

SOCIAL SUPPORT IN THE CONTEXT OF FAMILIAL ARREST:  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF BLACK MOTHERS' PERSPECTIVES

AN HONORS THESIS

SUBMITTED ON THE 20<sup>th</sup> DAY OF APRIL 2020

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

OF THE HONORS PROGRAM

OF NEWCOMB-TULANE COLLEGE

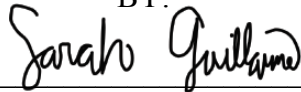
TULANE UNIVERSITY

FOR THE DEGREE OF

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

WITH HONORS IN PSYCHOLOGY

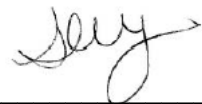
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## **Abstract**

The current phenomenological study sought to understand how economically disadvantaged Black mothers of young children in New Orleans describe their experiences of social support during and after their families' interactions with the criminal justice system. Social support has been found to buffer the impacts of traumatic experiences for Black women, however no research has specifically examined how Black mothers experience social support in the wake of familial arrest. Working from an intersectional feminist framework that highlights the marginalization of Black women's experiences due to the intersection of sexist and racist discrimination, the current study used a phenomenological lens to allow participants' unique experiences and perspectives guide the analysis. Interviews with seventeen Black mothers were qualitatively coded in order to understand the "universal essence" of the phenomenon from the mothers' perspectives. Results suggested that mothers experience both internal and external sources of support, however these sources are differentially impacted by six major factors: (1) incarceration as a physical and emotional barrier, (2) trust and betrayal, (3) dissonance, (4) physical and mental health characteristics, (5) experiences of solidarity, and (6) utilization of supplemental supports. These findings emphasize the importance of discrediting stereotypes about Black women not needing outside support (Strong Black Woman trope), elevating marginalized voices, and reducing stigma in order to inform future policy and clinical directions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly I would like to thank the director of my thesis, Dr. Sarah Gray, for her expertise and guidance not only throughout the thesis process, but also throughout my two and a half years in the Gray lab. The countless learning experiences and chances to grow as a research assistant in Dr. Gray's lab allowed me to explore and truly appreciate the world of psychology research. This thesis would not have been possible without Dr. Gray's help and encouragement.

I would also like to thank Dr. Carrie Wyland and Dr. Maeve Wallace for agreeing to be my second and third readers, and for offering both support and helpful feedback throughout this process. I greatly value their experience and insight, and am honored to have such accomplished women on my thesis committee.

I would like to thank my graduate student mentor, Elsia Obus, for her endless support and patience throughout this journey. She not only conducted all 17 interviews used for this thesis, but also contributed her invaluable insight and guidance throughout the qualitative research process. I am incredibly grateful to have such an inspiring mentor who has taught me more than I could have ever expected over the past two years.

Lastly I would like to extend my gratitude to my amazing family and friends who have supported me throughout my Tulane career, and life in general. I have a newfound appreciation for the importance of support networks, so I would like to emphasize my appreciation for everyone who has been there for me along the way.

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## **Background**

### **Arrest and Incarceration in the United States**

Arrest and incarceration impact many families across the United States due to the country's reliance on imprisonment as the standard penalty for criminal behavior (Murphey & Cooper, 2015). As of 2014, approximately 1 in 28 children in the United States had an incarcerated parent, which equates to roughly 2.7 million children nationwide (NRCCFI, 2014). Furthermore, it is estimated that 10 million children have experienced parental incarceration at some point in their lives (NRCCFI, 2014). It is harder to calculate the number of parents who have been arrested, but not sentenced. Police officers do not collect information regarding parental status during the arrest process so there is currently no way to know how many arrested individuals are parents or guardians of minor children. We *do* know that even more people are arrested than incarcerated each year; in 2018, there were over 10 million reported arrests in the United States (Duffin, 2018). Thus, we safely assume that parental arrest impacts an even larger number of children than parental incarceration.

There is a notably disproportionate impact of parental arrest and incarceration on Black and low-income families (FBI, 2015; Rabuy & Kopf, 2015). Black Americans are significantly more likely to get arrested, convicted, and incarcerated compared to non-Hispanic White Americans and Hispanic Americans, despite crimes being committed at roughly equivalent rates (Sugie & Turney, 2007). As a result of mass incarceration – the historically and comparatively extreme levels of incarceration targeting Black people in particular - statistics from 2014 reveal that 1 in 57, or 1.8% of White children in the United States have an incarcerated parent, 1 in 28, or 3.5% of Hispanic children in the

United States have an incarcerated parent, and 1 in 9, or 11.4% of Black children in the United States have an incarcerated parent (NRCCFI, 2014).

