fellow student. As Professor Stanchi explains, \textquoteleft\textquoteleft[T]he value-protective message recipients demonstrated belief change when confronted with the narrative evidence and were less persuaded by the statistics. The statistics \ldots served only to encourage counter-arguing.\textquoteright\textquoteright The group already predisposed to agree with the message, however, engaged in \textquoteleft\textquoteleft classic central processing\textquoteright\textquoteright of the statistical evidence.\footnote{195} The study showed that \textquoteleft\textquoteleft statistical evidence is superior for reinforcing beliefs of those already inclined to believe the message, and anecdotal evidence [personal narrative] is superior for influencing a much more difficult audience—those who disagree with the message.\textquoteright\textquoteright The group already predisposed to agree with the message, however, engaged in \textquoteleft\textquoteleft classic central processing\textquoteright\textquoteright of the statistical evidence.\footnote{195} The study showed that \textquoteleft\textquoteleft statistical evidence is superior for reinforcing beliefs of those already inclined to believe the message, and anecdotal evidence [personal narrative] is superior for influencing a much more difficult audience—those who disagree with the message.\textquoteright\textquoteright

How might anecdotal argument work in a judicial setting? Consider a judge who values a pro-life stance. In an abortion case, this judge might not experience outcome involvement because he has never needed an abortion himself and, as far as he knows, neither has anyone with whom he identifies. When he thinks of those who might need an abortion, he may think of a set of stereotypes about women who are sexually irresponsible—people unlike himself or those with whom he identifies. Thus, lacking any outcome-relevant stake in the question, the judge may rely more completely on his preexisting pro-life values. The primary purpose of a voices brief is to expand that judge’s realm of identification to include groups not previously a part of the judge’s personal world. A resistant, value-involved judge is likely to think \textquoteleft\textquoteleft this case is about them\textquoteright\textquoteright rather than \textquoteleft\textquoteleft this case is about some of \textit{us}.\textquoteright\textquoteright Voices briefs can introduce the judge to these \textit{others} in order to encourage meaningful merits analysis for all parties. Otherwise, some parties may receive a different kind of justice produced by a different kind of legal analysis than that offered to other parties.\textsuperscript{*}

\begin{itemize}
\item 193. Stanchi, supra note 176, at 442.
\item 194. Slater, supra note 176, at 184.
\item 195. Stanchi, supra note 176, at 442 (citing Slater, supra note 176, at 180, 184, 188).
\item 196. Id.
\item 197. Slater, supra note 176, at 185.
\end{itemize}
In fact, a robust scholarship supports the idea that judicial outcomes can be negatively affected by “us-them” thinking. In recent years, scholars have produced important work on the role of emotion and the necessity of empathy and moral imagination in judging (and therefore in advocacy). For example, Terry Maroney has debunked erroneous negative views of emotion and explored legitimate roles for emotion in judicial decision making. In *The Persistent Cultural Script of Judicial Dispassion*, Professor Maroney provides a powerful defense of empathy’s role in judging. Susan Bandes has defended the role of emotion in judging, critiqued problematic uses of emotion, and explored the necessity of moral imagination in legal deliberations. No lesser light than Martha Nussbaum, one of the nation’s most valued public intellectuals, has explored the importance of moral imagination and empathy in law. Mark Johnson, another leading scholar of philosophy, has also argued for the importance of moral imagination in all human deliberations, and leading scholars in cognitive linguistics have deconstructed seemingly unassailable rational assumptions. Other legal scholars have weighed in on these issues as well, identifying legitimate


200. “Moral imagination is the ability to understand one’s own limitations, the limitations of perspective, the range of values at stake, and the possibilities for change inherent in the situation. It is the ability to understand that things might be ordered differently, a way out of arid formalism and closed systems.” Susan A. Bandes, *Moral Imagination in Judging*, 51 WASHBURN L.J. 1, 24 (2011). Fundamental to moral imagination is the effort to understand the perspectives of others. Id.


roles for empathy and emotion in legal deliberations. Scholars of law and narrative have pointed out the role of stories in establishing narrative identification, and rhetoric scholars have pointed to the importance of rhetorical listening—the act of listening to learn another’s point of view rather than to formulate an argumentative response.

It is important not to over-claim here. First, no responsible scholar would argue that a flood of storytelling would or should overcome all other judicial influences. Judges must do more than understand the perspectives of those with experiences different from their own. First and foremost, they must analyze controlling text and precedent, account for other compelling policy concerns, and remain true to the role of the judiciary in a three-branch system of government.

Second, a relentless flood of moving stories may reduce or even reverse the stories’ intended effect. In at least some settings, repeated traumatic stories can eventually produce indifference to accompanying appeals. For instance, judges who have heard countless capital appeals may become weary and eventually immune to the tragic scenarios commonly presented by defense lawyers.

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208. One variety of this phenomenon is “compassion fatigue,” which has been defined as fatigue or apathy “resulting from... constant appeals from charities.” Compassion Fatigue, DICTIONARY.COM, http://www.dictionary.com/browse/compassion-fatigue?s=t. The ABA has identified compassion fatigue as a problem for legal professionals who receive repeated requests for assistance from those in traumatic situations. Compassion Fatigue, AM. B. ASS’N, http://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/resources/compassion_fatigue.html.

209. Pamela A. Wilkins, Confronting the Invisible Witness: The Use of Narrative to Neutralize Capital Jurors’ Implicit Racial Biases, 115 W. VA. L. REV. 305, 346 (2012) (“Capital defense lawyers routinely present evidence regarding the impoverished, abusive, and chaotic families whence their clients came, hoping jurors will find the client less culpable given the client’s childhood deprivations.”).
In some settings, the traditional heartrending mitigation story can backfire, producing a reaction opposite from the intended result. We may well wonder whether the flood of stories in abortion cases—where twenty-one voices briefs have been filed—may have reached a saturation point, at least for the Justices who have been exposed to those briefs over the span of many years. Much more study remains to be done before we fully understand common human reactions to repeated tragic stories, an undoubtedly complex question with many human and situational variables.

Third, involvement studies have not yet focused on judicial decision making, which is surely different in significant respects. We have a great deal to learn about how involvement might operate in a judicial setting. But until we learn more, we should take care to preserve a place for a form of argument that may help counter the effects of preexisting values bias and maximize the impact of traditional merits arguments.

V. CONSTITUTIONAL DELIBERATION IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

In addition to the uses we have seen, voices briefs may also play important roles for at least three other varieties of judicial actors and interested groups.

First, for those most intimately affected by the Court’s decision, it is important to be heard. In fact, being heard may be more important in defeat than in victory. The right to be heard is a fundamental precept of good government, but it is more. It is a deep human need. That need is at the heart of due process concepts, all dispute resolution systems, and all effective public discourse. For example, telling one’s story is a core practice of restorative justice, a process designed to facilitate some degree of healing by inviting affected parties to share their own stories and to listen to the stories of others. Similarly, truth and rec-

210. Id. (taking note of “the more radical position that traditional mitigation discourse may increase the empathic divide that already exists between white jurors and black capital defendants”).

