Before I begin, I'd like to thank the Tanner Humanities Center folks who make all these activities possible–Jeremy, Beth, Missy, and Skylar. And I'd like to thank my fellow fellows–I have loved spending the last few months learning from each of you. And it's lovely to see friends from the Writing & Rhetoric department–thanks for coming and enjoy the free food.

It's not fair for me to follow Matty, a poet. His work is at turns beautiful, funny, lyrical, and intense…not to mention the gorgeous video he played while he spoke. I, in turn, will be unBEARable…And I apologize.

Narratives do work in the world–giving rise to identity, challenging the status quo, and shaping sociocultural constructs. The stories we tell impact who we are, how we interpret the past, and how we envision the future. Narratives do work to establish credibility or to explain away errors. And from narrative, identity emerges. My work explores the convergence between narrative and identity through the lens of rural law enforcement officers. This work brings a nuanced interpretation of identity for individuals who are squarely situated within an ideological institution, i.e., police officers. In particular, I investigate how narrative generates and promotes identity emergence and circulates ways of being for police. In order to examine the ways identities are constructed, recreated, and solidified for rural/small-town officers in narrative, I operationalize critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis, an interdisciplinary method, is uniquely situated to uncover the rhetoric (the means and methods for effective communication) power, and social meaning interwoven and embedded in quotidian discourses and enables the discovery of how narratives create and circulate social meaning. In addition to critical discourse analysis, I apply indexicality theory to uncover the ways social meaning is linked to linguistic features and how speakers rhetorically communicate with their listeners without being explicit.

Ultimately, I argue that police identity is flexible, as it responds to on-the-ground interactions with citizens and broader, evolving policies and discourses in the sheriff's department itself. Identity for police officers has often been construed as static (White 1972, Muir 1977, Broderick 1977, Worden 1995; Paoline 2021). However, Andrus (2020) argues that law enforcement officers' identities are "semi-stable"--meaning that officers have at their disposal previously ratified identities, identities that have been deemed successful in past interactions and are thus available to take up in future instances. I build from Andrus' (2020) idea, presenting a concept I call "flexible and evolving identity." I argue that officer identities flex depending upon the specific contexts, interactants, and rhetorical purpose of the situation. Stock identities and cooperative discourses that exist can evolve through usage over time. Officer identity, I posit, is neither truly emergent nor "semi-stable." Officers use ratified identities, to be sure, but in their usage, over time these identities can evolve. Therefore, it's not that there are no semi-stable identities available, but these identities evolve over time as they are applied by different people and in new and old contexts alike. As community-minded narratives are performed and as new identities emerge, they give resistance to mainstream, traditional police discourse and identity. Moreover, this work suggests a new avenue for police reform: I argue that as more idiosyncratic identities and narratives are circulated, these flexible identities impact and change police rhetorics and discourse, ultimately having the capacity to change problematic police praxis.

As I show in what follows, narrative is a discursive, rhetorical language, and is co-constructed with active listeners. From narratives, identities emerge. The officers whose narratives I analyze are working through a shift in police discourse: the current sheriff is

disseminating a new ideology to his officers, pushing his officers to move away from traditional police discourses and methods toward a more service-oriented and community-minded type of policing called “community policing” (Cordner 2014, Greene 2007, McLean et al. 2020). In other words, this department is undergoing a shift in the dominant ideology to the discourse and praxis of community policing, and as such, police officer identity is changing. One officer from the study, Deputy Clapton, explains it this way:

> Our office is also unique in that we had a very clear defining line of the old-school way of doing things and the new-school way of doing things. Um, Gerald Bennett, the sheriff before [Sheriff Call], he was a good ol’ boy. [. . .] And then [Sheriff Call] comes in, and it was . . . uniquely, there was a very clear line of “we’re not doing that anymore. And we’re going to—and we are going to, um, live up to a higher standard. And not only are we going to get up to the times, but we’re going to push the limits on—not push the limits, we are going to proactively and preemptively build ourselves into a highly effective organization.”

