



Spring 5-1-2023

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

megan bruce
mbruce2@poets.whittier.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://poetcommons.whittier.edu/scholars>

 Part of the [Courts Commons](#), [Criminal Law Commons](#), and the [Family Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

bruce, m. (2023). The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography. Retrieved from <https://poetcommons.whittier.edu/scholars/34>

This Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship & Research at Poet Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Whittier Scholars Program by an authorized administrator of Poet Commons. For more information, please contact library@whittier.edu.

**The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched
Auto-Ethnography**

Megan M. Bruce

March 16th, 2023

Department of Whittier Scholars Program, Whittier College

Project Sponsor: Scott Creley

Major: Criminal and Social Justice (self-designed)

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

2

Abstract

In this researched memoir, I will be writing about my childhood growing up with my father being incarcerated and a drug addict. I'm writing about my story to let everyone know it isn't easy but you can get through it and there are a lot more children and families that go through this too. I'm also going to bring in my dad's perspective a little bit while throwing in research on the recovery process and the stages, the brain, and the justice system. I chose to write about my experience and emotional struggles to show readers that addiction and the subsequent consequences are much more common than people think. As a means of demonstrating the reality of addiction, I go in depth about my father's addiction and how it affected my life and what I experienced with certain experiences. Some things I will be writing about are the differences between visiting my dad in jail, in prison, or in a rehabilitation center and how I feel within all of them and any differences between these systems.

As I write about these experiences I will bring in statistics about certain experiences in my story and also research on certain things like the steps needed for the recovery process for an addict. I also describe how my dad has a cycle of abstinence and relapse he tends to follow every time he gets out from being incarcerated and I found research that writes about what kind of signs to look out for when a recovering addict is close to relapsing or already relapsed. I start from the very beginning when I was born to present day experiences and things I was told by my grandparents when I was too young to remember. Therefore, my researched auto-ethnography is written in a way that tells my story and I input research to either back up my story or to give more knowledge on certain things that I don't know a lot on. As far as my research nothing was really different from my own experiences there were some parts where I strongly agree or

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

3

disagree with authors and you will see what it is in my paper. All my sources are peer reviewed or otherwise reliable due to editorial oversight or industry review.

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

4

Table of contents

	Page
1. Abstract	2-3
2. Childhood & Adolescence.....	5-9
3. Addiction & Socioeconomic status.....	9-10
4. Childhood with an Addicted Parent.....	10-12
5. Visiting My Father in Jail and Prison.....	12-15
6. Stages of Recovery.....	15-18
7. Rehabilitation Visits & Family Meetings.....	18-20
8. Addicted In theJustice System.....	20-21
9. Parole, Probation, and Addiction.....	22-23
10. Conclusion.....	23-24
11. References.....	25-28

Childhood & Adolescence

We're often told that growing up in a broken family there are only two ways you will end up. You can take it as a lesson and decide you want something better for yourself or you can follow in the same footsteps of the family member who is struggling with something in their life. It's very important to know that we don't necessarily have a choice about how we're impacted by growing up in a broken family. We have some resources to help how we process the trauma (like professional help, and societal programs). There are a lot of reasons why we don't necessarily have control over other aspects of how this affects us because we can't control how our biology is affected. This is usually how people think about the impact of their upbringing, and it's what society encourages, but it isn't true that we can just try to think positively and move on. I tried to take my fathers drug addiction as a lesson and use it as a guide for my future to show me what not to do and what to push away when men come into my life for relationships and stuff like that. The experience has even infored how I think about making and keeping friends. It's reality, however, that there's a physical and psychological impact to trauma that can't just be overcome with a choice or decision.

In, "The Impact of Substance Use Disorders on Families and Children: From Theory to Practice" researcher Laura Lander writes about how, "each family and each family member is uniquely affected by the individual using substances including but not limited to having unmet developmental needs, impaired attachment, economic hardship, legal problems, emotional distress, and sometimes violence being perpetrated against him or her. For children, there is also an increased risk of developing a SUD themselves" (Lander, 1). This connects to my family's situation a little bit because we definitely have faced and suffered from emotional distress, sometimes violence, and economic hardship. It's very easy for one to develop any of these while

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

6

constantly being surrounded by someone with a substance abuse disorder. It is estimated that more than eight million children younger than age 18 live with at least one adult who has a SUD which is a rate of more than one in 10 children. The majority of these children are younger than age 5 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2010). I've noticed that although I didn't get into legal trouble or develop a substance abuse problem, I'm definitely attracted to people who are like my father. But I was able to realize that he wasn't meant for me and mine and his relationship wasn't something I actually wanted. After I graduated from high school we broke up because our lifestyles were too different and he wasn't willing to change. His brother was in a gang and his house was always a target because they knew that's where his family lived. Their house had gotten shot at a few times and once I saw my ex kind of looking up to that and thinking it was normal or okay I knew it wasn't what I wanted or needed. I didn't realize it then but now I can see I wanted to help my ex better himself and come out of that lifestyle but it didn't work, instead of being with him to make a future or because you love them I was with him for the wrong reason.