211. This need to be heard is present in all disputes but may be greatest in two situations: (1) in cases where the outcome will have a deeply personal impact on the intimate lives of those affected; and (2) in cases where those telling their stories are living lives vastly different from a judge’s experience. To date, voices briefs have been used almost entirely in cases forming a sub-set of the first category—cases threatening a woman’s control over her own body and cases threatening the deepest of human relationships. See supra text accompanying notes 51-57; see also Appendix.

212. Garcia, supra note 78, at 343-47.

213. See TERESA GODWIN PHELPS, SHATTERED VOICES: LANGUAGE, VIOLENCE, AND THE WORK OF TRUTH COMMISSIONS 4 (2006) (describing the truth commission participants’ need for their stories to be officially heard and acknowledged); RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TODAY: PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS 206-07 (Katherine S. van Wormer & Loren Walker eds., 2013) (describing the process of “[un]earthing the previously silenced voices of victims” to facilitate healing through storytelling).

214. TONY FOLEY, DEVELOPING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE JURISPRUDENCE: RETHINKING RESPONSES TO CRIMINAL WRONGDOING 75-95 (2014). Restorative justice encourages “moral learning” through personal encounters that can “activate [the] process of moral development.” Id. at 75.
conciliation commissions create fora for sharing stories to address the consequences of seriously polarized, painful, and sometimes violent situations.\textsuperscript{215} Their purposes are many, but they include the recognition of personhood and dignity. Even if the Court is not persuaded on the merits—in fact, especially then—those affected need to feel heard.\textsuperscript{216}

And winning and losing, after all, are often about more than any single case. Since most controversial topics come before the Court again and again and since many Justices will hear multiple cases on topics like abortion or LGBTQ rights, most sophisticated issue advocates try to do more than win a favorable decision in the pending case.\textsuperscript{217} They make arguments today that may bear fruit tomorrow. Voices briefs can be part of a long-term strategy of persuasion, and judges do sometimes change their minds. For example, after twenty years of acceptance of the death penalty, Justice Blackmun famously wrote, in a “rather ordinary case among many,”\textsuperscript{218} that “[f]rom this day forward I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death.”\textsuperscript{219}

Second, voices briefs can serve important roles even for the Justices who find themselves firmly on one wing of the Court—Justices unlikely to be persuaded to change their minds on the merits.\textsuperscript{220} Voices briefs filed in support of Justice’s preexisting leaning may provide support for that position, as in the Obergefell oral argument example.\textsuperscript{221} And voices briefs filed in support of the opposite position nonetheless may affect the tone and content of an unfavorable opinion. Ideally, voices briefs would encourage a Justice to write an opinion that recognizes and respects opposing views. Opinions that recognize the arguments on both sides are more persuasive, showing that the Court fairly and seriously considered all arguments—and persuasion is, after all, one of the most important purposes of a judicial opinion.

Third, the Court has a responsibility to model better public discourse for this fractured nation. The Court’s opinions should avoid exacerbating the nation’s deep divides. What’s more, they should show us how to listen and talk to each other when we disagree. An opinion that recognizes and respects all positions can provide a modicum of healing because readers who lose at least will feel


\textsuperscript{216} PHELPS, supra note 213, at 52-73 (explaining the special need for storytelling when the state cannot grant the relief sought).

\textsuperscript{217} See Lynn M. Paltrow, Missed Opportunities in McCorvey v. Hill: The Limits of Pro-Choice Lawyering, 35 N.Y.U. REV. L. & SOC. CHANGE 194, 201 (2011) (“Winning in the short term . . . is not always the point.”).\textsuperscript{218}


\textsuperscript{220} For example, it is unlikely that voices briefs could cause Justice Sotomayor to change her attitude toward abortion or voter identification regulations, or cause Justice Thomas to change his attitude toward marriage equality or gun control measures.

\textsuperscript{221} See supra note 83 and accompanying text.
heard, and readers who win may come away with a greater understanding of those on the other side of the issue.

This discursive process is at the heart of the feminist concept of rhetorical listening. As modern feminist scholarship explains, rhetorical listening is a conscious choice to be open to the perspective of another. Instead of reading merely to devise a reply, we read to understand another’s experience.\textsuperscript{222} Closely related to restorative justice,\textsuperscript{223} rhetorical listening invites affected parties to share their own stories and to listen to the stories of others, a goal that might be worthy of more attention when the Court is deciding highly charged issues of constitutional law.

In recent years, the Court has acknowledged and relied upon a legal concept of dignity.\textsuperscript{224} What I am suggesting here is procedural dignity. Procedural dignity applies equally to both sides. A Justice firmly committed to marriage equality might not understand why opponents want to impose their personal choice as a matter of law upon others. Reading the brief filed by Same-Sex Attracted Men and Their Wives in Obergefell might help that Justice understand how the situation looks to at least some opponents of marriage equality.\textsuperscript{225} She might sense that these young men are trying to preserve a world whose structures support their daily struggle to choose a different life—to marry a woman, have a family with her, and live in a community that validates their choice. Such a Justice might even imagine a sense of desperation beneath the stories of these young people as they try so hard to hang on to a world fast slipping away. When that Justice sits down to write her opinion, she might be more inclined to treat those young people with respect and empathy, even as she rules against their arguments.

To be clear, the assertion here is not that the Supreme Court should become a forum for touchy-feely therapy, nor that allowing public storytelling will magically heal the deep divides that afflict the nation’s common life. Rather, while going about its normal deliberative process, the Court might choose to be more aware of the effect of its language on other public discourse. A caustic tone in Supreme Court opinions is not helpful either for democratic governance in general or for the public’s respect for the Court itself.\textsuperscript{226}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[222.] See generally KRISTA RATCLIFFE, RHETORICAL LISTENING: IDENTIFICATION, GENDER, WHITENESS (2005).
\item[223.] See supra notes 214-216 and accompanying text.
\item[224.] See Elizabeth B. Cooper, The Power of Dignity, 84 FORDHAM L. REV. 3 (2015) (tracing an expanding legal concept of dignity through the holdings of four cases raising issues of LGBT rights).
\item[225.] Brief of Amici Curiae Same-Sex Attracted Men and Their Wives in Support of Respondents & Affirmance, supra note 48.
\item[226.] Greenhouse, supra note 41 (citing a poll showing that more people disapprove of the Supreme Court (50\%) than approve of it (45\%)).
\end{footnotes}
VI. THE THEORETICAL PLACE OF NON-PARTY STORIES

If voices briefs can serve these crucial roles, it becomes all the more important to ask whether these briefs are precluded by procedural rules or legal theory. As this Part will show, they are not. No formal rule limits the filing of any kind of amicus brief, but we still must ask whether these briefs run afoul of long-established principles and test them against traditional theories of legal reasoning, jurisprudence, and constitutional interpretation. The treatment here of this expansive question must be introductory only, but can begin what should ultimately become a more robust discussion.