According to Deputy Clapton, there was a distinct alteration in ideology and practice once the old sheriff retired and the new sheriff, Sheriff Call, was sworn in. Deputy Clapton deftly outlines the shift in dominant ideology, “the old-school way of doing things” under the prior sheriff to “the new-school way of doing things” under Sheriff Call, with which the law enforcement officers are now grappling. This shift from traditional policing, a conservative, cynical, racist, and machismo way of policing (Reiner 1985), to community-centered policing and its effects on officer identity is apparent in the narratives that officers tell about their work. I argue that it is within these ideologically and rhetorically-saturated narratives, impacted as they are by community and institutional changes, that identity emerges for the officers.

Data Collection

In order to obtain narratives of law enforcement officers, I conducted semi-structued interviews of dispatchers, administrators, patrol officers, school resource officers, undercover officers, and detectives. I conducted these interviews over the course of two years. I interviewed 29 law enforcement officers and 8 dispatchers. I did not collect any demographic information that could be used to identify the participants. As such, each participant chose a pseudonym. This table presents a brief overview of the demographics of my study.

(Critical) Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), one branch of discourse analysis, works to locate how power and ideology operate within and from discourse. Benwell and Stokoe (2006) describe CDA as being concerned with the "ideological workings of language in representing the world" (43-44; see Mayr 2018). This stems from the concept that language is not always a neutral system and is inherently political. It is, as Benwell and Stokoe (2006) present, "a form of ideological practice that mediates, influences and even constructs our experiences, identities and ways of viewing the world" (Benwell & Stokoe 2006, 44). CDA is concerned with the way that discourses represent and create individual and group identities and how sociocultural ideologies put pressure on individual and group language. Ultimately, CDA labors to find social and power imbalances within discourse and attempts to bring attention to the issues and adjust the discrepancy. CDA is especially primed, in tandem with indexicality, to find the performative elements of identity in the micro-context and see how power and ideologies in the macro-context constrain and provide affordances.

A QUICK NOTE ON RHET AND (c)DA

Discourse analysis (DA) is a method or theoretical framework that investigates chunks of linguistic structures and looks at the micro processes of everyday talk and text. Rhetoric, again, the means and methods for effective communication, typically focuses on the macro aspects of discourse and traditionally centers on planned, public, and more formal types of communication. Both rhetoric and DA closely study texts and both operate under the assumption that discourse does not merely represent the world, but it does work in the world. DA can work for rhetoricians in pursuit of understanding why a piece of discourse is persuasive. Rhetoric can provide ways for analysts to uncover larger social pressures that are impacting their data. Rhetoric and critical discourse analysis (CDA) work very closely with one another in that both are very interested in the macro: the ways that power and ideology shape and impact discourse, and both work to uncover those imbalances and seek ways to adjust the disparity. Combining elements from rhetoric and DA can benefit researchers in their scholarly aims–to uncover how language accomplishes things.

Tracy (2003) reminds us that rhetoric and discourse analysis are suitable bedfellows in that they both "share the commitment to the close study of texts in contexts" (727). At some level, rhetoric has "always involved discourse analysis, explicitly or not, as rhetoricians have analyzed relatively self-conscious, public, strategically designed talk and writing to see what makes it work" (Johnstone 2018, 6). Andrus (2012) posits that discourse analysis is "productively paired with rhetoric, because it is a context-sensitive, qualitative method that allows for a systematic, data-based, inductive approach to the analysis of texts and interaction. On the other hand, rhetoric offers discourse analysts tools for theorizing persuasion, authority, asymmetrical power relationships, and political activity" (4976; see also Huckin 2002; Barton

2002; and Eisenhart and Johnstone 2008). Pairing methods from both disciplines will create a lush exploration of the ways discourse works in the world, particularly the ways in which novel identities create change in traditional policing discourse.