Historical and contemporary structural racism have created a society in which disproportionate numbers of Black families live near or below the poverty line, compared to families of other races. Decades of discriminatory mortgage lending and purposeful disinvestment in non-white neighborhoods by federal law has resulted in racial residential segregation in many metropolitan areas. Resources are concentrated in predominantly white occupied neighborhoods and absent in predominantly non-white “disadvantaged” neighborhoods. Trends suggest a correlation between concentrated disadvantage and heightened neighborhood violence, which in turn becomes stigmatized by officers and draws increased attention to residents who are most often people of color (Fagan et al., 2010). This phenomenon contributes to disproportionate police presence in predominately Black neighborhoods. A study that examined the relationship between prior crime suspect rates and current “stop and search” rates found that historically Black neighborhoods with a past of violent crime suspects had significantly higher current “stop and search” rates when compared to Hispanic or White neighborhoods (Renauer, 2012).

Regardless of race, residents of low-income neighborhoods continue to experience elevated rates of crime despite the overall national decline between 1990 and 2012 (Kearney, Harris, Jácome, & Parker, 2014). Victimization rates are much higher among individuals from low-income households; in 2008, those with annual family incomes of less than \$15,000 were over three times more likely to be victims of crime when compared to those with annual income of \$75,000 or more (Kearney, Harris, Jácome, & Parker, 2014). Furthermore, disadvantaged individuals are much more likely



to engage in criminal behavior such as stealing necessary supplies and drug dealing, when other jobs are not available.

The impacts of arrest and incarceration on women are often overlooked because numerically, more men than women are arrested and incarcerated. However, women, and particularly mothers, represent a swiftly growing criminal justice-involved population. Between 1991 and 2008 alone, the number of children with an incarcerated mother increased by 131% (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008) and recent statistics suggest that over 147,000 children under the age of 18 have a mother who is incarcerated. Annually, over 1.3 million women are arrested in the United States (US Department of Justice, 2014). An inordinate number of these women are Black; the likelihood of Black women getting arrested and incarcerated is six times greater than the likelihood of White women, regardless of the fact that crimes are committed at an approximately equivalent frequency among all races (Mauer, 2013). This phenomenon is likely due to the previously discussed disproportional police presence in predominately Black neighborhoods. Therefore, Black mothers are forced to face the ever-present reality of a higher risk for arrest compared to mothers of other races. Due to disproportional impacts of arrest and incarceration on Black individuals in particular, Black children are more likely than children of other races to have an incarcerated mother (Mauer, 2013). Therefore, it is evident that criminal justice involvement, including arrest and incarceration, impacts a huge number of families in the United States. Black families and families living in poverty are disproportionately impacted, and Black women, while representing a growing justice-involved population, are frequently overlooked or ignored by researchers and policy makers.

## **Impacts of Arrest and Incarceration**

The effects of arrest and incarceration are far-reaching; involvement with the criminal justice system impacts every aspect of an individual's life. These aspects include, but are not limited to mental, emotional, financial, and physical factors. There is limited research on the effects of parental arrests that do not result in longer term incarceration, which is why the majority of the information that follows focuses on impacts of parental incarceration.

There are various negative effects associated with criminal justice involvement for the individual who experienced the arrest or incarceration first-hand. The labeling theory suggests that receiving a label such as "offender" can be extremely damaging to an individual with a history of arrest or incarceration, namely his/her prosocial opportunities (Lemert, 1967). Receiving a damaging label due to criminal justice involvement can also extend to various aspects of life, and result in poor mental and physical health outcomes (Robert & House, 2000). Any form of criminal justice contact, which includes arrest, incarceration, and parole, is linked to a higher probability of depressive symptoms among Black adults (Archibald, 2018). More specifically, experience with the criminal justice system can decrease an individual's employment opportunities and resulting financial stability due to labels and the attached stigma. (Schnittker & John, 2007). Stigma associated with criminal justice involvement has also been seen to negatively impact social bonds and an individual's ability to both form and maintain healthy relationships (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999).

When parents are arrested or incarcerated these negative impacts can extend to children. Parental incarceration is currently recognized as an "adverse childhood

experience” (NRCCFI, 2014). The effects of parental incarceration on children can be seen in the loss of social capital for the child, evident in economic deprivation, loss of parental socialization through role modeling, support, and supervision, along with the stigma of societal labeling (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Children with incarcerated parent(s) have been described as one of the largest at-risk populations in the United States, therefore extensive research has been done on the negative reactions children are having in response to the shifts in family structure along with their vulnerability to economic stress and interpersonal issues (Miller, 2006). Parental incarceration often precipitates a loss of income for a family, which combines with damaging psychological effects for the affected children (i.e. insecure attachment, anxiety, withdrawal, depression, aggression, hostility, etc.) resulting in various adverse outcomes for all affected individuals (Joint State Government Commission, 2011). Depending on the age of the child, the impacts of parental arrest and incarceration differ significantly. For example, younger children are more likely to find difficulty with comprehending why their mother has been taken away, whereas an older child is much more likely to struggle with the stigma attached to involvement with the criminal justice system.