A. Basic Forms of Legal Reasoning

Most legal analyses begin by considering what the governing rule or standard might mean in a given situation. Perhaps surprisingly, voices briefs can play a supporting role in analyzing a constitutional standard. The Thornburgh NARAL brief is instructive.\(^{227}\) In *Meyer v. Nebraska*,\(^{228}\) the 1923 case challenging a state law restricting foreign-language education, the Court declared:

> Without doubt [liberty] denotes not merely freedom from bodily restraint but also the right of the individual . . . to engage in any of the common occupations of life, to acquire useful knowledge, to marry, establish a home and bring up children, to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, and generally to enjoy those privileges long recognized at common law as essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness by free men.\(^{229}\)

The NARAL brief used these six aspects of liberty as the organizing structure for its stories. Beneath headings for each aspect of liberty, the brief shared stories demonstrating how the right to an abortion implicates that liberty interest. The final subsection, discussing "those privileges long recognized at common law as essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness by free men,"\(^{230}\) shared stories of women simply trying to live the kinds of fulfilling and responsible lives men could take for granted.\(^{231}\) As one woman explained:

I kept being struck by the ultimate unfairness of it all. I could not conceive of any event which would so profoundly impact upon any man. Surely my husband would experience some additional financial burden,

\(^{227}\) NARAL Brief, supra note 27; see generally Edwards, supra note 10.

\(^{228}\) 262 U.S. 390 (1923).

\(^{229}\) NARAL Brief, supra note 27, at 22-23 (quoting Meyer, 262 U.S. at 399).

\(^{230}\) Id. at 28 (quoting Meyer, 262 U.S. at 399).

\(^{231}\) Id. at 28-30.
and additional "fatherly" chores, but his whole future plan was not hostage to this unchosen, undesired event. Basically his life would remain the same progression of ordered events as before.  

As we have seen, many stories in voices briefs also support policy-based reasoning. They demonstrate the harm of one possible constitutional result or the other. For example, in Thornburgh, the Reagan Administration's Solicitor General articulated the question at hand as whether to "return the law to the condition" before Roe.  

NARAL's brief sought to remind the Court of "the condition" before Roe:

Before this Court's decision in Roe v. Wade, state governments were free to substitute their political judgments for the personal, moral judgments of women and the medical judgments of doctors. . . . Women obtained illegal abortions despite the illegality and grave risks involved, as these excerpts from the letters reveal:

I remember Tijuana. I remember bugs crawling on walls as I waited for the "second part" of my abortion to take place. . . . I was sent to a "hotel" to wait three hours—a stinking cesspool of urine, sweat, filthy sheets and bugs—unidentifiable crawling creatures all over the walls, floors and crevices. . . . Where else could I have gone in 1965?  

Finally, voices briefs may play an especially important role when the Court is considering a broad holding—a holding that will apply to many individuals in a variety of situations. In such cases, courts typically create and analyze hypotheticals. As Akhil Amar has observed:

Hypotheticals are the grist of legal reasoning and form an implicit or explicit part of virtually every legal case ever decided and every legal issue ever analyzed outside a courtroom. Even if a judge is sure that the plaintiff in the case at hand—call it case A—deserves to win, the judge must decide how broadly or narrowly to rule. If she adopts a broad rule, plaintiffs in later cases B and C will also deserve to win under the sweeping logic she announces. By contrast, a narrow rule in case A might mean that plaintiffs in later cases B and C will likely or surely lose. . . .

232. Id at 29.
234. NARAL Brief, supra note 27, at 8.
235. NARAL Brief, supra note 27, at 8-9.
[A] good judge will think carefully about these now-hypothetical cases in crafting the proper rule for the case at hand—case A.236

If hypotheticals—the stories of fictional non-parties and situations created entirely by the Court’s lively imagination—have long been accepted as “the grist of” traditional judicial reasoning, the actual stories of real-life non-parties are surely appropriate as well.237 Like hypotheticals, non-party stories convey a sense of those who may be affected by the Court’s decision. Surely it is at least as helpful to consider actual individuals as it is to consider imaginary individuals.238

B. Legal Theory

The broad tent of legal realism, today’s most widely accepted jurisprudential theory, sees law as the indeterminate product of a relatively subjective process. Holmes’s famous description of early legal realism (“The life of the law has not been logic: it has been experience”)239 strikes a familiar note in the context of voices briefs, which present the Court with human experience. Legal realists believe that law is made by people as the need arises.240 Realism sees law as reflecting historical, social, political, anthropological, psychological, and economic factors. One might say that legal realism forever unmasked the humanity, complexity, and malleability of the law.241 Stories of human experience can touch all the factors that, in the realist’s view, combine to account for a legal outcome.

237. Id. at xiii.
238. In fact, this imaginative process has a recognized narrative pedigree. Gary Saul Morson, a literary critic and a leading scholar of Russian and comparative literature, has dubbed this activity “sideshadowing.” Gary S. Morson, Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time 6–9 (1994). Sideshadowing defines a field of possible stories, not merely what did happen in a particular case but what might have happened. These other possible stories shadow the actual stories and demand adjudicative attention, freeing the law from captivity by the stories of the present litigants. See Edwards, supra note 169, at 26 (discussing the role of “sideshadowing” in enloring policy considerations); see also Linda H. Edwards, Legal Writing and Analysis (4th ed. 2013) (providing a more general description of the history of legal theory in America).
240. Catherine Drinker Bowen, Yankee from Olympus: Justice Holmes and His Family 275 (2007) (“[A] good judge unconsciously predicts a law according to the result it will have upon the community at large.”).
Another jurisprudential school—legal process—is seldom mentioned expressly in current jurisprudence but has had a lasting influence on legal theory and law. The legal process school values neutral, fair standards for how decisions are made: judges should curb their own preferences in favor of neutrality. At first glance, the concern for a neutral process might suggest that we should leave narrative out of the picture, but since the court’s legal interpretation will bind parties and non-parties alike, fairness requires a voice for non-parties as well. And as Section V explained, cognitive studies indicate that the best way to minimize inevitable subjectivities may be to expand—not contract—the pool of stories. If so, the paramount concerns of the legal process school would be best served by preserving a place for voices briefs.

The critical schools (critical legal studies, critical race theory, and feminist legal theory) support the use of voices briefs as well. Critical theory considers law to be produced largely from the perspectives of those in power. It views legal reasoning as a post hoc rationalization rather than a method of decision making. Therefore, instead of articulated rules, which are, after all, simply political artifacts, critical theorists turn to narratives about the experiences of marginalized groups. Voices briefs can be the vehicle for relating those stories.

Narrative has a particularly close relationship with feminist theory. For over thirty years, feminist scholars have recognized narrative’s key role in women’s moral choices. In 1982, Carol Gilligan published her groundbreaking book, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development, in which


243. See discussion supra Part IV. On a similar note, voices briefs can help to address the inherent advantage of organizational plaintiffs, who have complete freedom to choose the most appealing individuals to become the named plaintiffs and therefore the human faces of the litigation. Non-party stories also can help to level the playing field when the issues affect marginalized or unappealing groups or implicate social and political issues on which judges will already have a preexisting leaning if not a confirmed opinion, thus enhancing procedural fairness.

244. See Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law, 101 Harv. L. Rev. 1331, 1335 (1988) (“[A]ntidiscrimination law represents an ongoing ideological struggle in which the occasional winners harness the moral, coercive, and quasi-moral power of law.”); see also Kenneth J. VanDervele, Thinking Like a Lawyer: An Introduction to Legal Reasoning 129-33 (1996).

