

Moving Beyond Truth and Validity in Narrative Criminology

Ashley Barnes (ashley_barnes63@mymail.eku.edu; aaba223@g.uky.edu)

Dustin Crane (dustin_crane2@mymail.eku.edu)

Narrative criminology is based on the study of narratives provided by offenders. The narratives of offenders can serve as antecedents to their crimes, as well as offer insights into the how and why of their crimes. Predictably, narrative criminology has had to consider the notion of truth in these narratives. This paper sets out to explore whether offenders tell the truth when telling their stories and whether this actually matters. This paper argues that the issue of truth may be too much of a focus for critics of narrative criminologists and that the more compelling issues rest with the actual substance of the narratives (truthful or otherwise). Stories from various offenders will be provided as examples to support the position that truth in narratives is not necessarily important. Rather, this paper will reflect on the many things that a narrative can help us understand about the offender, such as the values and culture of that individual storyteller. The ultimate goal of this paper will be to demonstrate, through various examples and explanations, that the truth of the narrative can, at times, be set aside enabling criminologists a deeper appreciation of the story that told.