Maternal incarceration can be particularly disruptive for children because children are much more likely to be living with their mothers pre-incarceration, resulting in an increase in risk for the child due to entirely new living arrangements (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Maternal incarceration has been shown to negatively impact immediate as well as future outcomes across a wide range of domains; for example, children with incarcerated mothers who are of school age display symptoms of depression, anxiety, and aggressive behaviors (Murray & Farrington, 2005). The health

problems experienced by these children can in turn increase stress levels and depressive symptoms within mothers who have experienced criminal justice, thus creating a bidirectional relation in which stress is passed both from mothers to children and children to mothers. One study, which qualitatively interviewed 55 incarcerated women, found that some of the most commonly cited stressors were child- and family-related, including separation from families, worry about their children, and loss of control over their lives (Fogel, 1993). Even when mothers are arrested, but not incarcerated, they still may be separated from their children from extended periods of time and are forced to coordinate childcare.

The social stigma associated with criminal justice involvement can also be a source of stress for families. Criminal justice involvement can result in “exclusion from the social group” (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999, p.126). This exclusion alone can increase feelings of stress and rejection in justice-involved individuals and can also impede access to supports. The effects of social stigma can be even more damaging for mothers of young children. Society continues to uphold negative stereotypical images of mothers who are separated from their children, regardless of extenuating circumstances or any questions regarding the role the child’s father (Dumas, 2012). When mothers are arrested or incarcerated, they frequently must depend on an extended network of relatives, friends, and social agents in order to access child care and remain in contact with their children, whereas men more often depend on the child’s mother (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Approximately 25% of children live with their father when a mother goes to jail versus the 90% of children who remain with their mother when a father is incarcerated (NRCCFI, 2014).

In addition to negatively impacting children and justice-involved parents themselves, parental arrest and incarceration negatively impact non-incarcerated or non-justice-involved caregivers (Arditti, 2016). This negative impact often manifests as parenting stress for the non-incarcerated caregiver. Parenting stress promotes the development of both adult and child psychopathology (Arditti, 2016). There is an 80% chance of the non-incarcerated parent becoming the child's primary caregiver post parental incarceration; furthermore, 90% of those non-incarcerated parents are mothers (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2011). Despite the extensive research concerning the impact of social stigma surrounding parental incarceration on children, there is little literature about the impact on caregivers. Non-incarcerated mothers whose children's fathers have been arrested or incarcerated experience increased stress as they take on additional parenting and financial strain (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). A study that looked at caregivers of children with incarcerated parents found that the stigma they experienced was a direct result of the incarceration, and was particularly notable when the caregiver's relationship with the incarcerated parent was a past or current romantic relationship (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2011). The financial strain and frustration with external sources of support (i.e. lack of support from friends or support groups) was also a notable theme in Nesmith and Ruhland's study (2011).

Due to the numerous damaging effects of familial incarceration on incarcerated parents, children, and non-incarcerated caregivers alike, it becomes imperative to explore ways in which to support Black mothers impacted by their own or their children's fathers' criminal justice involvement.

## **Social Support as a Buffer**

Access to social support plays a powerful role in the lives of all mothers, and can take on various forms. Social support is a multidimensional concept; research has examined the effects of both different types and different sources of social support and how they can act as a potential buffer in the context of stressful events (Dean & Lin, 1977). The stress-buffering effects of social support can affect a wide range of factors concerning an individual's overall mental health and general coping mechanisms.

Data collected from two stressful life events questionnaires tailored towards measuring gender differences in depression, hopelessness, and suicide ideation of college students found significant differences in stress levels between individuals who reported high levels of social support versus those who reported low levels; those who reported high levels of social support reported much lower levels of stress, which in turn was associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms (Faied, 1998). Perceived social support has consistently been seen to accurately predict well-being outcomes, which include but are not limited to satisfaction with life and mental health (Lee, Chung, & Park, 2018). Social support has been observed to moderate the adverse effects of stress on various different factors, such as well-being and attitude, that affect behavior in parents (Crnic et al., 1983). A study looking at the changes in perceived social support among adults with physical disabilities concluded that changes in perceived social support are inversely related with changes in in depressive symptoms (de la Vega et al., 2019). Even in situations of high stress, which as previously mentioned are often associated with greater amounts of depressive symptoms, social support's buffering role significantly reduces these depressive symptoms (Faied, 1998). A meta-analysis that

combined data from multiple studies examining Facebook-based social support found that even support experienced through the usage of social media improved overall physical health, mental health, and general wellbeing across a total of 27 studies (Gilmour et al., 2019).