Indexicality

In order to locate how these police narratives and identities gain social meaning, I use the theory of indexicality. Indexicality is the mechanism by which social meaning becomes linked to a linguistic form–a word or a phrase. Taking an example from Silverstein (2003), the saying "Boys will be boys!" indexes or points to a type of behavior for boys or men that is culturally considered natural or expected. The specific social meaning is based on context– "boys will be boys" could index "locker room" behavior toward women or the ease with which fist fights between boys are written off. Context matters. The process and function of indexicality give rise to identities. In other words, a linguistic form used in talk-in-interaction can point to or index identity, connecting it to social meaning.

Speakers of a community of practice–in this case, officers–notice potential linkages with and meaning in discursive features and use them intentionally to do rhetorical and discursive work in the world. As police discourse becomes saturated with these particular linkages, ones which move the identity and behavior of officers from "traditional officers" to "community-minded officers," police identity evolves as saturation occurs.

Community Policing

As defined by Deputy Clapton, traditional policing was encapsulated in and disseminated by the prior sheriff, a QUOTE "good ol' boy." Traditional officers, those who choose to maintain barriers between themselves and the public they police, typically have a sense of mission and a conservative outlook, are action-orientated, and personify cynicism, pessimism,

and suspicion. They are considered to be racist and sexist and maintain solidarity with their own. With the new sheriff came a shift in policing methods. The old way of policing was being replaced by a newer method–community policing.

Community policing is a method and style of policing that, although has been present in one capacity or another for many years, is increasingly gaining traction–especially in rural and small-town areas like the one from which this data was collected. Community policing works to remedy the faults that are part and parcel of traditional policing. One such fault is the socio-cultural division between community and officers. At its core, community policing promises to radically adjust the relationship between the community and the police. Although the work of breaking police/citizen barriers is inherent in community policing praxis, it is not presupposed in extant police discourse. Investigating police discourse by paying attention to the rhetorical moves the officers make in the narratives via indexicality affords an understanding that police discourse is indeed open to play. There IS room for adaptation, for the rhetorical maneuvering between and shift from traditional to community policing methods, which give rise to evolving and flexible identities.

The community policing narratives I present today operationalize a trope, a metaphorical use of a word or phrase in a line of argument, which I have labeled "being human." In these narratives, "being human" functions as an indexical–a linguistic feature linked to social meaning, and as such, I will refer to these indexicals as "being human" indexicals hereafter. The indexicals shown here (TABLE in PPT) index the sociocultural meaning of "being human" for an officer.

"Being human" indexes identity for the officers. That is, the officers who use this trope and these indexicals draw on prior knowledge, consciously or not, of how community-minded police officers are expected to talk and act. These officers are familiar, in some way, with the

"being human" trope and have adopted it to suit their narrative, contextual, and identity needs. Deputy Benedict uses "being human" to do rhetorical identity work: "And [it] makes you look more personal, you know. That we're just people. We're not these crazy guys with guns." Deputy Benedict uses "being human" indexicals to correct the public's misconceptions about the officers–"We're not crazy guys with guns." This work to position officers as "just people" works to narrow the gap between officers and citizens.

The officers in my data utilized "being human" in two distinct rhetorical ways and, as such, the extracts are split into two sections. The first section, "We are human," highlights stories in which the officers utilize "being human" as a means to excuse poor decisions. They push the blame for their actions onto the notion that they "are human" and thus afforded space to fail. In the second section, "We are just like you," officers use "being human" indexicals to create connection and camaraderie with the public they serve. In other words, using a "being human" construction does work to break down the traditional barriers between officers and the community. The following analysis shows that due to the contexts in which it is used, officer identity is flexible.

"We are human" (Detective Holden): Pushing or Justifying Blame for Poor Outcome

In the first group of narratives, the officers rhetorically use the "being human" indexical to attribute blame to the officer's human fallibility. That is, being human entails a predisposition and justification for failure on the job. From these narratives, a traditional policing identity emerges for these officers. Because of time constraints, I will only share one narrative from this group of narratives.

