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Parliamentary Storytelling: a new concept in public engagement with parliaments

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This article focuses on the UK Parliament's recent efforts to engage citizens: specifically, the use of storytelling techniques to represent Parliament as a relevant and relatable institution. The use of these techniques is very recent within parliamentary engagement which, in its own right, is a relatively new addition to Parliament's functions and activities. Building on theories of parliamentary engagement, representation, and narratology, we construct a new conceptual framework of 'parliamentary storytelling' through which these recent engagement efforts can be understood and examined. In demonstrating the utility of this framework, we analyse three contemporaneous case studies according to five key components (and the dynamic between them): storyteller, narrator, characters, plot, and audience. In facilitating this unprecedented depth of analysis, the 'parliamentary storytelling' framework is relevant beyond the UK Parliament, and applicable to any legislatures intending to enhance – and more comprehensively understand – their own public engagement practice.

Keywords: representation, narrative, storytelling, parliament, engagement; UK Parliament

1: Introduction

Recent decades have witnessed a well-evidenced increase of public distrust in politics, particularly in relation to core political institutions such as parliaments (Dalton, 2017; Norris, 2011; Hay, 2007; Stoker, 2006; Dalton, 2004). In particular, there has been widespread scholarly acknowledgement ‘that high levels of support for democratic principles and even the democratic performance of [the] regime itself have gone hand in hand with low levels of trust in the institutions and actors that function in that regime’ (van der Meer, 2017, p.3); though susceptible to substantial fluctuation, a lack of trust in institutions suggest a disconnect between citizens’ own democratic principles and the perceived capacity of parliaments to support (or even abide by) them. It is in this context that parliaments have invested in the expansion of public engagement activities (Leston-Bandeira, 2013), in an attempt to redress disengagement. These efforts have been particularly evident within the UK Parliament since 2005 (Leston-Bandeira, 2016). In discussing parliamentary engagement, we adopt Walker et al.’s understanding of public engagement as a parliamentary function:

disseminating information about parliamentary business, at a deeper level to educate the public about parliament and policy-making, and at higher levels public consultation on policy and even participat[ion] in the co-production of parliamentary decisions. (2019, p.968)

Initiatives in this vein have been developed in a wide range of areas, from the creation of the Centre for Education in 2015 to the development of digital debates (also in 2015). In the development of these efforts, there has been considerable experimentation with different approaches to engagement; namely in the way these initiatives relate to parliamentary business, or the extent to which they are developed in parallel with business. As Walker points out, ‘for people to believe that Parliament is a worthwhile institution, it must be one which is perceived as personal, and relevant to the concerns of individuals’ (2011, p.275). It is therefore important

to also examine the ways in which citizens relate to parliamentary engagement efforts (and to the institution itself).

Parliaments can be understood as ‘places where competing narratives are told and claims on public resources are made’ (Parkinson, 2013, p.440). Narratives, as a means of understanding and experiencing social reality, are ‘told’ in the form of stories. Storytelling is therefore an essential facet of how Parliament, as an institution, is perceived and understood within a broader social reality. Moreover, there are recent parliamentary initiatives and publications that refer to *stories*; these initiatives include efforts to engage with citizens; ostensibly *through* storytelling. Examining storytelling in its own terms – i.e. using narrative theory – thereby helps us understand what (and who) Parliament – and its constituent Members, committees, and departments¹ – would ‘claim’ to be for. Storytelling thus constitutes an invaluable means of understanding and practising parliamentary engagement, both as a theoretical framework and an engagement technique. It therefore merits attention within Parliament and in academic study. Our article constitutes a major foundation in this respect: it utilises Barthes’ (1975) structural analysis of narrative to provide a robust framework for recognising, understanding and examining the typical characteristics of narratives. This is complemented by the ‘constructivist turn’ within the study of representation, and its re-conceptualisation of representation as a dynamic act of claim-making, through which we build our framework for studying storytelling as an engagement technique. In doing so, we provide a timely means of understanding parliamentary storytelling in theory *and* practice.

This article first defines the concept of ‘parliamentary storytelling’ in the context of engagement, discussing storytelling – across a myriad of institutions – as a means of connection with the intended audience(s). Through this discussion of narratives, storytelling and

¹ By ‘departments’ we refer in general to offices and services supporting the work of MPs and/or Lords.

representation, we identify the current absence of a theoretical framework for examining stories as (potentially) a new element of parliamentary engagement. In response to this academic lacuna, we then define, and elaborate, our framework for understanding and analysing ‘parliamentary storytelling’, based on five key components: storyteller (S), narrator (N), characters (C), plot (P), and audience (A). Our selection of these components draws upon narratological scholarship, as well as constructivist approaches to representation; both literatures emphasise communication as dynamic and relational. Following this discussion, we implement our framework – and demonstrate its utility – in analysing three case studies of storytelling within the UK Parliament’s public engagement. We then broaden our focus in order to discuss parliamentary storytelling alongside UK parliamentary engagement, and the potential significance of this concept as a new means of connecting, communicating and relating Parliament to citizens (and vice-versa).

2: A framework for conceptualising parliamentary storytelling

Within the context of public distrust we have alluded to above, Parliament’s efforts to engage the public have increased and diversified (Leston-Bandeira, 2016, pp.499-500). Parliamentary engagement – the process of connecting citizens to Parliament (and vice-versa), rather than simply representing their views to governance – is a relatively recent development in the UK and, where evident, is often one-way (in the manner of a broadcast) rather than dynamic (Norton, 2013). Typically, engagement is neither *practised* as a dynamic, nor *studied* as a dynamic; citizen ‘demand’ (e.g. shifts in trust and social capital), ‘intermediaries’ (e.g. mass media) and institutional ‘supply’ (e.g. democratic governance) ‘have often been treated separately by sub-disciplines in the fragmented and scattered research literature’ (Norris, 2011,

pp.7-8), rather than in relation to one another. This is a tendency which remains apparent.² As such, we propose to instead focus on the dynamic of parliamentary engagement. This is especially conducive to a discussion of a particular means by which parliamentary engagement is experienced: storytelling.