In addition to buffering against symptoms of stress and depression, social support has been observed to protect against the negative effects of material hardships and financial strain. A study examining the role of social support in material hardships among families with children employed a longitudinal design that controlled for income and other covariates within the study's cohorts. The study focused on material hardships, which is an alternative measure of a family's material wellbeing that includes earnings along with any other potential source of income (i.e. government assistance), and affects both maternal depression and childhood outcomes (Lee & Lee, 2016). Lee and Lee (2016) found that social support was associated with lower odds of experiencing these material hardships. The trickle down effects of material hardships negatively impact both parents and children, thus creating a negative correlation between material hardships and social support. Social support can therefore be considered a significant predictor of both parental and childhood outcomes.

Specifically, for Black mothers from economically disadvantaged communities, a few of the most frequently discussed forms of support include kinship support, support from romantic partners, professional and lay support, religiosity, and financial support (Arditti, 2016). Social support from kin is positively associated with optimism and negatively associated with mothers' depressive symptoms (Taylor, Budescu, Gebre, & Hodzic, 2014). The role of kin support was assessed in a sample of 101 Black women for

the purpose of determining any possible moderating roles kin support has on associations of poverty-related stress and resorting to unsafe coping behaviors (i.e. smoking and drinking). The results of the study concluded that kin social support moderated the relation between poverty-related stress and smoking and drinking; women who reported relatively higher levels of kin support were not observed to have a positive association between poverty-related stress (i.e. neighborhood crime) and unsafe coping behaviors (Budescu, Taylor, & McGill, 2011). An additional study found that kinship support weakened the association between familial financial pressure and depression (Taylor, Budescu, Gebre, & Hodzic, 2014).

The various types of support mothers receive depend on the source. One study found that family and partners provide more material support (e.g. food, money, toys, clothing), whereas professionals (e.g. psychologists, medical doctors) and friends provide more emotional support and assistance with childcare (Sanders, 2002). A study using data from 736 Black women living in poverty and caring for young children found that financial support reduced the levels of psychological distress by acting as a buffer on the influence of neighborhood disorganization (Ajrouch et al., 2010). In terms of religion, social religious support (from clergy and members of the congregation) along with spirituality (support from God) are positively associated with increased levels of family routine (Sissleman-Borgia, Budescu, & Taylor, 2018). A study examining the effects of religious coping on mothers found that religious support is positively correlated with increased levels of caregiver satisfaction and less feelings of burden amongst mothers (Miltiades & Prunchno, 2002). In a study examining Black women who provide childcare, the use of social support and spirituality was concluded to promote emotional



resilience, and spirituality partially mediated the presence of depressive symptoms and stress surrounding childcare (Smith, 2004).

The promotion of emotional resilience is an inarguably positive outcome of social support and spirituality, however this idea of resilience in the context of Black women should be used carefully. The Strong Black Woman (SBW) schema is commonly used to describe Black women in a way that suggests the possession of “superhuman strength” (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007, p. 46). While there are positive connotations surrounding this description of having strength, the underlying implications of being strong diminish the severity of possible internal hardships that could very possibly plague Black women subjected to the SBW schema and perpetuate stereotypes that characterize Black women as not needing or being undeserving of social support (Collins, 2000). The internalization of the SBW schema evokes various competing messages that call attention to the simultaneous advantageous outcomes and unfavorable implications associated with the schema. The three tensions identified by 13 Black women who discussed their experiences with the SBW schema include: the expectation to be psychologically durable while not engaging in behaviors that preserve psychological health/durability, to be both equal and oppressed, and to be feminine while rejecting traditional norms that define femininity (Watson & Hunter, 2015). The nature of these extremely prevalent and conflicting messages pose potential barriers to accessing support for Black women.

Contradictory messaging resulting from the SWB schema can limit Black women’s access to social support. Data from 158 participants revealed that perceived social support alleviated levels of psychological distress from the SBW schema (Watson- Singleton, 2017). A study examining gender and the health-sustaining and stress-

reducing functions of social support concluded that women were more positively affected by the direct effects of support, which consisted of support from family and friends, and experienced overall health-sustaining benefits when compared to men's experiences of social support (Pretorius, 1996). In a different study conducted with 48 Black mothers who experienced stress due to gun violence, the effects of social support and positive appraisal were shown to promote resilience within these women, along with lessening the severe, often lingering effects of traumatic stress (Bailey, Sharma, & Jubin, 2013). This supports that premise that Strong Black Woman schema lends insight into the lives of many women who struggle in silence due to this oppressive yet powerful widely internalized idea, and is evidence as to why social support is extremely important for Black women.

### **Social Support in the Context of Arrest and Incarceration**

The pervasive view of arrest and incarceration as a male experience equates to less support structures for previously-incarcerated women, women who have been arrested, and women caring for children of incarcerated men. Social support, however, is associated with fewer feelings of stigma and enhanced wellbeing for vulnerable parents and trauma-exposed children who have experienced parental arrest (Arditti, 2016).