In extract 1, Detective Holden responds to some of the national traumatic events in which police were negligent or overreacted. This excerpt is broken up into two sections, starting in line

1 and in line 10, indicated by the phrase “I feel like.” “I feel like” works as a hedge marker or statement of opinion which softens statements Detective Holden is making about law enforcement and the community. The first section provides Detective Holden’s opinions about police officers. This section begins with “I feel like in law enforcement” (line 1). The second section, starting in line 10, presents her thoughts about the public: “I feel like the community” (line 10). In both sections, Detective Holden’s use of the “being human” indexical works to present a “human” identity for the officers of which she speaks. From this usage, we see the capacity for indexicals, and thus the emergent identities, that respond to in-the-moment pressures, thus becoming flexible.

Extract 1: Detective Holden

1. I feel like in law enforcement,
2. we—again, we are human.
3. Mistakes are gonna happen.
4. Especially when you have a dynamic situation, and
5. you only have seconds to respond, or whatever.
6. And so whether you end up doing everything by the book,
7. the way you’ve been trained,
8. someone’s gonna be on the other end of that
9. ready to pick it apart, you know?
10. I feel like the community . . .
11. it just . . . again, comes down to education and
12. helping educate them on what it is that we do and
13. how it is we are trained, um,
14. because they don’t—you know,
15. they don’t understand.
16. They see movies or whatever, and—they have an unrealistic expectation.

In the first half of excerpt 1, Detective Holden begins by saying that those in law enforcement “are human” (line 2). She includes herself in this statement using the collective pronoun “we” as in “we are human” (line 2). Immediately after, she says “Mistakes are gonna happen” (line 3). The social meaning for “human” is made clear by its referent, found in the line below: “Mistakes

are gonna happen" (line 3). That is, being "human" indexes a disposition for making mistakes. Moreover, the collocation of the two lines "we are human. Mistakes are gonna happen" work to provide an excuse or justification for errors that officers make on duty. She goes on to provide more information on why these mistakes happen, pointing to the "dynamic situation" in which an officer has "seconds to respond" (lines 4-5). Then, she presents another layer of how blame gets attributed to officers–an outsider waiting to "pick [. . .] apart" officer actions. According to Detective Holden, not only should officers be excused for faulty behavior because of their state of being human, but the blame lies outside of the officers' control. Even when they "end up doing everything by the book, the way [they]'ve been trained" (lines 6-7), there is someone who is "ready to pick it apart" (line 9). That is, when officers make mistakes, it is because they are human. Even when they do everything correctly, according to how they are trained, someone may find fault with their actions.

The referent to the person waiting to "pick [. . .] apart" (line 9) officer actions is found in the next line– "the community" (line 10). Here, Detective Holden jumps into the second section of the extract, extrapolating on her opinions about the public. She opines that the public needs to be educated "on what it is that we do and how it is we are trained" (lines 12-13). The public needs to be educated "because they don't—you know, they don't understand. They see movies or whatever, and—they have an unrealistic expectation" (lines 14-16). The people who are "ready to pick [. . .] apart" (line 9) officer performance are those who the officers perceive as uninformed. That is, the public can't make a proper assessment of officer behavior because they do not understand officer education and protocol. Detective Holden provides outside reasons as to why officers are blamed for their actions–the "unrealistic expectations" (line 16) the public has for officers, but she pushes the blame from officers because of their state of being human.

Again, in this excerpt, being human is an indexical, rhetorically utilized to provide excuse for officer blunder. And from the usage of the indexical, a flexible identity emerges–an identity which eschews personal culpability for fault and misconduct on the job, and places blame on the officers' human nature.