Although you have choices and it may seem like you took the better path and you didn't follow anything from the trauma you faced growing up, it may take some time to realize it— but if you do that's even better. For example, I was given an opportunity to strive in school and I had a good support system no matter what I was going through and although I witnessed what my dad was going through my grandma was able to show me that there's more to life than just drugs and stealing. When I was younger that's what I thought my dad consisted of, as I got older I found out that wasn't the case. My grandma has always been independent and shown that she doesn't need anyone to help her, she always showed love towards me and my sister when we weren't getting it anywhere else, and many other things to show she cares and wants the best for

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

7

people. Not everyone is given an opportunity like that or able to overcome big obstacles. I don't think I developed more sympathy for my father, just more understanding. What I mean by this is when I was little I just knew what I was seeing and not really knowing or understanding the whole story. So as I got older I began to understand that my father was experiencing deep pain because of the trauma he suffered as a child and while incarcerated. Which has led him to where he is in life today. Which is why I also understand it's easier said than done to stop bad habits and the person with the addiction has to do it for themselves not for other people.

I grew up with my parents being divorced by the time I was five years old and my grandma raised me basically since birth because my brother was my mothers' priority and my dad was on drugs and doing what he does—which is a cycle of my father getting out and going with us or his girl at the time, then getting high which causes him to steal, and get arrested. I know he loves me and cares for me, but his lifestyle put a stop on him actually being there for his family. Actions speak louder than words and although he may still write me and send me things while he is incarcerated in prison or jail, the words he always says are, "I'm going to be better this time, I'm going to change, I'm going to get my life together and help you and grandma." But what happens when he gets out? He goes into a rehabilitation center and does good for six or so months and as soon as a hardship comes along he turns to drugs and the cycle begins again. It wasn't until he was forty years old that a judge gave him the chance to go to a rehabilitation center, but in my eyes, it was too late. His body and mind has been in this cycle and hurt for over twenty years, and mentally and physically hurt when he was younger. No one knew about the abuse my father suffered as a child until a few years ago when he decided to open up about what had happened to him and about the violence inflicted upon him in prison. Some of the things he had to do in prison was to survive but it all takes a toll on his physical and mental health. But

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

8

when he does drugs and gets high he thinks all his pains and worries go away but it's the fact that he doesn't just get high. He steals things and gets a very high adrenaline rush when he starts doing activities in that matter, which causes legal actions to get involved.

Thankfully, I had a good support system provided by my grandmother, the person who, raised me and took care of me when my mom didn't want to and my dad was too occupied "doing his things." Even though my grandparents (my dad's parents) took care of me, my grandpa is also a drug addict, so I didn't necessarily get away from it because there were constant arguments because my grandma didn't want my grandpa doing that lifestyle anymore, but he is disabled due to cancer, so he can't feel all his nerves and has a lot of pain so that would be his excuse on why he used drugs. I took the way I was raised and the things I saw like the constant police officers showing up to my house, and the constant crying from my grandma when she gets the phone call from my dad being incarcerated again. I knew I didn't want this for my future and I wanted to break the pattern and do something more with my life and hopefully for my grandmother as she retires soon. These things made me want a better family dynamic for my future kids and hopefully one for my current one too. I saw that my grandma was able to get through it, but I want an even better life. I do not want any of that drug life in my future, meaning the constant not knowing where my husband is or what kind of trouble he's getting into. This connects to "The Biological Effects of Childhood Trauma" by researcher Michael Bellis because he writes how experiencing trauma during development along with dysregulation of biological stress systems can adversely impact childhood brain development. If it slows down or interferes with the development of your childhood brain, that's going to impact your future because the development of your brain happens the most when you are a child. Therefore if this happens to a child and they subsequently don't have any healthy coping mechanisms or anything

along those lines they will most likely fall into behaviors like my father as means of coping with the trauma of being the child of an addict or otherwise being subjected to the chaos of being raised by an addict.

Addiction & Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status plays a big role in what can be done for anyone because how much money you make decides if you will be able to get the best of the best when it comes to clothes, food, cars, medical care, and everything else. It definitely affects someone with a drug addiction because, for instance, what kind of treatment they can get, the lawyer they can afford if they encounter legal consequences, and many other factors that impact their treatment and their experience in the legal system. Growing up, most people would likely have labeled my family as “middle class”. I would estimate that my mom and stepdad were a little bit higher in the middle class because at the time I never knew the wages for the middle class but they made more money than my grandparents. But as far as my grandparents were middle class, they made sure we had all the necessities and then a little extra on the side. They also always found a way to get what we need or want. When my dad was growing up it was a little tough because my grandpa had gotten cancer and had to have surgery and needed to go on disability because he wouldn't be able to feel fully on one side of his body. But when they were struggling she had her parents and family that would help her watch my dad when she was working and making the money while my grandfather was focusing on his health or trying to figure out a way to get more money since he can't work a regular job. My grandpa is also a drug addict so my grandma had that to worry about as well and tried to make sure the drugs stayed away from my dad but she could only do so much.