The social stigma attached to instances of arrest and incarceration is particularly prominent among women; especially when compared to male offenders and non-offenders alike, there is a greater need for more comprehensive support for female offenders in order to achieve successful reintegration back into society (Harris, 2015). Despite this need, very few studies have looked at the knowledge of community resources among marginalized women who have been impacted by the criminal justice

system, while next to none have focused on how social support could affect this relationship. One study conducted with 200 Latinx and Black women who had experience with the criminal justice system focused on resource knowledge, social support, and empowerment among these women. The researchers highlighted the lack of attention to this topic and population explaining that while previous studies have looked at resource knowledge, social support, and empowerment separately, few have examined the relationship between them and how knowledge of this relationship could be used to inform potential programs and policy changes for minority women who have had experience with the criminal justice system (Barringer, Bronwyn, Salina, & Leonard, 2016). The results of this study suggested that resource knowledge and empowerment were correlated, and belonging social support was a significant moderator of this positive correlation (Barringer, Bronwyn, Salina, & Leonard, 2016). In other words, the more expansive a woman's community resource knowledge, the more empowered she feels if she is receiving support.

Nonetheless, very little research has examined social support in the wake of arrest experiences. The small amount of available research on incarceration suggests that spirituality, as well as familial and professional support, aid in successful reentry for previously incarcerated Black women (Harris, 2015). In a study involving 182 women in the criminal justice system who self-identified as substance users, those who reported receiving high levels of emotional social support were more likely to significantly reduce or quit substance abuse in comparison to those lacking this form of support (Anderson, 2018). This conclusion stresses the importance and power of perceived social support. Substance abuse disorder is much more likely to be experienced by women involved in

the criminal justice system when compared to their non-institutionalized counterparts, just further promoting this idea of prison as a context of stressor with deleterious outcomes and the need for more research concerning women's experiences with criminal justice system (Anderson, 2018).

Social support is particularly important for the families of incarcerated individuals, in that if family members are supported, it is more likely that formerly incarcerated people will have greater success with reintegration (Pettus-Davis et al., 2017). It is important to explore the overall dynamic relationships and different perspectives within the family as a unit, while also keeping in mind certain challenges (for both incarcerated individuals and their non-incarcerated family members) particularly in the transitioning process during re-entry into society post-incarceration (Chui, 2016). Problems in the transition process include the new blurred role of the previously-incarcerated individual in the family unit, affecting every member of the family and intensifying this need for social support for families of incarcerated individuals. From the perspective of the child, social support is said to buffer the negative effects of parental incarceration, and emotional support from caring adults explained resilience in these children, along with promoting positive developmental outcomes (Luther, 2015).

Limited research has examined the role of social support in the context of experiences with the criminal justice system, which can be potentially traumatic. One study found that psychological stress among these women at the time of their arrest was positively correlated with both depression and weight gain (Fogel, 1993). Criminal justice as a context of stress for women who are also mothers extends to their children

and can therefore create more possibilities for stress to manifest itself in the lives of these women.

The social stigma associated with criminal justice involvement, and particularly women's criminal justice involvement, negatively impacts access to various fundamental support systems, including social, emotional, and financial support. Furthermore, female past offenders face a greater abundance of barriers along with vastly different needs in terms of successful reintegration compared to their male counterparts (Case, Fasenfest, Sarri, & Phillips, 2005). Despite the suggested importance of social support in the lives of families who have had interactions with the criminal justice system, no research has explicitly asked Black mothers how they experience social support in the wake of familial arrest. As previously mentioned, there is very little literature on women's experiences with the criminal justice system. Arrest and incarceration have been historically thought of as a Black male experience. Therefore, the voices of Black women, in particular, who have experience with the criminal justice system remain unheard due to society's focus on "the most privileged group members," which in turn "marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). Black women who have had experiences with arrest live at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities and social positioning variables; female gender, Black race, and criminal justice experience. Intersectional Feminist Theory, put forth by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, highlights why this marginalization happens to Black women due to the intersection of sexist and racist discrimination; this lack of visibility limits Black women, leading to the marginalization of their experiences. Arguably, stigma related to criminal justice involvement further intersects with these previously stated forms of discrimination.

Intersectional Feminist Theory supports research that elevates the voices of Black women by calling attention to the need for reconstructing both feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse to embrace the unique experiences of Black women (Crenshaw, 1989).

### **Current Study**

In order to address gaps in the existing literature, notably the lack of research with criminal justice-involved Black women due to the phenomenon explained by Intersectional Feminist Theory, the current study addresses the following central question:

How do Black mothers of young children from economically disadvantaged communities in New Orleans describe their experiences of social support during and after their families' interactions with the criminal justice system? These overarching questions will be explored via the following subquestions:

1. Who do mothers receive support from?
2. What types of support are they receiving?
3. What types of support do they wish they had?
4. What are the barriers to support?