"We are just like you" (Deputy Glen): Developing a Sense of Connection and Camaraderie with the Public

While the prior stories index "being human" as a way for officers to escape and explain away blame, the following stories use the "being human" indexical as a way to develop and create a sense of connection or camaraderie with the members of the public. In order to achieve their rhetorical purpose of showcasing connection, the officers use direct reported speech and in most of the narratives, variations of the verbs "to see" or "to look." Direct reported speech, according to Buttny (1998), occurs when the teller of a story is "purportedly quoting the actual words of the original speaker." Officers rhetorically utilize discursive features that are linked to specific social meanings. In this case, their language links to specific ways the officers want to be seen. This, in turn, suggests that officer identity is indeed flexible, changing in order to adapt to and suit the rhetor's in-the-moment rhetorical aims.

Deputy Tyler's (extract 2) extract comes at the tail-end of a narrative about working in the same community in which he grew up and currently lives. At the beginning of the narrative, Deputy Tyler speaks about how hard it is to police in such an atmosphere, pointing to the knowledge of a warrant that is out for his cousin's arrest, a cousin who lives in Western County. However, even with that concern, Deputy Tyler states that policing in Western County has ultimately been positive and something he has always "wanted to do" (line 1).

Extract 2: Deputy Tyler

1. It's something I wanted to do,
2. like I said earlier.
3. I wanted to go to the basketball games,
4. go to the rodeo,
5. be at the football games,
6. know people,
7. talk to people—
8. let people know, like, you know,
9. “Hey, we're still good people.”
10. Especially at this day and age with where law enforcement sits in a lot of people's eyes.
11. Um, "Hey, look, you know,
12. we're here to have fun.
13. We're here to hang out.
14. We're here to talk,
15. to, uh, support you guys.
16. We're not just here 100 percent of the time to just, you know,
17. take people to jail.”
18. I mean,
19. if they need taking to jail, they go to jail—or,
20. if they need a ticket, they get a ticket, but
21. we're also here to . . .
22. “We're humans.
23. We're happy to work with you and
24. talk with you and
25. just have a good community relationship.”

Deputy Tyler uses direct reported speech to both voice himself and a collective voice of officers as they hypothetically speak to the community. He states that he wanted to practice community policing by “go[ing] to the basketball games, go[ing] to the rodeo, be[ing] at the football games, know people, talk to people” (lines 3-7). He wanted to participate in community events to “let people know, like, you know, ‘Hey, we're still good people’” (lines 8-9). This line expresses the fact that Deputy Tyler believes that the public does NOT view the officers as “good people” (line 9). The use of the adverb “still” indexes that even though they are officers, they are “good people” regardless of their occupation. “Still” works to indicate that the officers can be both human AND good. That is, in spite of being police officers, they are good humans. By going to community events, Deputy Tyler hopes that he can reverse the notion that officers are not or no

longer “good people” (line 9). He interrupts his direct reported speech to provide insight into how important he thinks it is to adjust the public’s view of officers at this particular time: “especially at this day and age with where law enforcement sits in a lot of people's eyes” (line 10). Deputy Tyler’s use of “being human” indexicals attempts to adjust the way the public views officers.

Next, Deputy Tyler returns to his hypothetical speech addressed to the public by enumerating the positive things that officers do: “we're here to have fun. We're here to hang out. We're here to talk, to, uh, support you guys” (lines 12-15). The thrice repeated phrase of “we’re here to” (lines 12-14) works to underscore Deputy Tyler’s understanding of the role officers play in the community. That is, part of an officer’s job is to “have fun” with, “hang out” with, “talk” with, and “support” the community (lines 12-15). He then breaks the repetition to say what officers are “not here” to do in lines 16-17. These lines index Deputy Tyler’s conception of what the public imagines officers’ work entails–taking “people to jail” “100 percent of the time” (lines 16-17). Again, he breaks from his direct reported speech to elucidate his prior thought. While an officer’s job isn’t solely to “take people to jail,” officers will do so if they, the public, “need taking to jail” (line 19). Additionally, Deputy Tyler adds another element to officer work–giving tickets. If a member of the public needs “a ticket, they get a ticket” (line 20). He begins to give more information on the role of an officer but stops short (“we're also here to . . .” [line 21]). Instead, he returns to direct reported speech. This shift is noted by his change in pronouns from “they” in lines 19-20 to “you” (lines 23-24). He returns to direct reported speech to remind his listener/s that “we’re humans” (line 22). This is a different sentiment from saying “Hey, we're still good people” (line 9). The work in line 9 highlights Deputy Tyler’s belief that officers are human and good. The indexical “We’re humans” in line 22 indexes the similarities between the

officers and the people they police. That is, both groups are humans. The "being human" indexical does rhetorical work to break down the barriers between officers and the public.