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

10

“Understanding the Diverse Needs of Children whose Parents Abuse Substances” by researcher Jessica M. Solis writes, “in studies of community samples, children of substance abusing parents are more than twice as likely to have an alcohol and/or drug use disorder themselves by young adulthood as compared to their peers”. Some studies estimate that as many as half of these children will develop a substance use disorder by young adulthood. This connects to my family's struggles because my grandfather (my dad’s dad) is a drug addict himself and my dad grew up around it a little bit when he was younger and as my dad got older he started misbehaving and taking an interest in drugs. My grandma felt like she didn’t help my dad as well as she could have. But in reality she did everything she could, so me and my sister were definitely where my grandma tried even harder to show us that there's more to life than drugs and crime.

Childhood with an Addicted Parent

While my father was in and out of prison and jail for being addicted to methamphetamine, he has gotten charged for possession and stealing. My mom didn’t even raise me. She had me for a year or two then moved in with my dad’s mom and shortly after moved out to go to her moms with my brother and left me and my sister with my grandparents. Although we were with her, my grandparents raised us and watched us. So not only did we have a dad who wasn’t all the way there for us, our mom wasn’t either. Our father tried the best he could to support us, and I felt it from him more even though he wasn’t physically there for us. Luckily, I had my grandparents who stepped up to fill in the parents’ role for us. “Grandmothers Who Parent Their Grandchildren: An Exploratory Study of Close Relations Across Three Generations” by researcher Catherine Chase Goodman is an excellent article that relates to my

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

11

story when it comes to who raised me. Goodman said, “Grandparents raising grandchildren is a growing phenomenon born of serious parent difficulties such as drug addiction, child abuse, and neglect”. This quote right here describes my personal story perfectly. My grandparents stepped up and raised me and my sister because my dad is a drug addict and my mom neglected us and was too worried about trying to find someone to support her and my brother. Goodman also writes about how common it is for grandparents to step up and take the role as the parent for their grandchild. My mother has never been successful on her own. I was in my 5th-grade year when my mom had been seeing someone and he was able to give her a house and car so she decided to take me and my sister from my grandparents, who gave us the only safe home we knew of.

This time in my life definitely seemed bad, but now that I am older and looking back on this it had its pros and cons. When I was younger I thought my whole life was falling apart. Now that I look back at it, it showed me that I can get through anything that comes my way because it felt like my only safe place was getting taken away from me but I just had to keep an open mind. I was always in communication with my grandparents and would tell them everything that happened. It helped me be more independent because my mom didn't want to be bothered so we had to do a lot of things on our own, like cooking, cleaning, laundry and many other things at such a young age. The bad part is there was no mother daughter relationship, and it was a very toxic household. Once we moved with our mom, stepdad, and brother we constantly had to deal with the pressure that our stepdad was our “father figure”. I was old enough to know he wasn't and we have a father. That took a toll on my and my moms' relationship even more because I was already upset with her that she took us from my grandmother's house so drastically. We argued one time because she kept trying to influence my sister to think our stepdad was now our

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

12

father. We also had to deal with our mom and stepdad making negative comments about our dad whenever they got the chance. So we never really got to see what a “normal” family or mom and dad relationship is whether it’s them trying to co-parent or them actually still together. My dad never got to see that family dynamic either, yes his parents were still together but his father had a drug addiction.

Visiting my Father in - Jail

The first time I visited my dad in jail, I remember seeing him behind a glass window and having to talk to him on a phone. The phones are not the best, they're old and all scratched up. They kind of had a weird stale smell to them as well. All I remember is us putting our hands on the cold glass to act like we are touching each other. Leaving was definitely hard, and it took a toll on me everytime to the point that my mom didn’t want us to go with my grandma to see my dad because she didn’t think it was healthy. She just didn’t want us to be involved if he was going to keep going in and out of jail and prison. I didn’t like the fact that she was trying to keep us away from seeing our dad and not wanting us to have any contact with him.

What a lot of people didn’t understand is he wasn’t getting the proper help, the general attitude towards my dad from people that didn’t understand what he was going through, was frustration, disappointment, and confusion. But I know every time I left after seeing him I cried hysterically and wouldn’t stop for a good five to ten minutes. As I got older it “got easier” as some would say, meaning I grew out of believing all my father’s promises that were never getting fulfilled and got tired of going through it. I started telling myself and my grandmother I will believe it when I see it and until then I will support him and show him I care but I will not get my hopes up for change. I also became numb to the process and don't feel as much as I used to emotionally. He would get phone calls and every time he called I used to cry too and could

barely talk but his story of “I’m going to change and stop doing this” got tiring and I knew he was just saying that to make us feel better. I know now my feelings definitely are a lot different. “Young Children’s Behavioral and Emotional Reactions to Plexiglas and Video Visits with Jailed Parents” by researcher Julie Poehlmann-Tynan writes an article that explains the behaviors of children going to visit someone in a jail. It definitely compares to my experience. “Results of observations of 20 children indicated that children engaged verbally and visually with their incarcerated parents. They stayed in close proximity to the caregivers who brought them and engaged in an increasing amount of contact maintenance as the visit progressed. Children spent a surprising amount of time watching the visits occurring adjacent to them because of the lack of privacy during visits” (Tynan). I know I was definitely looking around and being curious about other people's visits, especially when my grandma would talk to my dad because there’s nothing else to do. I still do that now because I do not go by myself to see him, I still go with my grandma and the most recent time we went while she was talking to him I was looking around at other people’s visits.