‘Stories’ and ‘narratives’ are often mentioned interchangeably in academic discussion (and everyday parlance); therefore, we distinguish between them. Humans have always told stories ‘to explain themselves to themselves and to others’ (Kearney, 2002, p.3); they are what ‘we *tell* each other’ (Langellier, 1999, p.125, emphasis added). Stories and narratives are ubiquitous; as Barthes contends, ‘there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative’ (1975, p.1). Narratives constitute the social knowledge – based on subjective experience and tradition (Young, 2000; Langellier, 1999; Lyotard, 1984) – that stories allude to. The American Dream is a *narrative*, a means of interpreting events and figures; while we do not *tell* the American Dream to another, we can *tell* a story (about a person, event, or experience) that alludes or refers to the American Dream narrative. Through this process, storytellers engage in a dynamic with an ‘audience, whose members can complete the outline based on their own fantasies, emotional circumstances, and ideologies’ (Bennett and Edelman, 1985, p.164).

Another crucial distinction relates to storytellers and *narrators*. Nick Carraway narrates a story told by Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*; Ishmael narrates a story told by Melville in *Moby Dick*. Abbott describes this distinction using the example of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*:

It is an implicit acknowledgment that a story is understood as having a separate existence from its narration. As such, it can be told in different ways by different narrators. Were Hindley or Cathy

² See Pavlović (2016) for an example of demand-centric approaches to engagement. Müller (2014) and Parvin (2018) exemplify approaches based on ‘intermediaries’ and ‘supply’, respectively.

our narrator at this point, the narration of this story would be different, with different words, different emotional inflections, different perspectives, and different details. (2007, p.39)

Whereas the position of the narrator of *Wuthering Heights* is changeable (Hindley, Cathy, Heathcliff, etc.), the position of Brontë (as storyteller) is fixed. Margolin similarly describes the narrator as a literary *point of view*, a ‘speech position...from which references to the entities, actions and events that this discourse is about are being made’, and who therefore ‘should be clearly distinguished from the → author who is of course an actual person’ (2009, p.351). Margolin later defines a storyteller ‘as an author-fabricator’ (2009, p.362) who produces the story and selects the medium. Using a similar distinction, Fludernik attests that an audience engages with a narrator, rather than a storyteller; ‘narratives are presented by a storyteller to an audience that interacts with the narrator while the story is being told’ (2009, p.64). As Barthes puts it, ‘[t]he living author of a narrative can in no way be mistaken for the narrator of that narrative...The one *who speaks* (in the narrative) is not the one *who writes*’ (1975, p.261, emphasis in original). This does not preclude ‘the one who speaks’ from being an ‘actual person’; as we discuss, real experiences can be woven into the story being told.

In this way, ‘[t]he storyteller takes what he tells from experience – *his own or that reported by others*, and ‘makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale’ (Benjamin, 2006, p.86, emphasis added). Through this dynamic of shared experience, storytelling is an intimate means of knowledge and relatability. This is a potentially valuable asset for engagement and *identification*, essential means by which citizens ‘not only understand the parliament, but can also see its relevance and are able to link parliamentary activity to their own lives and experiences’ (Leston-Bandeira, 2014, p.418). Storytelling makes use of a similar capacity for *self-recognition* (what Benjamin (2006, p.372) describes as the ‘reader see[ing] himself living this written life’) and relatability: ‘Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?’ (MacIntyre, 2007, p.16). Nussbaum similarly contends that an audience ‘[s]eeing events as general human

possibilities...naturally also see them as possibilities for themselves' (2001, p.241). Discerning which stories we feel 'part' of – and see ourselves within – is therefore fundamental to the relevance of a story to an audience (Prior, 2018).

Throughout history, storytelling has been applied as a means of engagement with an intended 'audience'; in commerce, marketing and brand management, for example, it is a long-established practice (Salmon, 2010). Microsoft currently employs a Chief Storyteller to help manage the company's image and to consider brand strategy from the point of view of the audience (Juarez, 2019).³ Storytelling is intrinsic to the functions of charities and religious institutions, which – like any other institution – aim 'to make [a] message stand out among the others, to attract the recipient's attention, to arouse emotions and to involve the recipient in interaction as well as to add credibility to the activities' (Kloch, Przybysz and Siarkiewicz, 2017, p.28). This approach has been applied and/or advocated in many other institutional settings, from higher education (McGee, 2015) to libraries (Wittman, 2019) and museums (Kidd, 2019). However, the utility of storytelling as a political tool is a fairly recent discussion within political science (Coleman, 2015; Escobar, 2011), typically focusing upon *partisan* rather than *parliamentary* politics. Meanwhile, narrative approaches to political science, such as the Narrative Policy Framework (Jones and McBeth, 2010), have typically focused upon matters of policymaking (McBeth, Jones and Shanahan, 2014), legislative hearings (O'Bryan, Dunlop and Radaelli, 2014), and other adversarial relationships *within* institutions, rather than institution-citizen dynamics.

³ Steve Clayton (Microsoft's Chief Storyteller), during an interview in April 2019, spoke of his objective to 'help people understand who we are, what we do, and why we exist', the usefulness of '[telling] the story of the technology through the lens of personal experience'. Clayton also maintained that 'our greatest storytelling is around helping people understand the purpose of the company' and 'who the audience is' (see: Juarez, 2019). All three of these points, as our article elaborates, are crucial facets of storytelling and engagement strategies more broadly. It is arguable that the post of Chief Storyteller is essentially a euphemism for more generic forms of PR; however, it demonstrates an attention to corporate identity that Parliament conspicuously lacks.

Discussing storytelling in the context of particular companies or parties is made more practicable by their relative ease in establishing a ‘brand identity’, a problematic concept for parliaments. A parliament is a non-partisan institution, yet simultaneously represents all parties; as Winetrobe points out, ‘[t]hey are forums where strong, very public, and often adversarial political debates take place, reflecting the party competition of the wider political system, yet they themselves are, in essence, neutral institutions’ (2003, p.1). Parties, unlike parliaments, are not ‘neutral’ institutions; and, unlike parliaments, they can typically (and easily) state *what they are* and *who they are for*. These basic questions, as Winetrobe contends, are largely absent from academic discussions of parliaments: ‘not simply...what parliaments do or should do – traditionally, the main focus of legislative studies...but what they are, and who are their “customers”’ (2003, p.2). As well as being absent within legislative studies, these discussions of the UK Parliament’s institutional identity also appear absent (or unresolved) within the institution itself;⁴ as Kelso attests,

Parliament struggles with its identity as a holistic institution...Yet Parliament is gradually working towards building an institutional identity for itself, consciously or otherwise, the lack of which is unquestionably at the heart of the whole issue of how Parliament approaches the public and engages with it. What is not in question, however, is that the road along which such an institutional identity is to be built will certainly be far from an easy one. (2007, p.372)