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand what types of support Black mothers who have experienced familial arrest receive, from whom, what supports they wish they had, and barriers to those supports. This research will lead to a better understanding of the benefits and stressors associated with support systems, as well as barriers to supports for Black mothers navigating the criminal justice system in New Orleans. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research allows for a more in-depth insight into the lives of participants, which is the first step towards improving support for

families with personal experiences with the criminal justice system. The lack of hypotheses in a qualitative study permits the participants' emic perspectives to be heard and understood more clearly, while limiting the impact of the researchers' potential biases and etic perspective (Creswell, 2016). In this way, participants' own unique experiences and perspectives guide the analysis of the study. This aligns with the intersectional feminist framing of the current research which seeks to elevate the voices of Black women who have experienced familial involvement with the criminal justice system.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The 17 participants for this study already participated in a larger study, The Parent and Child Coping Study (PCCS), which recruited biological mothers of children (ages 3-5) without a diagnosed developmental delay who had a household income at or below the poverty line. During participation in The PCCS, mothers participated in an interview that included questions about their experiences with arrest. Mothers who identified as Black or African American and indicated that they themselves or their child's father had been arrested or incarcerated during their child's lifetime were invited to participate in an additional qualitative interview.

Seventeen of 37 eligible mothers agreed to participate. Within this sample, maternal age was 22-46 (M=29.65) and child age was 3-7 (M=4.88) at the time of interview. Interviews were an average of 55 minutes in length, with a range of 31 to 91 minutes. Interviews took place in the mother's home or at the Tulane office, depending

on each mother's preference. Mothers were compensated \$50 for their time and all procedures were approved by the university Institutional Review Board. The current study is a secondary analysis of data that was first used to research how Black mothers in New Orleans choose to communicate with their young children about their experiences arrest and incarceration and their interactions with the police. Out of the 17 families, 7 families experienced a maternal and paternal arrest in the child's lifetime, 6 families experienced a maternal arrest only, and 4 families experienced a paternal arrest only. As seen in Table 1, more mothers were arrested for misdemeanors, and more fathers were convicted of felonies. The current study represents a homogenous sample in that all mothers have young children, low incomes, personal experiences with the criminal justice system, are from New Orleans, and identify as Black or African American.

### **Phenomenological Coding and Analysis**

A phenomenological coding approach was chosen for this study because phenomenology seeks to describe "meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon," with a "focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). Reducing the individual experiences to a general description is key to understanding the "universal essence" of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). This universal essence is an essential part to truly recognizing and understanding the phenomenon from the perspectives of those involved, and can be more accurately thought of as "a grasp at the very nature of the things" (van Manen, 1990, p. 163).

Moustakas (1994) describes the best practices in phenomenological research as a series of steps. The first step of phenomenological research is the identification of the



phenomenon, which in the current study is the experience of social support in the wake of familial arrest for Black, economically disadvantaged New Orleans mothers. The next step involves data collection in the form of interviews with the participants who have experienced the phenomenon. Next, a combination of textual (*what* they experienced) and structural (*how* they experienced in terms of conditions, situations, and context) codes are collected from the interview transcripts. In the current study the author and graduate mentor collected textual data in a database outlining (1) who provided support, (2) what they provided, (3) who moms *wish* had provided support, (4) what they *wish* they had provided. The author coded all 17 interviews and organized data according to the category associated with each code. The graduate mentor co-coded 8 of the interviews and engaged in discussions involving the comparing and contrasting of codes with the author to increase trustworthiness of the analyses. All 17 interviews were analyzed in-person between author and graduate mentor. The author and graduate mentor collected structural data by summarizing the essence of each mother's context, influences, and barriers to support in 1-2 paragraphs after reading each transcript.

The next step of coding involved the addition of two psychology graduate students to the coding team. Within the coding team, two coders identified as White women and two coders identified as Black women. All four individuals discussed their own identities in order to bracket their personal biases. All four identified as being a woman and non-mother, however differences emerged in areas such as race, religion, and geographic origin. Through this group coding, codes from the previous stage were compared and combined to form hierarchical themes based on overlap amongst participants' descriptions of their experiences.

Transcendental or psychological phenomenology focuses less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on the description of the experiences of the participants through “*epoche*” or bracketing, which involves setting aside the personal experiences of the researcher in order to take a fresh perspective of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, p. 59). For this study, the author and coders engaged in bracketing through the implementation of peer debriefing and analytic memoing outlined in Nastasi’s (2008) principles for trustworthy data collection. In a qualitative study, trustworthiness is established in order to increase the likelihood of reliability and validity within the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline various criteria for trustworthiness, including continuous and recursive data transformation and peer debriefing, which were used in the current study. Continuous and recursive data transformation involved the continuous influence of data analysis, and interpretation on one another, which was evident in the constant comparison of data analysis between author and graduate mentor as well as the comparison between emerging themes and previously identified codes. Peer debriefing consisted of frequent discussions with the graduate mentor throughout the coding process in order to identify potential biases, along with the documentation of emotional responses to interviews in the form of analytic memos. Lastly, after individually coding the 17 interviews, a composite description of the “essence” of the phenomenon or experience was developed by examining the overlaps, similarities, and differences between what all participants experienced and how they experienced it (Creswell, 2007, p. 58).