Not much has changed in the justice system in the 15 years that I remember going in and out due to visiting my father. Nothing has really gotten better for them or worse from what the visitors can see.

Visiting my Father in - Prison

Prison visits are very different. We get to have an eight-hour visit with them where we can hug them, and walk around with them outside in their yard or area they have for them. I can buy them food from a vending machine, but the money we bring has to be in one-dollar bills or quarters in a clear bag. They have a dress code and if me or my grandmother doesn’t wear the

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

14

proper clothing we will be refused our visit. Some people bring extra clothes in their car in case that happens. I think I have probably visited 3 different prisons. He's been to some prisons multiple times, like this one prison I went to named Tehachapi has a small trailer of clothes that we can change if we need to so that way our visit isn't canceled. A lot of prison visits are an all-day thing because you are normally allowed an eight-hour visit on visiting days. Some prisons will probably vary on how long a person can visit, but a lot of them, in my experience, are around the same amount of time. I know that as a little kid the visits were kind of exciting for me because it was like you were taking a mini trip. We woke up super early to drive a few hours just to stand out in the cold and hope the guards were having a good day so we didn't have to change. While we were waiting we wanted to make sure we weren't getting bit by red ants because there were a lot of them there. Once we got inside we checked in and then sat down and waited to get called so we could go through the metal detector. You had to take off your shoes and put any type of jewelry in the box and walk through, if it went off and they couldn't figure out why they would ask to search you in a room that happened once to my grandmother because of her bra. My sister and I had to wait outside the door anxiously while she got search, obviously she didn't have anything illegal on her but the police officer can cancel the visit just because. Once we passed that we went to another room to wait for the bus to take us to the visitors room. Where we stand in another line to get checked in and then we get to go to the table. The inmates all have to sit in a specific chair at the table and you can't hold their hand or anything like that for long periods of time. They assume you are trying to pass them something. "Addicted to Incarceration: A Federal Judge Reveals Shocking Truths about Federal Sentencing and Fleeting Hopes for Reform" by research Mark W. Bennett is a judge that writes about how big of a mess the sentencing process is. In his small town he has sentenced more than 4,000 offenders to

federal prison, and 95% of the drug cases that he sentences can't afford to pay rent let alone representation. Which leads into how we can help people with a drug addiction and know where they are at recovery. So we know what we can and can't do around them.

Stages of Recovery

“Relapse Prevention and the Five Rules of Recovery ” by researcher Steven Melemis explains how for each stage of recovery there is always a chance of relapse and he goes in-depth about what those stages are. For the most part by the time someone goes to seek help, it's because they have tried on their own already and failed. But in my dad's case, he was court-ordered a few times instead of jail time. There's emotional, mental, and physical relapse. For emotional relapse, they won't relapse at that moment but possibly down the road because their mind is setting them up for it. Some signs of emotional relapse are: bottling up emotions, isolating, not going to meetings, going to meetings but not sharing, focusing on other people's problems and not their own, and poor eating or sleeping habits. These happen due to a lack of self-care and a way to help them in this stage is to show them or teach them what self-care is and why it is important. For mental relapse, there is a war going on in their minds, part of them wants to use but another part of them doesn't. Some signs of this are craving drugs, thinking about people, places, or things associated with past use, lying, planning a relapse, and looking for relapse opportunities. He also brings up how occasional thoughts of relapse are normal in early recovery and needs to be normalized in therapy because once they have experienced addiction it is impossible to erase their memory of it. Then there's physical relapse when an individual starts using again. Most of the time these are relapses of opportunity. They do this when they think they have a window of not getting caught. This is something that my father does too, my

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

16

grandma can tell right away when my dad is high he will always deny it until later on. I started being able to tell too, his whole demeanor changed and he started to blink a lot. He also looks like he hasn't slept in days because he hasn't it keeps them up. One time my dad came over to visit and he was very skinny and had dark circles under his eyes, he looked very malnourished. He was sweating like crazy and couldn't sit still and we knew then he was under the influence.

As disappointing as this was, I now know that relapse is part of recovery. Melemis claims that Cognitive therapy is one of the main tools for changing people's negative thinking and developing healthy coping skills. Fear is a common negative thinking pattern because they fear being judged or fear of feeling like a fraud. One of the most important tasks is redefining fun. When they start to undergo stress this starts to think that recovery is hard and that using is fun. How they deal with setbacks plays a major role in recovery, a setback can be any behavior that moves someone closer to physical relapse. Recovering individuals need to learn to feel comfortable with being uncomfortable because non-addicts go through some of the same negative feelings. I definitely think this is how my dad felt when he went through certain things or was thinking of relapsing again. My dad has faced fear a lot once he gets released and goes through this.