The task of building an institutional identity is made more complex by the fact that Parliament ‘is populated by active person-to-person claim-makers but those same claim-makers do not

⁴ The Scottish and Welsh Parliaments – both established relatively recently – acknowledge the value of corporate identity to engagement. The Scottish Parliament’s latest Brand Guidelines state that this institution’s ‘Corporate Identity has been designed to reflect the values of the Scottish Parliament in the balance between authority and openness’ (The Scottish Parliament 2020, p.6). The Welsh Parliament (formerly the National Assembly for Wales), in its Official Languages Scheme, described itself as ‘a bilingual organisation that serves a bilingual nation...Our culture and corporate identity must reflect these requirements’ (National Assembly for Wales 2017, p.41). In both cases, the institution acknowledges the importance of corporate identity in holistically and symbolically representing the values and needs of the institution (and society more broadly). Discussing the relationship between parliaments’ ‘youth’, and the degree to which a holistic identity is visible, is outside of the scope of this article. However, these documents show that a lack of holistic identity is not an *intrinsic* characteristic of legislatures.

primarily stand for, or make positive claims on behalf of, the institution itself' (Judge and Leston-Bandeira, 2018, p.162). In other words, Parliament's most recognisable denizens – MPs – typically represent (i.e. speak for) themselves and not their institution. Meanwhile, the 'task of appreciation building...has largely accrued to non-partisan institutional claim-makers (such as the Speaker of the House of Commons) or to parliamentary officials and services' (Judge and Leston-Bandeira, 2018, p.164). In the absence of a singular institutional identity, it is necessary – in understanding the dynamic of parliamentary engagement – to examine these claim-makers, the stories they tell about Parliament, and their intended audience(s).

At a theoretical level, the examination of what parliaments 'mean', and to whom – and who makes these institutional claims – has begun to emerge as an area of focus for legislative scholars, especially through the framework of representation in its myriad forms (Leston-Bandeira, 2016; Loewenberg, 2011; Parkinson, 2009). Addressing the broader literature on representation, the 'constructivist turn' conceptualises representation as a communicative act that takes the form of a proposition; thus there exists the maker of a *representative claim*, and an audience to which this claim is offered (Verovšek, 2016; Coleman, 2015; Disch, 2015; Lombardo and Meier, 2012; Mansbridge, 2011; Saward, 2010; Parkinson, 2009; Street, 2004; Hinchman and Hinchman, 2001). Consider Saward's critique of Pitkin's foundational text, *The Concept of Representation* (1967), and its downplaying of this dynamic:

For Pitkin...it is the inanimate object – the painting, the icon, the symbol, the map – that represents.

The intentions of the maker of the symbol, etc. are either ignored or reduced to merely informational impulses. (Saward, 2006, p.300)

Saward's emphasis on the dynamic of representation is highly relevant to the study of Parliament (as an institution speaking in many different voices to many audiences) and of storytelling, itself a dynamic between 'maker' and audience. The contribution of Saward (and the 'constructivist turn') is in emphasising intentions: the desired dynamic between the *maker*

(who, given the partiality of the dynamic, is also the *subject*) of the representative claim and its audience, as ‘the maker-subject constructs a new view of itself’ (Saward, 2006, p.305). The *audience(s)* – who may accept and legitimate a representative claim, thereby rendering it existent and meaningful – are therefore crucially important within this dynamic. Discussions of intensions and audience(s) are therefore key elements of parliamentary storytelling, as we see below when we incorporate them into our discussions of parliamentary storytelling, to reflect its conceptualisation as a dynamic.

Public engagement is a relatively recent addition to parliamentary activity, while the emergence of narrative techniques within some engagement efforts is more recent still. Case studies exemplifying ‘parliamentary storytelling’ – the use of narrative devices to inform, educate, consult and/or involve citizens, and connect Parliament to them – are therefore very recent and very few. However, there are now parliamentary initiatives and publications which make explicit references to stories and storytelling. Moreover, parliamentary select committees are increasingly calling for ‘public stories’ as part of their inquiries (for example, the Petitions Committee’s inquiries on high heels and workplace dress codes in 2017, and on brain tumour research funding in 2016) and directly referencing these stories in subsequent reports (Petitions Committee, 2016; Petitions Committee and Women and Equalities Committee, 2017). To better understand these varying applications, we first discuss our methodology, encompassing a selection of case studies and the means by which we examine them. In doing so, we present narrative as a means (and, in the form of storytelling, a unit) of analysis.

3: A methodology for identifying and analysing parliamentary storytelling

Having discussed the importance and ubiquity of narratives and storytelling, we now detail our methodology. We explain the way in which we identify and examine instances of narrative

devices being utilised as ‘parliamentary storytelling’. In doing so, we identify such elements as the storyteller, narrator, characters and plot, and audience. Through this analysis, we address an academic lacuna identified by Judge and Leston-Bandeira (2018, p.155); the lack of scholarly attention, within studies of engagement, on ‘what is being communicated to citizens about parliaments and...the nature of the parliamentary institutions that citizens are expected to engage with’. To return to MacIntyre’s question, it is not just a matter of determining which stories an audience may find themselves ‘part of’. We must also ask: who could be *part* of the audience who may, in turn, become *part* of the story? And in what way might this shape different approaches to engagement?

Narrative provides the foundation for our methodology; being consistent with our subject matter, it provides us with the means to examine stories in their own context. Narrative analysis is also a widely used interpretive approach within the social sciences and humanities, most of which

have recently turned to narrative analysis for the human involvement in reporting and evaluating experience...a careful analysis of the topics, content, style, context and telling of narratives told by individuals or groups under ethnographic study should, in principle, give researchers access to tellers’ understandings of the meanings of key events in their lives, communities or cultural contexts. This is to analyse narrative as text or product, but narrative can also be analysed as a social process or performance in action. (Cortazzi, 2001, p.384)

In this case, rather than ‘capturing’ stories through ethnographic techniques (e.g. observation; interviews), we instead focus on ‘narratives as text’ and identify pre-existing materials as case studies. These cases have been chosen on the basis of their explicit incorporation of (and referral to) narrative techniques as a means of engaging their intended audience.