245. See, e.g., Peter Goodrich, Legal Discourse: Studies in Linguistics, Rhetoric and Legal Analysis ix (1987) (arguing in favor of a “critical concept of legal discourse as a language of power, as the pursuit of control over meaning and as instrument and expression of domination.”); VanDervele supra note 244, at 131 (“CLS scholars view legal doctrine as constructing an elaborate facade of legitimacy and inevitability that masks the political and contingent nature of judicial decisions.”).

246. For example, in The Alchemy of Race and Rights, Patricia Williams eschews the traditional academic style in favor of a form of personal diary written in the first-person and filled with personal and sometimes emotional anecdotes and reactions, often illustrating her points from her own experience. Patricia J. Williams, The Alchemy of Race and Rights (1991). Her very choice of style conveys a jurisprudential point, although it precludes easy summary or proof-texting citations to her theses. See also Edwards, Speaking of Stories and Law, supra note 206, at 160-63; see generally Edwards, supra note 161.
women’s stories were treated for the first time as an important part of moral development and decision making. In 1986, four developmental psychologists published *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*, in which voice plays a crucial role in women’s methods of constructing knowledge. If narrative is instrumental in meaning-making for women, the silencing of narrative is a potentially gendered act. Thus, if we want a judicial system that dispenses justice to all its citizens, including women, we should think long and hard before silencing stories in the judicial process.

C. Theories of Constitutional Interpretation

In constitutional cases, the most relevant theoretical questions often involve theories of constitutional interpretation rather than more general theories of jurisprudence. Many scholars identify interpretive bases by analyzing long-accepted judicial practice—a kind of Aristotelian process in the sense that it observes what is being done and works up the ladder of abstraction from there. For these scholars, constitutional interpretation is a rhetorical practice, and the interpretive methods grow from the practice itself.

For example, Philip Bobbitt has identified six interpretive norms (modalities) to infuse underdetermined constitutional language with meaning: the historical, textual, structural, doctrinal, ethical, and prudential modalities. Bobbitt’s ethical and prudential modalities are the most natural theoretical homes for

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247. As part of studying women’s moral development, for perhaps the first time in social science literature, Gilligan’s book allowed women to tell their own stories in their own voices and with their own dignity and integrity. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (1982).

248. Mary Field Belenky et al., *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (1986). The book identifies five epistemological methods and their roles in women’s mental processing. The first is silence. Id. at 23–34. According to the authors, when women are silent, they tend to experience themselves as unable to construct or process knowledge and instead as subject to the authority of others. Women spoke of the importance of having a voice, both metaphorically and literally. They spoke of being silenced, feeling “deaf and dumb,” and having no words, in contrast to speaking up, talking and listening, and saying what they mean. Id. at 24. By contrast, “[c]onstructed knowledge,” another epistemological method, values contextual knowledge and both subjective and objective strategies of understanding. Id. at 131–52

249. Ratcliffe, supra note 222, at 79 (“[D]ysfunctional silence . . . resinscrib[es] a powerful cultural desire in the U.S. not to talk publicly and cross-culturally about how gender and race intersect.”).


252. Philip Bobbitt, *Constitutional Interpretation* 12-13 (1991). An even more flexible approach to constitutional interpretation arises from the idea of the “living” or “evolving” constitution. Proponents of a living constitution understand the document to be designed to change with the times. Terms like “due process” are thought to establish fundamental values to be applied by contemporary judges to contemporary times. See generally David A. Strauss, *The Living Constitution* (2010); see also Katherine A. Currier & Thomas E. Emerson, *The Study of Law: A Critical Thinking Approach* 135 (2009). If voices briefs can play a legitimate role in a modalities approach, they are even more certainly legitimate in a living constitution approach.
voices briefs. The ethical modality looks to fundamental moral commitments reflected in the Constitution, and the prudential modality balances competing interests (costs and benefits), attempting to accommodate those interests in a useful and reasonable way. 253 The stories in voices briefs demonstrate the human costs and benefits of a particular constitutional result, thus helping to address the concerns of the prudential modality. 254

Another leading constitutional scholar, Akhil Amar, has developed a richly textured set of philosophical and social commitments that influence constitutional interpretation. 255 Amar argues that constitutional “text itself, when properly approached, invites recourse to certain nontextual—unwritten—principles and practices.” 256 He writes that we should “read between the lines,” understanding “the difference between reading the Constitution literally and reading the document faithfully.” 257

Amar points to at least three interpretive influences that are relevant to voices briefs. In Chapter Three (“Hearing the People”) of America’s Unwritten Constitution, Amar recognizes the role of culture and evolving practice in considering “the constitutional status of textually unnamed or underspecified rights.” 258 He refers to a lived experience of liberty, recognizing that “judges should pay and do pay close attention to how various rights are embodied in citizens’ daily rhythms and embedded in powerful customs.” 259 He closes the chapter by suggesting that “what should ideally emerge is a genuine dialogue among judges, legislators, and ordinary citizens.” 260

Chapters Seven and Eleven also support a role for the lived experience of the People. Chapter Seven recognizes feminism’s legitimacy in constitutional interpretation, 261 and Chapter Eleven recognizes a role for judicial conscience and humanity. 262 Amar writes: “The success of our national constitutional project


254. In Obergefell, for example, voices briefs in support of marriage equality were offered to show the costs of inequality to LGBT citizens, their families, and especially their children. Brief for Kristin M. Perry, et al., supra note 85; Brief of Ninety-Two Plaintiffs, supra note 92; Brief of the County of Cuyahoga, Ohio, supra note 90; Brief of PFLAG, Inc., supra note 45; Brief of Family Equality Council et al., supra note 90; Brief of Marriage Equality USA, supra note 90.

255. “The take-home lesson of our story thus far is that sound constitutional interpretation involves a dialogue between America’s written Constitution and America’s unwritten Constitution. The latter, at a minimum, encompasses various principles implicit in the written document as a whole and/or present in the historical background, forming part of the context against which we must construe the entire text... Rather we have been exploring a variety of unwritten sources that intertwine with the written text—sources such as... preconstitutional and postconstitutional practices and precedents; principles and purposes implicit in various patches of constitutional text; and... structural deductions from the constitutional system viewed holistically.” AMAR, supra note 236, at 19-20.

256. Id. at xiii.
257. Id. at 5.
258. Id. at 97.
259. Id. at 97.
260. Id. at 138.
261. Id. at 277-305.
262. Id. at 417-48.
requires that certain things must always exist, and exist in abundance, in America. Virtue, honor, and conscience rank high among these essential elements.263 All this proof-texting should not be taken to mean that either Bobbitt or Amar would support resolving a constitutional issue by storytelling. Bobbitt has not addressed the role of narrative, and Amar is still, when all is said and done, a “text-centric” originalist.264 The point here is that, in both Bobbitt’s and Amar’s constitutional worlds, there is room for considering the lived experience of the People. Voices briefs provide glimpses of that lived experience.

VII. LOOKING AHEAD

The use of voices briefs has increased dramatically in recent years, and we have no reason to suspect that, absent Court intervention, that trend will abate. As vehicles for expression, especially by marginalized groups, the briefs serve important purposes. Their role in persuasion may even be necessary to respond to the preexisting biases that afflict us all, including judges. Just one more pair of questions remains: What legitimate concerns do voices briefs raise, and how might we preserve their role while minimizing undeniable concerns?