## Results

Mothers described experiencing both internal supports (from their own personal strength and religious beliefs) and external supports (family, friends, partners, professionals), but access to these supports is differentially impacted by six major factors: (1) incarceration as a physical and emotional barrier, (2) trust and betrayal, (3) dissonance, (4) physical and mental health characteristics, (5) experiences of solidarity, and (6) utilization of supplemental supports.

In order to more succinctly label the number of participants who met the criteria for each theme described in this theory, the following terms will be implemented. *All* indicates 17 participants, *most* indicates 13-16, *many* indicates 8-12, *some* indicates 4-7, and *few* indicates 1-3. Saturation was reached after coding the 15<sup>th</sup> interview; the final two interviews produced unique individual codes, but no new higher-level themes.

### Sources of Support

As seen in Table 2, all mothers cited multiple sources of supports, and all mothers described experiencing both internal and external supports. The total number of noted supports ranged from two to six sources. In regards to internal supports, many mothers relied on personal strength as a source of support. The importance of personal strength to some mothers was revealed when one mother said “love yourself first, always make yourself feel good...just keep your head up and take care of those children” (Participant 14). Some mothers also stated religion as a form of support; one mother revealed that she receives emotional support when her own mother tells her that “it’s gonna be alright, just give into God” (Participant 1). As for external supports, divisions in support based on gender were revealed; the majority of mothers brought up their own mothers and other

female relatives as examples. However, many mothers also received support from male relatives, and some experienced support from male romantic partners. One unique source of external support experienced by some mothers consisted of the utilization of one child's support for their other children. This phenomenon can be viewed as a form of sibling solidarity, which aids in both emotional support and information transfer among siblings, in turn supporting mothers by decreasing cognitive load in their parenting and emotional support of children.

### **Theme 1: Incarceration as a Physical and Emotional Barrier**

Most mothers described incarceration as a barrier to support, noting both physical and emotional aspects. It is important to note that all of the mothers interviewed had some form of experience with the criminal justice system, and therefore it is unsurprising that most mothers spoke of their personal experiences with arrest or incarceration as barriers. However, the extent to which incarceration acted as both a physical *and* emotional barrier to accessing support was particularly noteworthy.

Incarceration can impact affected individuals along with their family and friends in various ways, perhaps most obviously in the physical sense. One mother who felt that incarceration was a physical barrier after her children's father went to jail said "it's a family thing and we a family and we can't have an understanding. We already trying to do the understanding through the phone like he trying to act like he really physically here with me and he not" (Participant 14). This mother talked about the difficulty with distance and solely being allowed to talk on the phone with her children's father. She also mentioned the importance of eye contact and being able to see each, along with her children, while talking with her children's father. Other mothers reiterated this point that

physical distance made it hard to access emotional and co-parenting support from incarcerated fathers. Additional physical barriers to support included transportation problems (i.e. having to travel long distances to visit loved ones in prison), financial issues (i.e. paying for phone calls), as well as the intersection of physical and financial barriers including the fact that some mothers did not have access to cars and a few mothers with warrants due to unpaid parking tickets were not legally allowed to visit prisons.

Incarceration was also described as an emotional barrier to support. Themes relating to stigma and shame were brought up by some mothers; for example, one mother discussed the lack of dialogue between her oldest son and his father concerning the father's experiences with the criminal justice system. This mother said "um I feel as if my oldest son, he doesn't talk to his dad about it because his dad is more embarrassed [about] why he's going to jail" (Participant 10). This feeling of embarrassment due to possible shame and stigma created an emotional barrier between father and son regarding discussions about the police and jail, as this mother described how feelings of shame kept her from feeling supported through co-parenting with her child's father.

Barriers explicitly related to incarceration were exacerbated for mothers of male children, particularly those whose children's fathers had been incarcerated, due to gendered differences in support. Mothers described how the absence of a male role model created a feeling of gender mismatch for few mothers; they felt like their children needed a male role model, and like they needed a male co-parent. One mother explicitly said that she "can't raise a man by [herself]" (Participant 11). Before her son's father went away to jail, another mother said "he did pull him to the side and you know told him you're gonna

be the man of the house you know and help your mom as much as you can” (Participant 6). Mothers described that this interaction between father and son amplifies the feeling of physical and emotional distance as a barrier to support due to incarceration by shifting the current familial roles and responsibilities, potentially putting pressure on both son and mother. One mother talked about her feelings concerning her son’s lack of male figure and said:

If he was here...that’s what be kinda hurting me the most...I mean just seeing them at events with the people going with they dad that be kinda hurtin’ for my son. I know he like-you know where his dad at [jail]. Even though, you know, he have his grandpa. I try to tell my brothers, you know, to be there more, just cause he don’t have his father figure at the moment. (Participant 14)

This mother noted the importance of her son having a male figure in his life, and made it a priority to recruit co-parenting support from other male family members in her life.