In selecting case studies, we focus primarily on stories and narratives utilised by, or on behalf of Parliament, rather than narratives of (i.e. about) Parliament. Though the latter is a key

component of studying public perceptions of Parliament (for instance, see Flinders' (2012) and Fielding's (2011) discussions of the 2009 expenses scandal), our focus is on storytelling as a means by which an institution *addresses* these perceptions, and thereby 'constructs a new view of itself', to borrow Saward's aforementioned phrasing. We provide three examples of 'parliamentary storytelling' below, all of which make explicit reference to stories (as a means of citizen input and/or communicating Parliament to citizens). The case studies do not constitute a comprehensive account of storytelling in Parliament, but rather an indication of instances in which storytelling is most explicitly used and/or discussed (as well as where, within Parliament, these activities are located):

1. *Your Story, Our History*
2. *The Story of Parliament*
3. *Funding for research into brain tumours*

The *Your Story, Our History* initiative (UK Parliament Education and Engagement Service, 2016) is a series of YouTube films commissioned by Parliament, in which one or two people discuss the impact of a piece of legislation on their lives.⁵ These include Shango Baku – who travelled to the UK in 1962 aboard the RMS *Ascania* – describing his experiences of racism, the importance of legislation outlawing discrimination in public places (including the 1965 Race Relations Act) and ongoing challenges faced by immigrants. *The Story of Parliament* (House of Commons Enquiry Service, 2016) available in booklet and poster form, charts the evolution of Parliament alongside the UK's democratic development. This encompasses early contestations of monarchical rule – including the Magna Carta and the de Montfort Parliament

⁵ The #YourStoryOurHistory hashtag is still used to mark major events and relay viewers back to previous films. For example, Lesbian Visibility Day 2019 was publicised on Twitter (using the same hashtag) through @YourUKParliament, with a website link to a 2017 *Your Story, Our History* film on the effects of parliamentary legislation on Queer Women of Colour. See: Your UK Parliament, 2019. *Mark #LesbianVisibilityDay by listening to Nadine and Tia 🧡❤️🧡 share their experiences of how the 2003 Local Government Act and the 2004 Civil Partnerships Act have impacted their lives as queer women of colour. #YourStoryOurHistory.* [Twitter]. 26 April. [Accessed 10 April 2019]. Available from: <https://twitter.com/YourUKParl/status/1121720526509047808>

– and more recent milestones, such as the reduction of the voting age to 18 in 1969. *Funding for research into brain tumours*, an inquiry report published by the House of Commons Petitions Committee (2016), cites the stories of citizens who had lost loved ones to brain cancer, and could attest to the small percentage of cancer research funding apportioned to brain tumours.

These examples were chosen in order to balance cross-comparison with depth of discussion. There are many references to ‘stories’ across parliamentary engagement initiatives and documentation. However, the three examples we chose were selected because they draw especial attention to the *telling* of stories; as a form of citizen input and/or communicating (and relating) Parliament to citizens. In this sense, we do not categorise or compartmentalise these examples *only* as ‘parliamentary storytelling’ (rather than parliamentary engagement, for instance). Instead, we identify them as employing common narrative devices (and thus being directly relevant to a study of parliamentary storytelling). For example, all three present a sequence of events (Abbott, 2008; Barthes, 1975) that is described in the past tense (Abbott, 2008). Besides this, all three were published in 2016, enabling us to examine three contemporaneous case studies and how they differ from each other. The usefulness of these case studies is reinforced by the fact that *Your Story, Our History* is an ongoing initiative, and *The Story of Parliament* is continually distributed by Parliament’s Participation Team, and remains available in Portcullis House, an important site of ‘social interaction and engagement’ for Members and visitors (Hansard Society, 2011, p.69).

The narrative techniques within these examples, and the types of audience that they address (and conceptualise) is therefore a question of *ongoing relevance* to parliamentary storytelling and engagement. While the *Funding for research into brain tumours* report is not an ongoing initiative, it demonstrates an approach to storytelling which merits discussion alongside them. All three examples originate from different sectors within Parliament (with potentially different

engagement objectives); an in-depth comparison enables us to explore the ways in which different teams across parliament understand ‘parliamentary storytelling’. For the purposes of our analysis, we can broadly characterise three key elements within the process of ‘parliamentary storytelling’:

1. The storyteller and narrator
2. The characters and plot
3. The audience

We condense storyteller and narrator into one element, as it is vital to discuss both in relation to one another. As we discuss, it is also possible for the storyteller to be the narrator. We then examine the dynamic between characters and plot, utilising narrative theory. This three-part conceptualisation broadly mirrors the constructivist model of representation, by which (1) a representative (2) puts forward a ‘claim’ to (3) an audience who can, in turn, legitimate the claim (and, by extension, the representative). As with this constructivist model of representation, we understand storytelling *and engagement* to be dialogic, and circular rather than linear; not a ‘broadcast’, nor a ‘correspondence’, but a dynamic. This reinforces the significance of the audience and, by extension, the necessity of examining it. We address all three of these storytelling elements – storyteller/narrator, characters/plot, and audience – to analyse Parliament’s own understanding (and utilisation) of narrative devices.

4: Storytellers and narrators: who is telling the story?

Taking the first element of parliamentary storytelling (storyteller and narrator), an understanding of this process necessitates establishing who is actually *telling* the stories. This is a pertinent question, as storytellers enjoy ‘the most privileged position in the storytelling event’, since they are ‘aware how it will turn out’ (Bauman, 1986, p.38). Not only that,

storytellers *control* how the story will turn out, and what (as well as whom) it claims to represent. In the case of *Your Story, Our History*, the identity of the storyteller may appear obvious: the person shown on screen. However, one of the lasting contributions of the ‘constructivist turn’ is its focus on the *makers* of representations (Saward, 2010), who are not *visible* but remain *present*, influencing the formation of communicative acts in accordance with pre-existing intentions. Identifying *Parliament* as the storyteller would portray Parliament as somehow coherent or *unified*, whereas – as we have already discussed – existing research suggests the existence of multiple personae; it would also ignore or downplay the role of the individuals who are part of the institution. In understanding the applications of storytelling, it is useful to understand the context in which these stories are generated, by whom, and with what aim(s). Since the three examples in question have different points of origin, it is important to discuss the relationship between the stories discussed thus far – *The Story of Parliament*, *Your Story, Our History*, and *Funding for research into brain tumours* – and the parliamentary staff who published them.