A. Concerns

Despite the value of voices briefs generally, legitimate concerns do exist. Voices briefs add to the number of amicus filings before the Court, which continue to increase in the most controversial cases each term.265 But while a large number of amicus filings may engage judicial resources and complicate case management, nothing unique to voices briefs distinguishes them on this basis.266 In fact, it is considerably easier to read and digest a voices brief than to read and digest a brief making traditional legal arguments. Thus, any response to the increase in amicus filings should not single out voices briefs.267

Three legitimate concerns do exist, however. The first is the question of reliability. Evidentiary rules establish a process for testing the reliability of adjudicative facts, but the rules of evidence do not help on appeal. As earlier sections have shown, the value of non-party stories does not depend as much on careful evidentiary accuracy as does the value of trial court evidence. Nonetheless, it is disturbing to imagine an appellate process that might include a set of fictional

263. Id. at 419.
265. See supra notes 19-25 and accompanying text.
266. This observation is especially true since, most likely, a potential amicus filer precluded from filing a voices brief simply would seek to file a more traditional brief.
267. While concern about the number of amicus filings is not particular to voices briefs, some of the suggestions discussed in the following section might help reduce the number of amicus filings overall.
stories masquerading as real, especially in recent months when “fake news” and “alternative facts” have entered public discourse to an unprecedented degree.268

Rules of professional conduct offer only small comfort. Amicus briefs can be filed only by an attorney admitted to practice before the Court,269 and rules of professional conduct prohibit lawyers from knowingly making false statements of fact to the Court.270 But the rule prohibits only “knowing” false statements, so in theory, the lawyer’s client might create fictional stories without the lawyer’s knowledge. And some lawyers do violate professional rules, especially if they believe the odds of discovery to be slight.

Some risk does exist, then, but we must ask how great the risk might be. Realistically, it seems unlikely that a lawyer, an organization, or a group of individuals would simply fabricate an entire set of stories claiming, for instance, to have had an abortion when they did not.271 The more realistic concern is that these storytellers may exaggerate or misstate their experience.

That risk is real, but it must be balanced against the realities of judicial decision making. As we have seen, judges are already inevitably influenced by a variety of background facts, many of which are completely untested and some of which are expressly fictional. Social science information—the kind of information that has been presented to the Court for over a century—may be no more reliable than the stories in a voices brief.272 And judges rely expressly on a wide variety of extrarecord sources whose accuracy is untested—including internet sites, magazines, experiments with video games, letters, and newspapers.273 They also are influenced by their own experiences and those of family and friends, and by the books they have read (including fiction) and the movies, television shows, and documentaries they have seen.274 These extra-record sources and influences largely are invisible to advocates and citizens and thus are immune from testing.

268. James Carson, What Is Fake News? Its Origins and How It Grew in 2016, TELEGRAPH (London) (Mar. 16, 2017), http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/0/fake-news-origins-grew-2016/ (discussing the history and current status of “fake news”). Despite our current heightened sensitivity to false reports, the stories in voices briefs should not be confused with false evidentiary reports, such as reports that Barack Obama was not born in the United States. Michael D’Antonio, The Real Reason Trump Clings to Birtherism, CNN (Sept. 16, 2016), http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/10/opinions/why-trump-clings-to-birtherism-dantonio/ (describing claims that Barack Obama was not born in the United States and is a Muslim). In voices briefs, each person describes only her own personal experience with the issue presented to the Court.

269. “An amicus curiae brief may be filed only by an attorney admitted to practice before this Court as provided in Rule 5.” Sup. Ct. R. 37(1).

270. MODEL RULES OF PROF’L CONDUCT r. 3.3 (AM. BAR ASS’N 2017) (requiring candor toward the tribunal).

271. It is unlikely that a group of lawyers, judges, students, and law clerks would falsely claim to have had abortions. See Brief of MacAvoy et al., supra note 1. The Rules of Evidence have long recognized such estimates of likelihood. For example, Federal Rule of Evidence 804 establishes dying declarations as hearsay exceptions because, while not impossible, it is unlikely that a person who believes that her death is imminent would lie.

272. See supra Part II.

273. See supra notes 121-133 and accompanying text.

274. See supra notes 141-160 and accompanying text.
or refutation except by studies and stories that can broaden the Court’s view of the issue.

And it is broadening that we are talking about here, after all. A personal story in a voices brief shares the experience of one person. It does not attempt to refute the individual experience of someone else. It seeks only to show the Court that there may be more to the matter than is apparent from the stories with which the Court is already familiar. Each story finds its own small place within a wide narrative sea already awash with many other stories. Each story is just one tiny facet of a large, complex, and inevitable set of narrative influences.

Those other narrative influences include stories that circulate widely in the culture, often with little factual basis.\textsuperscript{275} For example, consider this recent, widely shared, anonymous Facebook meme: “It is wrong to tax a working person almost to the breaking point, then give it to a person who is able to work but refuses to.” Two inaccurate cultural stories combine to produce that message: (1) the master story that the financial distress of working people is caused by exorbitant taxes (rather than by legislatures refusing to raise the minimum wage, employers manipulating working hours to avoid offering health care, or a myriad of other systemic and personal causes); and (2) the master story that tax dollars are distributed routinely to people who could get a job but instead choose a life of leisure on welfare.

The actual stories of individuals may be the only way to challenge these false cultural stories. Certainly, advocates would want to offer social science studies and statistics to disprove the stories, but, as Part IV has shown, statistics and social science studies can operate to increase, not decrease, the influence of preexisting cultural beliefs.\textsuperscript{276} Anecdotal messages such as those in voices briefs may be the best way to loosen the grip of preexisting values commitments.\textsuperscript{277} And after decades of voices briefs, to date we have no indication that the Justices are confused about the nature of the stories, nor would we expect them to be.\textsuperscript{278}

Given (a) the relatively low risk of complete fabrication, (b) the need for a way to counter pre-existing bias, (c) the need for a way to counter inevitable extra-record sources, (d) the ability of opposing parties to offer competing narratives, (e) the tiny role of any individual story compared to many others, and (f) the sophistication of the judicial audience, the reliability risk is acceptable. Nonetheless, as the next section describes, some steps can be taken to reduce reliability concerns.

\textsuperscript{275} For a discussion of the role of master stories in law, see Linda H. Edwards, supra note 161, at 49-53.
\textsuperscript{276} See supra notes 189-192 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{277} See supra notes 193-197 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{278} Even Justice Kennedy, if he was referring to the stories in Carhart, carefully qualified the reference: “While we find no reliable data to measure the phenomenon, it seems unexceptionable to conclude some women come to regret their choice . . . .” Gonzales v. Carhart, 550 U.S. 124, 159 (2007). These are not the words of a Justice who is confused about whether voices briefs constitute evidentiary facts.
The second concern is the question of relevance. The stories related in voices briefs should not be offered simply to prompt a generalized emotional reaction for or against a topic or practice. Rather, the stories should relate to the particular issue the Court must decide. For example, in *Whole Woman’s Health*, the Texas legislature had passed sweeping regulations purportedly aimed at protecting women’s physical health by raising the medical standards applicable to abortion clinics.\(^{279}\) The new standards had caused the closure of over half the clinics in the state. The issue for the Court was whether these regulations represented legitimate medical requirements rather than a masked effort to make abortion less available.\(^{280}\) Pro-life voices briefs offered stories describing psychological injuries from abortion generally—stories completely unrelated to the medical practices at issue in the case.\(^{281}\) These stories raise relevance concerns, for voices briefs should offer only stories that relate to the relevant legal issue. Thus, the following section proposes a way to tighten the connection between the proffered stories and the legal question at issue.