Melemis goes into depth on the recovery process, the first stage of recovery is the abstinence stage which is normally right after a person stops and usually lasts for 1 to 2 years. The main focus of this stage is to deal with the cravings and not use them. Some of the tasks they should be doing are, accepting they have an addiction, practicing honesty in life, and a few more. In the second stage of recovery, the main task is to repair the damage caused by addiction. Clinical experience has shown that this stage usually lasts 2 to 3 years. They must confront the damage caused by addiction to their relationships, employment, finances, and self-esteem. Some

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

17

tasks in this one are, using cognitive therapy to overcome negative self-labeling and catastrophizing, understanding that individuals are not their addiction, repairing relationships and making amends when possible, and more. The growth stage is about developing skills that individuals may have never learned and that predisposed them to addiction usually 3-5 years after. This is also the time to deal with any family of origin issues or any past trauma that may have occurred. These are issues that clients are sometimes eager to get to. But they can be stressful issues, and, if tackled too soon, clients may not have the necessary coping skills to handle them, which may lead to relapse. Some tasks are; identifying and repairing negative thinking and self-destructive patterns, setting healthy boundaries, giving back and helping others. My father hasn't been able to get very far, I don't think he's ever been clean long enough to get to the second stage. My grandpa hasn't either. He may not do methamphetamine anymore but he feeds his addiction with weed and cigarettes. This is important to know and learn so that way I know what to look out for if this ever happens again or if someone I know is going through the same thing.

I just went to go see him in February and I left sad yes, but not sobbing or out of it. When I went recently they had napkins and sanitizer spray for us to grab before we sat down to wipe the phones down and anything else we'd like. I'm not sure if that's something they started because of COVID-19 or if they always had it. A lot of the cubicles had carvings on the tabletop with people's names and hearts. Even when it's just a call, I can keep myself together and I can talk to him. But looking at it now I am tired and I want to support him and encourage him, but I don't get my hopes up anymore. I kind of just sit back and wait for him to relapse again because he hasn't wanted to stop or change for himself yet. It's all been for other people or me and my

sister or his mother. So it definitely is hard to try and still be there for someone so he can get the family support he needs and not try and hurt me.

Rehabilitation Visit & Family Meetings

There's also a difference between visiting them while they are in a rehabilitation center. This one is a lot different when it comes to different facilities. They all have blackout days where they can't be in contact with anyone from the outside when they first get into the program, how long just depends on the program. For example, they are normally 30 to 45 days from when they first step foot into the facility. Once they have completed their blackout days they are allowed visits but these are a lot shorter but it also just depends on the facility as well. I've been somewhere where the visit is only 30 minutes and some were an hour. I don't think I had any that were longer than that. When we went to visit him at his rehabilitation center they let us buy him food from their little store or vending machines they had there and talk, hug, and pretty much anything else as long as it was respectful. They weren't able to use our cell phones while we were there and we had to stay in their visiting area. I went one time on a weekend because that's normally when he was allowed visits but since he needed an inpatient facility there weren't any nearby locations so we had to drive about an hour just for a 30 minute to an hour visit.

I've also gone to family meetings. The people in the rehabilitation center and their visitors were there with us and the meetings are about an hour and then they let us visit with them for like 15 minutes after. We all sat in a circle and someone facilitated the group. I didn't talk because I was still a child so I wasn't comfortable but it was nice hearing other families stories. It's definitely different than seeing them locked up and there is a lot more emotion going on because they are getting into their feelings and actually fully detoxing from everything. It's

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

19

kind of bittersweet because they are doing better and trying but leaving them is hard and not knowing if they will follow through with it is hard too because there's a high possibility that they will fall back into their cycle. Here they don't care about dress code or anything like that, you just can't give them anything it needs to get checked before it can go to the person. They also can't use your phone. You can show pictures and stuff but they can't use the phone. Their phone calls to home while they are there are monitored by someone in the room. It's normally their sponsor. The crazy part is my dad didn't start going to rehabilitation centers until recently the past few years. He was put in front of a drug court judge and he could see that there was a reason behind his behavior. He doesn't commit crimes and steal or high jack cars or anything like that unless he is under the influence of methamphetamine. He doesn't do drugs unless there's something negative going on in his life that's his coping mechanism. I didn't learn that myself until a few years ago because he told my grandma what started this behavior when he had just graduated high school. He never talked about it before and the people didn't believe him because his own family did it to him. He couldn't even face telling his own parents until he started talking to one of his sponsors in a drug program and he told them and they told him it would be good to tell his loved ones, especially his mother. So he did and she told me just so I could understand a little bit more that he doesn't necessarily choose to do it, it's all he knows.