In *Your Story, Our History*, each film is introduced as *[X]’s story* (i.e. the name of the individual being filmed). However, it is most accurate to describe these individuals as narrators rather than storytellers. As we have discussed from a narratological perspective, the narrator is the person or ‘voice’ whose viewpoint is used in telling a story, while the storyteller relates stories through one medium or another to an audience. The storyteller/narrator distinction encapsulates the dynamic between the parliamentary department and the citizens within this initiative: relating a story *through* the viewpoint of an individual. This is not to say that these individual experiences are simply used in an instrumental sense to benefit parliamentary storytelling. Ishmael and Carraway are inventions of Melville and Fitzgerald, whereas the individuals depicted in *Your Story, Our History* (and their deeply personal experiences) are certainly not ‘inventions’ of Parliament; their experiences are timelessly relevant and should

be heard. Instead, it should be seen as a demonstration that a proposed story about parliamentary legislation making a difference to individual lives is inextricable from (and meaningless without) the stories of those individuals to whom parliamentary legislation has made a difference.

This observation reinforces the dynamic nature of parliamentary engagement, as well as the significance of storytelling in shaping and constituting social realities. At this point we recall Benjamin's description of the storyteller, who 'takes what he tells from experience – *his own or that reported by others*' (2006, p.86, emphasis added). Parliamentary storytelling, in this instance, is taking what it tells from the experience of others, through whose eyes the story is experienced. In the *Funding for research into brain tumours* report, the Petitions Committee presents numerous first-hand accounts; in one instance, the Committee attests to being 'profoundly moved by the story of Stephen Realf, as told to us by his sister and his parents. We present it here in their own words' (2016, p.7). This constitutes a reversal of the dynamic in *Your Story, Our History*, in which citizens were *narrating* (through their own experiences) a story being *told* by a parliamentary department. In describing *their experience* of (i.e. being 'profoundly moved by') this input, the Committee explicitly *narrates* stories being *told* by citizens. This suggests that even though the 'privileged' role of storyteller is ultimately retained by the respective department/committee, the narrator-storyteller link is reversible and dynamic *within* an act of parliamentary storytelling, showing a capacity for committees to relate (and *demonstrate* relation) to citizen input in many different ways. This is highly relevant to Parliament's broader efforts to engage, themselves reliant upon an intended dynamic between *maker* and *audience*.

The Story of Parliament provides another element to this complexity, inasmuch as the storyteller and (third person) narrator are indistinguishable. There is some mention of individuals, but no discernible narration of the story through their experiences; instead they are

presented as ‘characters’, a concept discussed further in the following section. Thus, even within the first element of ‘parliamentary storytelling’ (storyteller and narrator) we see that parliamentary storytelling can be approached and implemented very differently, as all three examples show a different dynamic between storyteller and narrator: (1) citizens narrating parliamentary stories, (2) a committee narrating citizens’ stories, and (3) a conflation of narrator and storyteller in the presentation of a parliamentary story. Examining the distinctions (and confluences) between narrator and storyteller in these instances is central to understanding the different dimensions of storytelling as a means of engagement. It also allows us to examine which (and, more broadly, whether) citizen stories are being (re)told via Parliament, and thereby offers an invaluable lens through which to view the dynamic between institution and citizen.

5: Characters and plot: what, and who, are parliamentary stories about?

The concept of a ‘plot’ is particularly relevant in understanding *The Story of Parliament*, in which a narrator and storyteller are less easy to identify than in the other two examples we have discussed. However, in *The Story of Parliament* we can still identify *characters*, or ‘participa[nts] in a sphere of actions’ (Barthes, 1975, p.258). In *Your Story, Our History* and the *Funding for research into brain tumours* report, these ‘participants’ were (respectively) *narrating* parliamentary legislation and *telling* their personal experiences. *The Story of Parliament* includes characters such as Simon de Montfort, Charles I, Emily Wilding Davison, and even Parliament itself. Margolin describes characters as ‘play[ing] a role, no matter how minor, in one or more of the states of affairs or events told about in the narrative’ and as ‘participants in the narrated domain, the narrative agents’ (2007, p.66). Discussing characters is therefore essential when examining the plot of a story.

In Aristotelian poetics, the notion of character is secondary, entirely subordinated to the notion of plot. There can be fables without characters, according to Aristotle, but there cannot be characters without fables. This view has been upheld by classical theoreticians (Vossius)...Without going so far as to ignore characters in his analysis, Propp reduced them to a simple typology, based not on psychology but on the homogenous nature of the actions assigned to them by the narrative (giver of the magic object, Assistant, Villain, etc.). (Barthes, 1975, p.256)

As Abbott attests, ‘plot’ has been defined variously within literary theory and common discussion; sometimes being synonymous with ‘story’, sometimes with ‘the order in which the story-events are arranged in the narrative’ (2008, p.240). Abbott also highlights another definition; ‘the chain of *causally* connected events in a story’ (2008, p.240). This last definition is invaluable when applied to *The Story of Parliament*, in examining the plot as ‘the shaping principle or dynamic that is revealed in the way the story is held together’ (Abbott, 2008, p.18). Parliament (i.e. the House of Commons Enquiry Service, the ‘storytellers’ in this instance) is making a *causal* claim in describing the Magna Carta, the Model Parliament, the Bill of Rights, votes for women, and so on. The claim is that these events constitute and reflect a development ‘from monarchy to democracy’ (House of Commons Enquiry Service, 2016, p.3) and, by extension, that the story of Parliament is inextricable from (*and crucial to*) the story of UK democracy. Through this causal ‘timeline’ format, the story is presented as objectively true (i.e. a story that would be told the same way each time), even though parliaments are – to recall Parkinson’s definition – ‘places where *competing* narratives are told’ (2013, p.440, emphasis added). This speaks to the aforementioned prerogative of the storyteller (or, in *The Story of Parliament*, the storyteller-narrator) in determining the course of a story.