The third realistic concern is that non-party stories may actually be adjudicative facts in disguise. No Supreme Court filer should use the appellate process to smuggle new evidentiary facts into the record. For example, *Whole Woman’s Health* put directly at issue the evidentiary question of whether and to what extent the conditions in Texas abortion facilities raised legitimate health concerns. Facts describing the conditions in those Texas clinics would seem to be evidentiary facts. Yet, pro-life appellate briefs offered stories from Texas women relating substandard abortion practices in Texas.\(^{282}\) Those stories may overstep the line between adjudicative facts and legislative facts. As the next section suggests, the Court should increase scrutiny of any appellate brief that offers what may amount to untested evidentiary facts.

Finally, the Court’s own procedural rules complicate all three of these concerns. Under the Court’s rules, parties may and often do grant blanket consent to the filing of amicus briefs,\(^{283}\) thus short-circuiting screening as part of the consent process. But even in the absence of blanket consent, the Court’s rules all but preclude meaningful pre-filing screening. Rule 37(1) admonishes amicus filers not to file briefs that duplicate the arguments made by the parties, but Rule 37(3)(a) requires that amicus briefs be filed within seven days after the filing of the brief for the party supported. Thus, in theory, Rule 37 seems to contemplate

\(^{279}\) *Whole Woman’s Health* v. Hellerstedt, 136 S. Ct. 2292, 2300 (2016).
\(^{280}\) Id.
\(^{281}\) See, e.g., Brief of Amicus Curiae Priests for Life in Support of Respondents at 8-11, *Whole Woman’s Health*, 136 S. Ct. 2292 (No. 15-274).
\(^{282}\) Two briefs offered stories from Texas women who had abortions and from Texas abortion providers describing their experiences with the facilities. Amicus Curiae Brief of Former Abortion Providers et al. in Support of Respondents app. at A1-12, B1-5, C1-8, *Whole Woman’s Health*, 136 S. Ct. 2292 (No. 15-274); Amicus Curiae Brief of 3,348 Women Injured by Abortion and the Justice Foundation in Support of Respondents for Affirmance, *Whole Woman’s Health*, 136 S. Ct. 2292 (No. 15-274).
\(^{283}\) Sup. Ct. R. 37(3)(a).
that a conscientious amicus filer would (1) write a draft of the brief and reserve a spot with the printer despite not yet knowing whether the brief will be filed; (2) await the filing of the party’s brief and quickly read it; (3) decide whether the proposed amicus arguments would be duplicative; (4) if not, seek consent from all parties (including from the party whose attention is, at that point, focused with laser-like precision on the newly filed opposing brief and on drafting its own response); (5) receive consent from the parties; (6) have the brief printed; and (7) file the brief. Steps two through seven would have to be accomplished within seven days. Even in less controversial cases, this timing is, practically speaking, impossible. In controversial cases—the very cases in which voices of briefs are most likely to be filed—the large number of briefs seeking consent within that short window would exacerbate an already impossible situation.

 Understandably, as a practical matter, this is not how amicus practice unfolds. Amicus filers decide to file well before they know what the parties or any other amici will argue. The rules simply do not permit filers to await the parties’ briefs to decide whether they have something new to say. Some amicus filers subsequently work informally with the supported party, coordinating strategies. Others do not. If no blanket consent has been given, filers seek individual consent while their brief is being written. Parties generally consent without having time to review the amicus brief for which consent is sought. Printing is arranged and often accomplished nearly simultaneously with or shortly before the supported party’s brief is filed. Thus, under the Supreme Court’s own rules and customary Supreme Court practice, pre-filing screening by the opposing party—the party with an incentive to screen—is essentially impossible.

 The practical impossibility of evaluating a proposed brief applies to all amicus briefs, but the difficulties may be greater for voices briefs and briefs relying on social science information. Briefs making traditional legal arguments may be easier for the parties’ lawyers to evaluate because they are already deeply immersed in the applicable law. If they were to review the brief before consenting, which generally they do not, they would at least be well versed in the legal arguments. Voices briefs and social science briefs, however, may rely on sources that are completely new to the parties and their lawyers—sources the lawyers have little ability to evaluate under intense time pressure. Thus, appellate procedure essentially precludes meaningful pre-filing screening either to enforce the non-

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284. Consent sought before the filing of the party’s brief would preclude the opposing party from insisting on compliance with the “no-duplication” rule.
285. Because it is a significant expense, printing is unlikely to precede the decision to file.
286. See supra notes 12-15 and accompanying text.
287. This Article’s scope does not include the question of whether the Court’s non-duplication standard is or can be effective, but the timing contemplated by Rule 37 is instructive on that question as well. Rule 37’s timing precludes careful compliance with the non-duplication standard by even a conscientious amicus filer. The timing requires an amicus filer to await the filing of the party’s brief in order to determine whether the amicus brief would duplicate the party’s arguments. The amicus filer then has seven days in which to re-draft and file the amicus brief, all while seeking consent and allowing for three or four days for printing.
duplication standard or to test information for reliability, relevance, or legislative fact.

Supreme Court rules create another procedural unfairness. Currently, amicus filers supporting the respondent can rebut amicus briefs filed in support of the petitioner, thus relieving the respondent from the need to use precious pages to rebut an amicus brief. The petitioner, however, is the only participant capable of responding to an amicus brief supporting the respondent because the only filing opportunity remaining after pro-respondent amicus briefs are filed is the petitioner’s (short) 288 reply brief. 289

Whole Woman’s Health again serves as an example. Women Injured by Abortion (WIA) had been an amicus filer in the Fifth Circuit and was expected to be an amicus filer in the Supreme Court as well. In the Fifth Circuit, WIA’s amicus brief had related stories describing psychological injuries attributed to abortion, making the implicit argument that abortion injures women’s mental health and therefore any regulations that limit abortion are valid protections of women’s health. 290 Because the pro-choice argument was in the procedural position of the petitioner at the Supreme Court level, the only available way to rebut those anticipated arguments without sacrificing space in the Petitioner’s Reply Brief was for a pro-choice amicus filer to cite to and rebut WIA’s Fifth Circuit amicus brief. 291 Unanticipated pro-respondent amicus filings could not be rebutted in this manner, however, and would therefore require space in the petitioner’s reply brief.