In Deputy Lincoln's narrative (extract 5), he discusses a woman he has helped on multiple occasions. This woman suffers from severe mental illness and most recently attempted suicide. In this extract, he references calls like these–where officers carefully attend to members of the public who cannot or will not receive mental or material help from other community services. The demonstrative pronoun "this" refers to the ways in which officers attend to precarious mental illness calls.

Extract 3: Deputy Lincoln

1. I always say,
2. "Well,
3. they should come with us for an hour, and
4. they can see this and . . .
5. I just wish they'd see us as people.
6. That we have our own problems,
7. have our own struggles.
8. Um, but put them aside to help others, and . . ."
9. Honestly,
10. we're happy to do it.
11. I mean,
12. I would bet that anybody on that board back there,
13. they'd be more than happy to pounce on a call like that, but . . .
14. We're kind of seen as just people who like to ruin people's lives and
15. shoot people,
16. kill people,
17. lock innocent people away.

Deputy Lincoln's words index the way he thinks the public views officers. He suggests that officers are seen as "other than" or "not" human by the community: "I just wish they'd see us as people" (line 5). However, later in the extract, he says that the public sees officers as "just people who like to ruin people's lives and shoot people, kill people, lock innocent people away" (lines 14-17). In the first instance, he uses direct reported speech to discuss what he "always" says

about how he wishes the public viewed officers. To an unnamed audience, he says “I just wish they’d see us as people. That we have our own problems, have our own struggles” (lines 5-7). These lines rhetorically work to create a connection between the officers and the members of the community. In essence, Deputy Lincoln is saying that officers are people just like community members are people–people who “have [their] own problems, have [their] own struggles” (lines 6-7). In the second instance, he is no longer in the story world, but in the storytelling world. He states in the interview how he understands the way the public views officers (lines 14-17). Here, police ARE considered people, but a particular type of people. No longer are they people who have “struggles” and “problems” (lines 6-7), but here officers are indexed as people who do harm to the very public they serve–they are the type of people who “ruin people’s lives,” “shoot” and “kill,” and “lock innocent people away” (lines 14-17). Not only are officers indexed as the type of people who do these things, but they “like to” do these activities (line 14).

However, Deputy Lincoln juxtaposes the actual work the officers do with the way he perceives the community sees officers. After opining that he wishes the community would see officers “as people” (line 5), and before he extrapolates on the way the community views officers, as people who “like to ruin people’s lives” (line 14), Deputy Lincoln comments on his co-officers. Even though officers are people who have their own “problems” and “struggles” (lines 6-7), they “put them [their struggles] aside to help others” (line 8). Breaking from the direct reported speech to give further emphasis on the willingness to help others, he states that “honestly, we’re happy to do it” (lines 9-10). That is, officers are not only going to put their own personal struggles aside to help the public, but they are “happy” (line 10) to do so. Next, in the context of the interview setting, he references a large vinyl board in the conference room. This board provides names and images for each person who works for the Sheriff’s Department.

Referencing the board, lines 11-13, he states, “I mean, I would bet that anybody on that board back there, they’d be more than happy to pounce on a call like that” (lines 11-13). That is, anyone who works for the Sheriff’s Department would be “more than happy to” attend to difficult calls, referring to calls like the one with the woman who suffers from extreme mental illness. These few lines do rhetorical work to showcase different views of officer motives and identity. This narrative encapsulates a spectrum of officer ways of being–from officers as people who are “more than happy” (line 13) to put aside their personal issues to help the public to officers as people who take pleasure in creating pain for the public they serve (lines 14-17). Ultimately, Deputy Lincoln utilizes “being human” indexicals in order to present his opinions on the public perception of officers. He wishes the public would identify officers as the type of officers and humans he sees them as–ones who are just like the public and ones who are willing to help community members during difficult calls.