In acknowledging that the storyteller controls the plot (in the form of sequence, and shaping principles), it must also be said that the storyteller does not necessarily control what a story is actually about. In doing so, we recall Bennett and Edelman’s description of the

‘audience...complet[ing] the outline based on their own fantasies, emotional circumstances, and ideologies’ (1985, p.164). Barthes, meanwhile, observes that

Each point in the narrative radiates in several directions at a time: when James Bond orders a whiskey while waiting for the plane...it is a sort of symbolic node which attracts and combines several signifieds (modernity, wealth, leisure)...the ordering of a whiskey must work its way through several relays (consumption, waiting, departure) before it reaches its final meaning. (1975, p.267)

Though the author can pre-empt and anticipate these signifieds and relays to some extent, it is left to the audience to ‘complete the outline’ of its meaning. This also echoes Saward’s theory of representation, by which ‘[a] maker of representations (M) puts forward a subject (S) which stands for an object (O) which is related to a referent (R) and is offered to an audience (A)’ (2006, p.302). Leston-Bandeira demonstrates this through the case study of

the Arts in Parliament programme in the summer of 2012, which was developed to coincide with the Olympics in London...One representative claim may be the Houses of Parliament (M) utilising its own space to share contemporary art (S) as evocative of perceptions of democracy (O), to the public (A). (2016, p.512)

Representation – through this framework – takes the form of a claim made to an audience which can be accepted or rejected; in this case, contemporary art within parliamentary space as an evocation of democratic perceptions. Citizens, in this instance, ‘may see it as evocative of other ideas such as peace or challenging issues faced by society’ (Leston-Bandeira, 2016, p.512). This is a crucial point: that the maker of the claim may provide a subject in order to evoke perceptions (which may involve some consideration, or even attempted prediction, of what these might be), but the perceptions themselves are outside of the maker’s control. In this sense the meaning of the subject, and even what it is about, represents an outline completed subjectively by the citizen (or not at all). This reflects the notion of a storyteller’s control over how a story is held together, but not what it is *about* (nor, crucially, what it *means*).

The Story of Parliament, for instance, would appear to be ‘about’ the development of parliamentary democracy (and Parliament itself). *Your Story, Our History*, meanwhile, is seemingly ‘about’ parliamentary legislation (as we have discussed, *through* the relation of citizens’ experiences of it) and, by extension, the continued relevance of Parliament. The *Funding for research into brain tumours* report is similar in the sense that it is making a claim for parliamentary relevance; or, more specifically, the relevance of the Petitions Committee (2016, p.4) *within* Parliament; ‘set up in July 2015 and...from the outset, aim[ing] to give the public a direct channel to call for action from the Government and Parliament’. Like *Your Story, Our History* (and unlike *The Story of Parliament*), the term ‘story’ is discussed – within the text itself – in connection with public experience and testimony. What is notable is that the authors of the report (i.e. Committee staff, with the approval of Members)⁶ make frequent references to ‘moving’ and ‘painful’ stories, to being ‘profoundly moved’ by them, being ‘struck by the common themes’ across them. Particularly candid is the following comment, made in relation to the setup of a web thread, inviting public stories and experiences of brain tumours:

We were struck by the number of incredibly moving stories it received in a short space of time. We were deeply touched by people’s willingness to share profoundly tragic and painful stories, in order to help with our inquiry. (Petitions Committee, 2016, p.11)

There is considerable discussion, then, of publics’ personal stories by parliamentary staff within this report, and of what these personal stories meant to them. This is reinforced (and analogised) by the description, in the previous section, of a ‘reversal’ of the narrator-storyteller link, and the capacity for committees to relate (and *demonstrate* this relation) to citizen input in many different ways, through telling *and* narrating it. Taken alongside *Your Story, Our*

⁶ The dynamic between staff and Members in this context, and with respect to public engagement and input more broadly (see: Hendriks and Kay, 2019; Hendriks and Lees-Marshment, 2019) would be an important consideration for studies of longer-term take-up of storytelling by committees as a mode of input and engagement, though it is outside the scope of this article.

History, the report demonstrates the usefulness of stories to parliamentary engagement in a dynamic sense; in other words, it shows that stories can not only relate Parliament to citizens (for example, through stories of parliamentary legislation), but can also relate citizens to Parliament (for example, when committees read citizens' own experiences of an inquiry topic). In all of the cases we have discussed, there is a crucial role for an audience in 'completing the outline'. This necessitates further discussion of who or what can be described as an audience in this context, and also a consideration of an 'audience' by a collective institution such as Parliament. We discuss both in the following sections.

6: Audience: 'completing the outline'

Before discussing the concept of 'audience' within our case studies, it is important to consider how the literature on political engagement in the UK has addressed this term. The concept of 'audience' remains invaluable to the study of engagement, especially in understanding its dynamic nature. This relates not only to the aforementioned concept of the representative claim (and the significance of the audience within it), but also to a recent repurposing of 'the theatre metaphor', traditionally a shorthand for 'rigid "them" and "us", "on-stage" and "off-stage" distinctions' in politics (Ryan and Flinders, 2017, p.142). Through a closer examination of 'the history and theory of theatre', characterised by the 'fluid, shifting, reciprocal, and almost infinitely variable' distinctions between performer and audience (2017, p.142), Ryan and Flinders establish that these terms – typically invoked when describing archaic and/or exclusionary forms of politics – are in fact an effective analogy and framework for 'an increasingly dynamic and fluid repertoire of civic expression – from occupations and silent flash mobs to ad-jamming, e-petitioning, and "slutwalks".' (2017, p.134)

This concept of ‘audience’ is relevant in understanding not only the dynamics of political engagement, but also public engagement with Parliament. The aforementioned ‘dynamic’ and ‘fluid’ qualities of contemporary political engagement often appear absent from *parliamentary* engagement, likely attributable to the latter’s relatively recent emergence. As we have discussed, it is only recently that either House has demonstrated a means (or inclination) to engage citizens, or even inform them (Norton, 2013, p.147). Even in comparatively recent instances of what we may recognise as engagement – for example, utilising digital technology to maximise a prospective audience – these attempts tended to ‘disseminate material rather than encourage a dialogue’ (Norton, 2013, p.151). Encouraging a dialogue entails a consideration (and, therefore, a conceptualisation) of an audience as part of a dynamic. This is an especially pertinent consideration for the UK Parliament, in attempting to engage ‘a less deferential and more cynical public audience’ (Judge and Leston-Bandeira, 2018, p.160). In this context, Parliament’s relevance (and existence) within the UK political system, if once taken for granted, has become precarious. It is therefore crucial to include the concept of ‘audience’ within our framework, entailing a discussion of how audiences are conceptualised and formed. Publics, as Warner attests, ‘exist only by virtue of being addressed’ (2002, p.67). Moreover, these acts ‘only work, or even exist, if ‘audiences’ acknowledge them in some way, and are able to absorb or reject or accept them or otherwise engage with them’ (Saward, 2006, p.303). As Young (2000, p.130) states, ‘in most situations the specific constituency exists at best potentially; the representative institutions and the process of authorization themselves call its members into action’. Crucially, the constituency being described can relate to *themes* in the story; relatability is therefore not the preserve of those with personal experience of its events (Young, 1996, p.131). At this point we can make two crucial observations with respect to audiences: firstly, the audience(s) for parliamentary engagement and storytelling are *created* by the attempts themselves. Secondly, attempts at storytelling only exist as a form of

engagement *if the audience(s) accept them as such*. As such, they succeed or fail (i.e. exist or do not exist) on the basis of the audience(s) they create, who may subsequently *relate* and *engage with* them. We thereby discuss the audiences that the below examples aim to ‘address into existence’ (by searching for instances of the term “you*”).⁷ Examples from this text search are provided below:

- *The Story of Parliament*: ‘Contact us if *you* have a question about the work or membership of the House of Commons or House of Lords’ (House of Commons Enquiry Service, 2016, emphasis added)
- *Funding for research into brain tumours*: ‘The journey of *your* e-petition’ (Petitions Committee, 2016, p.4, emphasis added)
- *Your Story, Our History*: ‘Wherever *you* live, no matter who *you* are or your background, the laws that the UK Parliament passes affect and shape all areas of *your* life’ (UK Parliament Education and Engagement Service, 2016, emphasis added)

We reiterate that there is no ‘public’, no audience, for parliamentary storytelling, outside of those who are personally addressed (i.e. to whom the story is *told*). Using the extracts above, we can assess the audience for all three examples of parliamentary storytelling. In *The Story of Parliament*, the audience comprises those who already have questions. In *Funding for research into brain tumours*, it is those who signed an e-petition. This should be considered alongside research commissioned by the Liaison Committee (Flinders, Marsh and Cotter, 2015, p.48), which identified ‘dissemination of final reports’ as ‘an opportunity to re-engage with those who have submitted evidence and those who may engage in the future’. The Petitions Committee report addresses the first ‘opportunity’ but not the second, addressing an already-involved audience. *The Story of Parliament* similarly addresses an audience that is already interested

⁷ The asterisk in this context represents a placeholder for unknown or ‘wildcard’ terms; in this instance, any permutation of the word ‘you’ (‘your’, ‘you’re’, ‘yours’, etc.)

(enough to ask questions). In addressing anyone who may be watching – regardless of location, identity or background – *Your Story, Our History* represents the clearest attempt to reach beyond a closed loop, to those for whom Parliament may not be an existing interest, but a common denominator of relatable stories (life experiences, influential legislation).

These examples represent attempts to ‘talk to multiple publics in multiple ways’, another recommendation of the aforementioned research commissioned by the Liaison Committee. However, acknowledging Warner’s aforementioned contention that publics ‘exist only by virtue of being addressed’, we conclude that the ‘publics’ in question, though myriad in nature, are nonetheless largely characterised by being already interested or engaged, rather than traditionally elusive; ‘those who may engage in the future’, in other words. This provides impetus for a clearer framework for parliamentary storytelling with respect to the ‘public’, or ‘audience’; not only *who they are*, but *who they may be* in future. We can combine this with our previous observations relating to factors such as the narrator and storyteller, characters, and plot, in order to conceptualise a framework for parliamentary storytelling and narration.

7: Towards a framework for parliamentary storytelling

Throughout this article we have conceptualised a framework for parliamentary storytelling, based on the following components: storyteller (S) and narrator (N), characters (C) and plot (P), and audience (A). All of these require consideration and identification as part of effective parliamentary storytelling. This framework is informed by the theories of narrative and representation we have discussed. The examples we examined did not inform the framework *per se*, but instead demonstrate the ways in which this framework can be applied to different projects, initiatives and publications. In the context of committee publications, for example, the framework could be used to analyse reports which incorporated some form of narration or

storytelling (to identify, through its level of consistency with the framework, how storytelling could be used even more effectively in future), or even if none existed (to illustrate how storytelling could have been a valuable addition). Through this framework, various implementations of storytelling within engagement (and its constitutive elements) can be identified, as well as the means by which citizens can relate their own experiences to Parliament.

This framework is also useful in identifying what is and what is not storytelling: *Your Story, Our History* was classified simply as a ‘public engagement project’ (alongside events such as London History Day) in a recent Commons Library Briefing (Kelly and Bochel, 2018). Initiatives such as *Your Story, Our History* should instead be recognised as a particular, or even specialised, form of engagement: parliamentary storytelling. Recognising particularities and specialisations is key to effective parliamentary engagement, itself a central tenet of representative democracy: ‘freedom of public expression, the electoral mandating of representatives and their lawmaking powers’ (Alonso, Keane and Merkel, 2011, p.7). The UK Parliament is a key mediator between citizens and governance (Leston-Bandeira, 2016), and its essentiality to UK democracy is a source of broad (and consistent) acknowledgement (Hansard Society, 2017, p.27). The significance of effective (and ongoing) engagement is therefore critical.

To discuss Parliament itself as a storyteller is an act of synecdoche; describing a whole by a part of it. Parliament contains – and, in an implicit sense, employs – storytellers. It also contains narrators. Nevertheless, Parliament continues to be defined largely by its membership (MPs); as Norton (2013, p.140) states, ‘[r]ather than engaging in direct participation, people have looked to their representatives in Parliament’.⁸ Though the roles of MPs are essentially *defined*

⁸ For an example of a Member of Parliament telling stories about Parliament, see Jacob Rees-Mogg discussing the historical importance of Westminster Hall. Leader of the House of Commons, 2019. *Westminster Hall, built in the reign of William II, has witnessed so much. It is part of our living history and, as the oldest part of the*

by Parliament (i.e. as members), their responsibilities go beyond it – to constituents, party, and government – and can openly conflict with parliamentary interests. This association between Parliament and MPs relates back to the aforementioned difficulty of establishing a singular identity, and raises additional issues in terms of public perception; in the latest Hansard Society Audit of Political Engagement, only a third of respondents expressed confidence in Members of the House of Commons and Lords to act in the public interest (2019, p.11). In addition, events such as the 2009 expenses scandal ‘slotted very easily into an already-established narrative in which politics and corruption were close bedfellows’ (Fielding, 2011, p.227). Against this narrative, parliamentary departments (distinct from MPs) can tell and/or narrate ‘the stories which people tell and live which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives’ (Andrews, 2004, p.1) such as inherent political corruption. These efforts can, in turn, be understood through a framework of ‘parliamentary storytelling’.