This section has recognized three legitimate concerns—reliability, relevance, and the potential misuse of adjudicative facts—all of which are somewhat exacerbated by the Court’s procedural rules. But preserving a role for voices briefs is preferable to limiting their use in ways that ignore modern cognitive science and ancient rhetorical principles, that silence the voices of the governed, or that secretly smuggle in the adoption of a limiting jurisprudential view. The choice to preserve a role for voices briefs is bolstered by the possibility of adopting modest reforms that can reduce understandable concerns. The next section proposes such reforms.

B. Preserving and Managing a Role for Voices Briefs

Voices briefs should be tested by asking three questions: Are the stories reliable enough? Are they relevant enough? Are they too relevant because they are actually adjudicative facts?

1. Reliability

For reliability, legal process looks primarily for competence (the person speaking is competent to make the statements) and accuracy (the statements are likely to be accurate for their intended purposes). We seek only the degree of reliability appropriate for the use to which the facts will be put. Currently, voices briefs vary in their assurances of competence and accuracy. Some stories are told by the person who experienced the events, while others are related by third parties, including journalists and researchers with varying degrees of neutrality. Some relate conclusions for which the speaker is the most competent source, such as her own emotional reactions or the “who, what, when, and how” of particular events in her own life. Others offer expert conclusions the speaker seems unqualified to make, such as the appropriateness of certain medical decisions or matters of medical causation.

For assurance of accuracy, some amicus filers have provided stories in the form of sworn affidavits. Others have taken the stories from some other published source, ranging from sworn legislative testimony to social science studies, to newspaper articles, to website postings, to letters sought by a partisan organization. Some have provided the parties and the Court with access to the original versions of excerpted stories. For highly personal issues, some names are redacted in public filings. All have cited to the original versions of the stories or have explained the process by which the stories were gathered.

2. Relevance and Legislative Facts

Relevance on appeal requires the stories to be relevant enough (by relating to the appropriate legal standard or policy argument) and not too relevant (by being adjudicative facts masquerading as legislative facts). Most voices briefs expressly explain the relationship between the proffered stories and the legal and policy questions raised by the case, but voices briefs largely have not addressed the question of whether the proffered stories qualify as legislative facts. As the example from Whole Woman’s Health demonstrates, some briefs may have trespassed beyond permissible uses of facts on appeal. Responsible use of non-party stories on appeal should include an explanation of the basis for asserting that the stories are not evidentiary facts in disguise.

292. Supra note 282.
3. Suggested Improvements

Presently the Justices appear to manage amicus briefs by using their clerks to sort briefs in chambers. A variety of additional strategies—some better than others—could improve reliability and relevance, either by replacing the sorting process or by improving it. For instance, the Court could toughen the consent process with the goal of prohibiting questionable briefs. This approach is problematic for several reasons. It would significantly increase the Court’s workload, and depending on how stringently the Court approached requests for consent, the approach might smack of prior restraint, silencing an appellate argument before it can be made. It also would risk sparking internal arguments regarding which sources and forms of argument some Justices would permit other Justices to hear.

Alternatively, the Court could impose post-filing sanctions when the Court believed that a brief had transgressed reliability and relevance standards. Legal sanctions might include striking the brief itself and/or assessing monetary fines against the filer, the lawyer, or both. Striking the brief, however, would increase the Court’s workload. Simply ignoring the brief would be much easier than creating a process for decisions to strike that would result in significant disagreements on the Court. The sanction would be difficult to implement as well, since a triggering standard likely would be vague, at least in application. Sanctions also might risk something akin to a chilling effect—discouraging speech offered as part of a judicial proceeding out of concern about legal sanctions.

Striking the brief might have a less depressive effect than a fine, but the public humiliation could still cause filers and their counsel to worry about judicial reaction to a brief that uses strategies outside the customary variety, especially in light of the vagueness of the standard. Further, almost inevitably, the reach of post-filing sanctions would be broader than the goal. Lawyers would surely want to build a hedge

293. Interviews with seventy Supreme Court law clerks refer to such a sorting role. “Nearly all clerks (83%) skimmed or looked over every amicus brief filed,” carefully reading only the briefs they found to be useful. “One clerk described his personal system of screening amicus briefs as ‘separating the wheat from the chaff.’” Lynch, supra note 60, at 43. The late Justice Scalia confirmed that he did not read the amicus briefs as a general rule but rather asked his law clerks to read them and identify those of value. Andrew Wolfson, Gay Marriage Court Briefs Both Wacky, Profound, USA TODAY (Apr. 14, 2015), http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/04/14/gay-marriage-court-briefs-wacky-profound/25762729/.

294. While the content of the brief could be disseminated to a broader audience in other ways, it likely could not be communicated directly to the Justices themselves, and it is to the Justices that the amicus filers wish to speak.

295. Professor Garcia has suggested using a standard similar to that created by Rule 11. Garcia, supra note 78, at 349-52. Among other things, Rule 11 allows sanctions for knowingly signing litigation documents (1) when presented for an improper purpose, such as to harass, cause delay, or increase litigation costs; (2) when the arguments are frivolous; or (3) when the facts lack evidentiary support. Id. That standard has the virtue of familiarity in a trial court setting, but it has not been applied in an appellate context. Developing precedent explaining the standard in the appellate setting would impose significant new work on the Court.

around the Torah in order to avoid the public humiliation and possible financial consequence accompanying sanctions. Thus, sanctions would be either ineffec-
tual because seldom applied or too effectual, thus risking a depressive effect on advocacy.

Three other less severe options exist, however, all functioning as supple-
ments to the Court’s current sorting practice. In ascending order of change, the Court could (1) publicize informal best practices for amicus briefs, especially on
matters of reliability and relevance; (2) amend the rules to require amicus briefs
to explain their reliability and relevance; or (3) amend the appellate timeline to
create a designated window to allow parties to reply to amicus briefs.

Promulgating a set of informal best practices is the easiest and the least re-
active. The Court could endorse a set of best practices and couple it with a mes-
sage indicating that briefs consistent with these practices likely would be consid-
ered more persuasive than briefs not in compliance. This approach avoids
concerns of prior restraint or speech-chilling, and it does not require amendments
to the rules. Nor does it increase the Court’s current workload. It might result in
some immediate improvement in the quality of briefs, but it could also serve as
the first step of a gradual, measured approach to reform. After endorsing a set of
best practices, the Court could continue its internal sorting process and monitor
amicus briefing. The list of best practices could provide standards by which
briefs could be evaluated, either by the parties in the consent process, by parties
or other amicus filers in responsive briefs, or informally by the Court in its own
deliberations. Best practices, at least for voices briefs, might include the follow-
ing:

- **Citing to the original sources.** In the case of stories originally
gathered by an organization, the brief should explain fully the
gathering process and the instruments used.
- **Providing electronic access to original sources.** The brief could
provide the Court and the parties with electronic links as the
primary form of access, with CD-ROM or flash drive transfer
available on request.  
- **Including names where possible.** If the stories must be anony-
mous, an appendix should include a sworn affidavit explaining

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297. The Supreme Court’s style manual for its own opinions weighs in on the matter of online
materials. The manual:

> strongly discourages citation of otherwise-unpublished online materials . . . because of their
> corruptibility by hackers, natural disaster, technological obsolescence, and similar factors and
> because of their transient nature. While the Court’s opinions will be relied on as authority for
decades, even centuries, many of the materials posted on Internet Web sites are deleted within
days, weeks, or months after their inclusion. Entire online sites come and go with alarming
frequency, and sites regularly adopt entirely new Internet addresses (URLs).