“Behavioral Perspectives on the Neuroscience of Drug Addiction ” by researcher Gail Winger, goes into the concept that I was talking about how my dad doesn't do drugs because he wants to and that's what he loves doing in his downtime. The brain of an addict is literally wired for survival mode with the addiction occupying the space of a hierarchical need like water or food. Winger says “Neuroscientific approaches to drug addiction traditionally have been based on the premise that addiction is a process that results from brain changes that in turn result from

chronic administration of drugs of abuse. An alternative approach views drug addiction as a behavioral disorder in which drugs function as preeminent reinforcers”. Although they are different, the emerging neuroscience of reinforcement and choice behavior eventually may shed light on the brain mechanisms involved in excessive drug use. Genetic differences and the societal-environment can play a role in the development of drug abuse as well.

If people like police officers, probation / parole officers are not aware of the proper steps for someone to stay clean then how can the justice system help them? Which is why the justice system fails so many people, and needs a lot of work and coaching when it comes to addicts in the justice system.

Addicted in the Justice System

“Criminal Justice System and Addiction Treatment” by researcher Karen L. Cropsey starts with some statistics, “In the United States, over 8 million adults and 650,000 youth are under some form of criminal justice supervision. Substance abuse is four times greater in the offender population than in the general population; 37% of offenders are estimated to have a substance abuse disorder, also are more likely to be cigarette smokers” (Cropsey). My father is a cigarette smoker, hopefully, when he gets out he won’t go back to it but only time will tell because he smokes cigarettes to try and stop his other addiction. “The largest growing segment of the criminal justice population is community corrections, which comprises programs such as drug court and Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities. These programs divert drug- and alcohol-dependent offenders from jail or prison and provide intensive case management and treatment. However, among prisons and jails, less than 10% of the eligible inmate population receives drug treatment services” (Corpsey). She also continues on with saying they are urgently

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

21

needed to improve both access to and quality of argument services for individuals under criminal justice supervision. Argument services are for the attorneys to emphasize certain things in the case and any questions will be answered. Which I one hundred percent agree with because my dad has never gotten the proper treatment he needs. The system knows they have a problem with this but they still do not do anything about it. This past year one of the places my dad was at was Norco CRC and CRC stands for California rehabilitation center. While he was there he had the most problems there, we constantly had to send people money to protect him because either he knew someone in there from his past or people just wanted to punk him. In my opinion, the information in my source would have prevented this from happening because he should have been kept in a place that deals with drug abuse offenders not murderers and criminals like that because they take advantage of people.

The reason the judge granted him the drug program ties into some of the clinical findings in “Addiction and Cognition” researcher by Thomas Gould because the first stage is that the individual’s occasional drug taking becomes increasingly chronic and uncontrolled. The second one is that the addictive process presents additional clinical features, including withdrawal symptoms during early abstinence, persistent vulnerability to relapse, and alterations in decision making and other cognitive processes. My dad uses drugs as a coping mechanism and once he starts using again or something bad happens and he doesn't know how to process his feelings or thoughts it gets uncontrollable. He’s also very vulnerable and the judge was able to see that and see that nothing was working by just throwing him behind bars.

Parole, Probation, & Addiction

Now, with my dad being in and out of jail and prison since he graduated high school, he has been on parole and probation before. Which is something an inmate gets put on before they are released. It's someone they go to for drug tests, checkups, house checks, and any other rules or regulations they need to follow. Each parole/probation officer is different, some are more strict, and some don't care about you following the rules but if you get caught by a cop you will get arrested for violation of probation or parole whatever you are on. I've witnessed my dad having both strict and ones who do not care. The strict ones have random raids of the house which means like 5 to 10 police officers come out with his parole officer and they search anything and everything his belongings are in.

When they come out to do house visits they pound so hard on the door it sounds like it's going to fall off or they are going to break in. It's a little frightening when all you hear is a bunch of male voices yelling outside your house and pounding on the door, especially if it's early in the morning and they wake you up. There was one time, probably a few years ago, when I was asleep in my room and an officer came in asking me to come out of my room and asked me to come out into the living room. This was one of the nicer house visits because he apologized for waking me up and just looked inside my closet because that's where my dad's belongings were but he hadn't been staying with us so they didn't search the whole house. But normally when they are searching the house they make everyone step outside or go in a neutral area of the house like the couch or dining table while they search everything. They do not search nicely, they tear the drawers up, throw things all over the place, break blinds, they just make a mess of anything they touch. Not every cop or raid happens. I've witnessed some where they were very nice and polite with our belongings and kind of trusted our words that there were no drugs or weapons in

the house. I've also witnessed them handcuffing my handicapped grandfather because they said he was disobeying them in reality he wasn't moving fast enough for them. "What Happens in Home Visits? Examining a Key Parole Activity " by researcher Tammy Meredth writes how "Findings suggest that each visit is related to reduced risk of a new felony arrest or a revocation, controlling for criminogenic factors and supervision activities". I find it interesting that this is their reasoning behind why they conduct house visits because personally I think it's the opposite. I feel like house visits are for them to try and find something so they can say they are violating their parole or probation. To me they seem more punitive because although if they get caught they won't be considered felonies, they are looking to put them back in jail so the officer doesn't have to keep checking up on them.