It is also important to note that these stories do not need to originate from Parliament. Across three examples studied within this article, we identified cases of (1) citizens narrating parliamentary stories, (2) a committee narrating citizens’ stories, and (3) a conflation of narrator and storyteller in the presentation of a parliamentary story. This second case (citizens narrating parliamentary stories) provides another nuance to our discussion of parliamentary storytelling, and to parliamentary engagement more broadly. It exemplifies a form of engagement based on citizens *telling* stories about themselves and their point of view, which can then be *narrated* and circulated by Parliament. This is a vital observation within a discussion about parliamentary engagement through storytelling; the practice of storytelling can be just as dynamic and multi-directional as parliamentary engagement. Consistent with our assertion that parliamentary engagement cannot be reduced to a binary correspondence

Palace of Westminster, remains at the centre of British political life. [Twitter]. 1 November. [Accessed 20 February 2020]. Available from: <https://twitter.com/CommonsLeader/status/1190235363018760193>

between institution and citizen (instead existing in the dynamic between them), parliamentary storytelling exists in a storytelling dynamic between both institution and citizen, with potential for storytelling and narration from either party. This demonstrates the applicability of our theoretical framework beyond a new communication strategy for Parliament; rather, it is a reinforcement of engagement understood as a dynamic, and the provision of a new means (i.e. storytelling) by which this dynamic can be achieved and enriched.

While this practice of ‘parliamentary narration’ is an intriguing and innovative case of storytelling, an examination of committees’ approaches to engagement and evidence – and the value placed on personal stories – suggests that the very basis of *storytelling* conflicts with institutional practice. In discussing the traditional evidence base for committee reports, the Institute for Government (IfG) observed that

...reference[s] to anecdotal material...are discouraged. This convention enables a report and the evidence on which it is based to provide a largely stand-alone, publicly-available resource...[h]owever, particularly when inquiries are conducted at speed, it can restrict the evidence base available to committees. (White, 2015, p.14)

While the IfG refers specifically to committee members’ own stories and anecdotes, we can identify a much broader discouragement of stories within Parliament. In explicitly discouraging anecdotal material within committee evidence, a Scottish Affairs Committee (2002, para.12) report argued that it ‘can serve to detract from rather than embellish a line of argument. Formal evidence to select committees benefits from being substantiated, so far as possible’. Similarly, the Committee on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions (2003, p.6) described the launch of an inquiry ‘as a serious attempt to get past the anecdote and prejudice to the evidence of the impact of planning on business’. This indicates a dichotomisation between evidence and anecdote, the latter portrayed as detrimental to committee work (to the extent that it *necessitates* an inquiry). Though it is

arguable that citizen stories do in fact play a vital (though, as yet, mostly uncredited) role in informing parliamentary research and publications, it remains apparent that the value of anecdotal material in general is at best unacknowledged and, at worst, explicitly downplayed. This, in turn, can only serve to discourage the telling/narration of citizen stories as engagement, further restricting the ‘evidence base’ described by the IfG.

In this context it is important to identify additional examples that counter this institutional practice. The Environmental Audit Committee and Defence Committee used platforms such as Shorthand to publicise their activities via interactive ‘digital stories’ (Walker *et al.*, 2019), in 2018 and 2019 respectively. Moreover, a Work and Pensions Committee inquiry on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) assessments noted that ‘[a] great many of the stories we heard were harrowing’, legitimating stories as input when crediting ‘the thousands of people who shared their stories with us, to inform the report’ (Work and Pensions Committee, 2018b). However, this language (taken from a bulletin *about* the report) is absent from the report itself, which mentions ‘stories’ only twice, and never in reference to citizen input (Work and Pensions Committee, 2018a). These examples do not acknowledge the power of stories to the same degree as the aforementioned Petitions Committee report, though this committee’s unique mandate (existing on public input), relatively recent establishment, and the presence of engagement officials within it, constitute an atypical relationship with public engagement (and, by extension, storytelling). Nevertheless, these examples downplay the notion that the Petitions Committee’s mandate, youth and composition render it *uniquely* receptive to storytelling. The examples discussed throughout this article indicate the emergence of storytelling within engagement, from numerous institutional points of origin. With this in mind, a framework of ‘parliamentary storytelling’ could not be more timely.

8: Conclusions

This article has demonstrated the significance of parliamentary storytelling as a mode of engagement. We have used representation and narrative theory to frame and analyse storytelling, and to clarify its applicability to Parliament and public engagement, thereby establishing the foundations of the concept of ‘parliamentary storytelling’. Parliamentary engagement is a relatively recent effort, and parliamentary storytelling more recent still. Parliamentary storytelling presents a new means of effective engagement with Parliament; one which not only ‘disseminates material’ but creates the audience(s) that can *connect to* the material. As such, it merits scholarly examination within broader discussions of Parliament and public engagement. It also merits attention from Parliament itself. Our examination of *Your Story, Our History*, as well as *The Story of Parliament* and *Funding for research into brain tumours* – contemporaneous parliamentary efforts – identifies different ways by which the audience(s) for a story can be constructed, and the different elements that shape storytelling more broadly (i.e. storyteller, narrator, characters, plot, and audience). These collectively reflect the importance of examining storytelling *and* engagement as dynamic (e.g. examining the audience(s) in relation to the storyteller, and plot in relation to characters).

Our article has also provided a theoretical framework through which Parliament (across myriad departments and committees) can better understand and appreciate the value of storytelling. This not only relates to the stories that Parliament may want to tell about itself (as in *The Story of Parliament; Your Story, Our History*), but also the stories that citizens tell about themselves (in *Funding for research into brain tumours*, for example). This recalls a central argument of this article: that storytelling (similar to other forms of engagement) is a dialogue, not a dissemination. Stories are not only *told*, but also *narrated*; through this process they are also *interpreted* and imbued with meaning. The relationship between narrator and storyteller is an important consideration within parliamentary engagement, as it determines whose experiences

are being relayed, by whom, and to what audience(s). The value of parliamentary storytelling applies not only to the UK Parliament, but to any legislature looking to enhance their public engagement practice. It is vital for those within parliaments to understand the importance of this relationship as part of their ongoing functions and efforts. It is also crucial for parliamentarians and scholars to appreciate the value of parliamentary storytelling as a potentially indispensable component within a broadening portfolio of engagement techniques and initiatives.

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