Conclusion

In this data, there are two ways officers do rhetorical identity work via indexicality–both of which operationalize the “being human” construction. The first group of narratives do work to push blame onto the officer’s human fallibility. These narratives of culpability traffic in traditional policing discourse. That is, the social meaning linked to their use of “being human” indexicals is presupposed in traditional police discourse. In this case, the officers are using language to position themselves and other officers in a particular way, while also participating in a naturalized discourse.

In the second grouping of narratives, the officers use the “being human” construction to do work outside of traditional, normative boundaries. These officers operationalize indexicals that link to community policing ideologies–ideologies that are novel to and often antithetical to

traditional policing praxis. Officers who share these narratives and use these indexicals are doing rhetorical work to break down the barriers that have traditionally separated them from the community they serve. By showing they are human, they want to be perceived as human, like the public.

In order to achieve their individual narrative and rhetorical goals, the officers in my data set operationalize the "being human" trope in disparate ways. Indexicals, like "being human," can point to or index a very different cultural meaning depending on the context of the utterance, the speaker, and the rhetorical purpose behind the utterance. The "being human" indexicals are flexible in that they bend to the rhetorical needs of each specific context.

Chan (1996) contests that while traditional police culture "may be powerful, it is nevertheless up to the individual to accommodate or resist its influence" (111). In many ways, operationalizing "being human" indexicals is doing the resistance work of which Chan (1996) refers. That is, as these officers rhetorically use the "being human" indexical in order to break down police/citizen barriers, they are resisting traditional police culture. While Shearing and Ericson (1991) make affordances for the idea that officers do work to create culture, my work differs from theirs in that I argue that these officers are indeed aware of the traditional cultural rules they are bending or breaking and are actively introducing novel ideologies into the traditional discourse. These officers rhetorically utilize indexicals depending on the context and their needs as rhetor. As officers use the "being human" indexical, they are introducing a flexible and novel officer identity–a "human" identity into the extant traditional policing discourse.

It is in this process that we can see the power of narrative. As more of these community-minded policing narratives are circulated and shared and as more officers accept, utilize, and privilege the social meaning of the "being human" indexical as a means to connect

officers with the public, they start to become embedded in the extant policing discourse. As these narratives, identities, and ideologies become embedded within the discourse, the new linkages and connections become naturalized. The naturalization of flexible, community-minded identities could mean that officer/citizen barriers will continue to diminish and community policing practices (those that contradict and address traditional harmful policing practices) will take purchase. As a discourse is internalized, that discourse shapes the views and actions of that individual–such is the power of discourse. Analyzing police narratives and locating the flexible nature of "being human" indexicals uncovers emergent and evolving police identities–all of which aid in the creation of a new, adapting police discourse. That is, police discourse at large is available for flexibility itself.

To be sure, more research needs to be conducted, but here we can see the beginnings of a shift away from harmful, traditional policing methods to a more humane, community-minded policing praxis–one that puts the community first and invites the community into the discussions of how they'd like to be policed. The existing links between officer identity and social meaning are being adjusted due to the pressures applied by the new sheriff, Sheriff Call. Within the narratives shared by these officers, we can see that the prior links created within traditional policing discourse evolve and adjust to new, community-minded policing ideologies. In this shift in policing, we can see the potential power of discourse–its ability to influence and shape the ideologies, identities, and norms of police work. Discourse is powerful as it can influence ways of being. It has the ability to alter the ways people, in this case, law enforcement officers, interpret the world, and it can impel and influence action. In other words, discourse can be a site

for police reform. Within this discourse, we can see the very identities of the officers as flexible and capable of evolution.