Conclusion

Overall the criminal justice system has let down so many youths when it comes to any addiction because they do not have a proper center for them to go to. The justice system also just sees that the person committed a crime and keeps getting in trouble but the main reason why they commit the crimes is because of the drug they are on. I know that's my dad's reasoning because he gets this adrenaline rush when he's high and thinks he can do whatever. It's kind of like a confidence boost in their mind but in reality, we all know it's not. I definitely think the justice system needs to step up its resources and stop overpopulating the jail systems and prison systems with addicts that do petty crimes. Crosby's article agrees with me on how poorly the justice system helps individuals with drug addictions. I'm not saying to put a drunk driver or someone under the influence of drugs who killed a family in a car crash in a rehab center but the ones that steal or may have possession work on getting them the proper help when they are young. So that

The Impact of the Justice & Treatment Industry upon my Father—A Researched Auto-Ethnography

24

way we can have a better future and show troubled youth that there are resources and support out there for them. There's always reasoning behind why people do the things they do. I hope the criminal justice system can find a way to become better with helping people with addictions and find a system that works for addicts because sentencing them doesn't help. Seeing what my dad has gone through and how the system has failed him makes me want to help be the change or make the change for the future. No one deserves to struggle with an addiction in their life because they aren't being offered the right opportunities and treatment. My dad has never been able to afford the expensive inpatient programs, but expensive or not they should all do the same thing.

For the most part the research I have found has compared to my experiences very well. There weren't any differences that I could see, the research helped me learn more in depth about the recovery process and the stages of recovery that they are actually supposed to follow to make sure they succeed at the end of the stages. I knew what my dad said had to do for certain programs and I knew the basics of the first few stages. Writing this paper and doing the research has helped me process more of my emotions and think back on everything that me, my dad, and family has gone through as individuals and as a whole. Having a loved one become a drug addict affects everyone around and in their life, it affects some people more than others but it's pretty much all negative effects. Hopefully the research and my story and how I coped with and process these situations help someone who is going through the same thing without any support system.

References

1. Bennett, M. W. (2018). Addicted to Incarceration: A Federal Judge Reveals Shocking Truths About Federal Sentencing and Fleeting Hopes for Reform. *UMKC L. Rev.*, 87, 3.
 - a. This article goes into shocking statistics about incarceration and how common it is for drug offenses to be sent to jail or even prison. Which connects perfectly to my story because my father always got sentenced instead of getting help.
2. Brown, James. *The Los Angeles Diaries: A Memoir*. United Kingdom, Counterpoint Press, 2011.
 - a. A wrenching chronicle of loss and reaffirmation from novelist James Brown. Plagued by the suicides of both his siblings, heir to alcohol and drug abuse, divorce and economic ruin, James Brown lived a life clouded by addiction, broken promises and despair. I read this book so I can see another's perspective on the style of a memoir and to see how they set things up.
3. Cropsey, Karen L., et al. "Criminal Justice System and Addiction Treatment." *Addiction Medicine: Science and Practice* (2011)
 - a. In the United States, over 8 million adults and 650,000 youth are under some form of criminal justice supervision. Substance abuse is four times greater in the offender population than in the general population; 37% of offenders are estimated to have a substance abuse disorder. In addition, criminal offenders are more likely to be cigarette smokers, suffer from psychiatric conditions, have sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDs, and have other infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis. A recent study concluded that 58% of county jail inmates had a lifetime history of drug dependence and 51% met criteria for current dependence, suggesting a large need for substance abuse services in facilities that are not equipped to offer such services. However, the criminal justice system has been slow to adopt evidence-based practices to treat drug dependence, such as pharmacotherapies. The largest growing segment of the criminal justice population is community corrections, which is comprised of programs such as drug court and Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities. These programs divert drug- and alcohol-dependent offenders from jail or prison and provide intensive case management and treatment. However, among prisons and jails, less than 10% of the eligible inmate population receives drug treatment services. Research is urgently needed to improve both access to and quality of drug treatment services for individuals under criminal justice supervision.
4. De Bellis MD, Zisk A. The biological effects of childhood trauma. *Child Adolesc Psychiatr Clin N Am*. 2014 Apr, 23
 - a. Trauma in childhood is a grave psychosocial, medical, and public policy problem that has serious consequences for its victims and for society. Chronic interpersonal violence in children is common worldwide. Developmental

traumatology, the systemic investigation of the psychiatric and psychobiological effects of chronic overwhelming stress on the developing child, provides a framework and principles when empirically examining the neurobiological effects of pediatric trauma.