Office of the Reporter of Decisions, Supreme Court of the United States, The Supreme
Court’s Style Guide § 0.2 (Jack Metzler ed., 2016).
the need for anonymity and the manner of assurance of accuracy.

- Providing the public with hyperlink access to the original versions of the stories. These more public versions of the stories could be redacted to preserve anonymity.

- Committing to maintain the hyperlink on a website for a set period of time, perhaps ten years, in order to minimize link rot.

- Providing the stories in the words of the individual herself, where possible, rather than in language crafted by a lawyer, the amicus filer, or another third party.

- Including in the brief a section explaining the stories’ relevance to the legal standard or policy argument at issue.

- Including in the brief a section explaining why the proffered stories are legitimately considered legislative facts rather than adjudicative facts.

Second, moving beyond an informal list of best practices, the Court could require amicus briefs to include a formal section explaining (a) the degree of reliability of their non-legal information; (b) the information’s relevance to the legal issue; and (c) the information’s legitimate status as legislative fact. Simply drafting such a section would focus the brief-writer’s attention on these concerns and likely would result in some improvement. It also would focus attention in chambers on whether the assertions in that section of the brief were accurate. This approach would require a rule amendment and might thus require more effort than the Court would like to invest at this point. But after a few years of working with a set of best practices, this approach could offer a potentially productive second step.

Third, instead of tightening the consent process, the Court could amend the rules to allow the parties (and only the parties) time to file a short reply to amicus briefs (one brief per party, not one brief per amicus brief). The reply could respond particularly to matters of reliability and relevance. This approach would have the advantage of placing most of the enforcement responsibility on the parties rather than on the Court and of assisting the in-chambers sorting process. While the reply brief would add some work in chambers, it would be relatively easy to read and digest. Work in chambers need not await the filing of the reply, so there would be little to no delay.

Amending the appellate timeline could bring another benefit. The newly amended rule could slightly increase the time allowed for filing amicus briefs.

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298. Id. “Link rot” is the tendency of websites to be abandoned or removed, so the information becomes unavailable. See Stopping Link Rot: Aiming to End a Virtual Epidemic, NAT’L PUB. RADIO (Apr. 26, 2014), http://www.npr.org/sections/alttechconsidered/2014/04/26/307041846/stopping-link-rot-aiming-to-end-a-virtual-epidemic.
The goal would be to permit meaningful attention to the Court’s no-duplication standard. Proposed amicus filers could be required to provide their proposed brief to the parties as part of the consent process. They might even be required to include a statement of what their brief would add to the briefs of the parties. The simple requirement of articulating and applying the non-duplication standard might improve compliance by amicus filers, even if parties continue to grant consent freely. To accomplish that goal, filing deadlines would need to change. Amicus filers would need additional time to examine the supported party’s brief, to finalize their own brief, and to seek consent to file.

If the rules are amended in one of these forms, the implicit procedural disadvantage to petitioners discussed above could be resolved as well. Allowing the parties to file simultaneous short replies to all amicus arguments as a last step in the briefing process would allow the petitioner to respond without using space in its reply brief, thus placing the parties on more even procedural footing.

These three approaches balance a number of important goals. They would maintain the parties’ control over their own litigation while recognizing the legitimate interests of non-parties. They would maintain a level playing field and preserve the rights of others to craft their own appellate arguments without the depressive effect of pre-filing hurdles or post-filing sanctions. They would conserve judicial resources and avoid needlessly increasing litigation costs. Most important, they would preserve a legitimate role for voices briefs while improving the briefs’ reliability and relevance.

CONCLUSION

On deeply personal constitutional issues, voices briefs are increasingly common, accounting for more than ten percent of the amicus briefs in Obergefell v. Hodges and over twenty percent of the amicus briefs in Whole Woman’s Health. These briefs tell non-party stories on appeal without the benefit of any evidentiary testing, a potentially troubling practice. Because they were rare in earlier years, they have been the subject of little comment and no analysis to date. Given their dramatically increased use in the last three years, however, the time has come to examine the practice and begin to draw some conclusions.

This Article has begun that analysis. We have seen that voices briefs do not run afoul of any legal requirements, and they fulfill most of the recognized roles long served by other kinds of amicus briefs. In fact, surprisingly, they are far less different from traditional policy briefs than one might initially assume. They are

299. Supra notes 288-291 and accompanying text.
300. A total of 144 amicus briefs were filed in Obergefell, see supra note 25, and 16 of them were voices briefs, see supra note 13.
301. A total of 80 amicus briefs were filed in Whole Woman’s Health, see Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt, SCOTUSBLOG, http://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/whole-womens-health-v-hellerstedt/ and 17 of them were voices briefs, see supra note 15.
at least as reliable as some other sources on which the Court increasingly relies. And because voices briefs are publicly submitted, unlike many of the web-based sources the Court now consults, the parties can respond to them rather than being blind-sided by them.

On a theoretical level, voices briefs are consistent with the overall policies behind procedural rules and forms of legal reasoning; with major schools of jurisprudence; and with major philosophies of constitutional interpretation. Further, in light of modern cognitive studies, they may be the only form of persuasion that can address the problem of preexisting bias. In fact, when an argument threatens an important preexisting value held by a judge, the stories in voices briefs may be one of the only ways to encourage that judge to engage in a rigorous traditional legal analysis. Voices briefs permit an appropriate amount of democratic involvement in cases that will govern the lives of parties and non-parties alike. Finally, even if a voices brief stands little chance of affecting the Court’s decision on the merits, it can and should affect the Court’s tone and attitude toward the losing side.

Voices briefs are not worry-free, however. They raise concerns about reliability, relevance, and the role of legislative facts on appeal. To address all of these concerns, the Article identifies three possible strategies. These strategies comprise a spectrum of judicial responses ranging from a gradual informal response to a more significant formal response. All of them, however, aim to preserve a role for voices briefs in constitutional deliberation.

Why? Because in addition to all the reasons listed above, voices briefs offer a chance for the Court and for all of us to engage in rhetorical listening—a feminist concept often ignored in theorizing about constitutional deliberation.\(^{302}\) Rhetorical listening is the primary way we can reach beyond our own limiting frames and better understand both ourselves and each other. Voices briefs can be a vehicle for that much-needed understanding.

\(^{302}\) See *supra* note 222 and accompanying text.
Telling Stories in the Supreme Court: Appendix A

Voices Briefs Filed to Date

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Pro-Life</td>
<td>Feminists for Life of America et al. 1989 WL 1115184</td>
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<td>Gonzales v. Carhart</td>
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<th>International Law Claims</th>
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<td>Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Petroleum Co.</td>
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<td>Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. 2015 WL 1048438</td>
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<td>Organizations That Promote Biological Parenting 2015 WL 1569761</td>
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<td>Little Sisters of the Poor Home for the Aged v. Burwell</td>
<td>Anti-Obamacare (challenging contraceptive coverage)</td>
<td>Residents and Families of Residents at Homes of the Little Sisters of the Poor 2016 WL 183800</td>
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