5. Goodman, C. C., & Silverstein, M. (2001). Grandmothers who parent their grandchildren: An exploratory study of close relations across three generations. *Journal of Family Issues*, 22(5), 557-578.
 - a. This article goes into why a lot of grandparents raise their grandchildren a lot more often than in the past.
6. Gould TJ. Addiction and cognition. *Addict Sci Clin Pract*. 2010 Dec
 - a. The brain regions and neural processes that underlie addiction overlap extensively with those that support cognitive functions, including learning, memory, and reasoning. Drug activity in these regions and processes during early stages of abuse foster strong maladaptive associations between drug use and environmental stimuli that may underlie future cravings and drug-seeking behaviors. With continued drug use, cognitive deficits ensue that exacerbate the difficulty of establishing sustained abstinence. The developing brain is particularly susceptible to the effects of drugs of abuse; prenatal, childhood, and adolescent exposures produce long-lasting changes in cognition. Patients with mental illness are at high risk for substance abuse, and the adverse impact on cognition may be particularly deleterious in combination with cognitive problems related to their mental disorders.
7. Lander L, Howsare J, Byrne M. The impact of substance use disorders on families and children: from theory to practice. *Soc Work Public Health*. 2013
 - a. The effects of a substance use disorder (SUD) are felt by the whole family. The family context holds information about how SUDs develop, are maintained, and what can positively or negatively influence the treatment of the disorder. Family systems theory and attachment theory are theoretical models that provide a framework for understanding how SUDs affect the family. In addition, understanding the current developmental stage a family is in helps inform assessment of impairment and determination of appropriate interventions. SUDs negatively affect emotional and behavioral patterns from the inception of the family, resulting in poor outcomes for the children and adults with SUDs. Social workers can help address SUDs in multiple ways, which are summarized in this article.
8. Melemis SM. Relapse Prevention and the Five Rules of Recovery. *Yale J Biol Med*. 2015 Sep 3
 - a. There are four main ideas in relapse prevention. First, relapse is a gradual process with distinct stages. The goal of treatment is to help individuals recognize the early stages, in which the chances of success are greatest. Second, recovery is a

process of personal growth with developmental milestones. Each stage of recovery has its own risks of relapse. Third, the main tools of relapse prevention are cognitive therapy and mind-body relaxation, which are used to develop healthy coping skills. Fourth, most relapses can be explained in terms of a few basic rules. Educating clients in these rules can help them focus on what is important: 1) change your life (recovery involves creating a new life where it is easier to not use); 2) be completely honest; 3) ask for help; 4) practice self-care; and 5) don't bend the rules.

9. Meredith, T., Hawk, S. R., Johnson, S., Prevost, J. P., & Braucht, G. (2020). What Happens in Home Visits? Examining a Key Parole Activity. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 47(5), 601-623.
 - a. This talks about the purpose of house visits and why they add checking in weekly in person with your parole officer. Checking in weekly is suppose to make sure and help prevent people from relapsing. This helps prevent people from relapsing because they can get randomly drug tested any visit and if they come back positive for being under the influence they violate there agreement and can go back to jail or prison. They do home visits to make sure they are living where they say they are and not hiding anything illegal there.
10. Poehlmann-Tynan, J., Runion, H., Burnson, C., Maleck, S., Weymouth, L., Pettit, K., & Huser, M. (2015). Young children's behavioral and emotional reactions to plexiglas and video visits with jailed parents. *Children's contact with incarcerated parents: Implications for policy and intervention*, 39-58.
 - a. This article goes in depth about certain behaviors that children do during their visits and reactions to certain things. They are very curious and observing in visits. They watch other people's visits when the inmate isn't interacting with them.
11. Solis JM, Shadur JM, Burns AR, Hussong AM. Understanding the diverse needs of children whose parents abuse substances. *Curr Drug Abuse Rev.* 2012 Jun, 5
 - a. They first review studies showing the elevated risk that children of substance abusing parents face in general for poorer academic functioning; emotional, behavioral, and social problems; and an earlier onset of substance use, faster acceleration in substance use patterns, and higher rates of alcohol and drug use disorders. We then review studies showing contextual risk factors for children of substance abusing parents, including parenting deficits (less warmth, responsiveness, and physical and verbal engagement as well as harsher and more over-involved interaction styles), greater risk for child maltreatment, and less secure attachment patterns.
12. Westover, Tara. *Educated: A Memoir*. United Kingdom, Random House Publishing Group, 2018.

- a. Educated is a memoir by the American author Tara Westover. Westover recounts overcoming her survivalist Mormon family in order to go to college, and emphasizes the importance of education in enlarging her world. I read some of this so I can see how a memoir is written.
13. Winger G, Woods JH, Galuska CM, Wade-Galuska T. Behavioral perspectives on the neuroscience of drug addiction. *J Exp Anal Behav.* 2005
- a. Neuroscientific approaches to drug addiction traditionally have been based on the premise that addiction is a process that results from brain changes that in turn result from chronic administration of drugs of abuse. An alternative approach views drug addiction as a behavioral disorder in which drugs function as preeminent reinforcers. Although there is a fundamental discrepancy between these two approaches, the emerging neuroscience of reinforcement and choice behavior eventually may shed light on the brain mechanisms involved in excessive drug use. Behavioral scientists could assist in this understanding by devoting more attention to the assessment of differences in the reinforcing strength of drugs and by attempting to develop and validate behavioral models of addiction.