## **Theme 2: Trust and Betrayal**

Many mothers addressed the ideas of trust and betrayal as differential impacts to support. Many mothers highlighted how a lack of trust can impede access to emotional, school, and childcare support. One mother described experiencing betrayal from friends, and claimed to be “a loner.” She said, “and everybody doesn’t understand it’s safer that way. Ya know people tend to do you things when you trust them...” (Participant 4). This mother expressed that she was not interested in forming new relationships with anyone, hence restricting her emotional support network.

Instances of betrayal as a barrier to support extended beyond friends into familial relationships. One mother explained how she was betrayed by her mother-in-law, who took her children to visit their father in prison without asking her. This mother said:

I was really just feeling the situation which made me like be on her even more about just letting them come over there cause you're [her mother-in-law] trying to be so sneaky! I really don't like them type of things (Participant 14).

This betrayal negatively impacted access to childcare for this mother because she felt as though she could no longer trust her mother-in-law.

Mothers also reported concern about whether they could trust their children's schools as sources of support. When asked whether she would tell the child's school that her child's father had been arrested, she replied, "I don't want them to go tell, like school. You know people that get down to like 'why were they seeing their dad get arrested?' You know how school is...They take something and run with it" (Participant 2). This mother expressed discomfort at telling her children's school about their father's arrest due to her concerns about how the school would react, which impeded her ability to access support from the school.

Due to harmful experiences of betrayal and lack of trust, a few mothers revealed their use of humor as a coping mechanism. Humor allowed mothers to get some emotional support without engaging in deep conversations with people they did not necessarily trust. One mother said "I'm a joker, so I've mentioned it but they [her friends] think 'you just full of shit!'" (Participant 13). While humor can be used to help mothers cope with the absence of trust, mothers described how it can also create a barrier to

emotional support. One mother discussed her experiences with her mother and sister's use of humor when talking about her own arrest. She said:

If I had to think about it seriously like just put some thought into it, I think I'd be more uncomfortable like there's some things you can joke about in front of my kids, and some things you just leave alone (Participant 15).

This mother did not feel supported by her mother and sister due to their use of humor regarding a topic mom did not feel comfortable joking about, along with the joking in front of her children. This discomfort created a barrier to this mother receiving support from either her sister or her own mother.

### **Theme 3: Dissonance & Agreement**

Many mothers noted dissonance, or disagreements about parenting and lifestyle, as a barrier to support while agreements promoted supportive relationships. Dissonance was experienced in the form of intergenerational issues, disagreements about parenting, or general fights as primarily a barrier to support. One mother disagreed with her children's father about his lifestyle choices in relation to his family and said "I just feel like he chose the streets over his family and at the end of the day the fast money isn't worth the time and the things that you miss out on because you can't get them back" (Participant 6). This fundamental disagreement created a barrier to the mother receiving any kind of support from her children's father for both herself and her kids.

Mothers discussed not only disagreements in the present negatively impacting access to support, but also past experiences of dissonance affecting support. One mother who experienced intergenerational issues revealed wishing for more of a conversation about jail with her parents; she said:



That's exactly why I'm so adamant about doing it. It was never [Not a conversation] nope. It was just kinda like outta sight outta mind, like 'Oh I know you know I went to jail, but I'm not gonna mention it, and you're not gonna ask so'...Like there's so many questions that I wish could have been answered as a kid that I couldn't get answers to because it was kinda just like, 'Ok, I know you seen me go to jail, but I'm back home now so whatever. Resume life. Don't act like I wasn't here,' like yeah (Participant 3).

Mothers described how these past disagreements between family members often significantly impacted their current views regarding matters such as parenting.

However when an agreement was reached, or mothers were on the same page with their partners or family members, they felt supported. One mother discussed her experiences of parenting with her children's fathers:

I just talk to their dads and see like what's their point of view before I actually talk to my child so we can come to some kind of understanding so it won't be like if he talk to her one day, it'll counteract something I say so I don't want us to head butt each other. I want us to come together with the same thing on the same subject so I'll probably talk to them first to see how they feel (Participant 15).

Therefore, mothers described that when they actively sought out agreement in their relationships, they were able to receive emotional and co-parenting support.

#### **Theme 4: Physical and Mental Health Characteristics**

Some mothers discussed their experiences in dealing with physical and mental health issues, which ended up primarily being a barrier to support. One mother talked

about her struggle with mental illness in jail and explained why she didn't allow her children or other family members to visit her. She said:

I suffer with depression and it was hard enough being in there [jail] and seeing them [her children] when they go away...it would've just been too depressing for me...I didn't want any hiccups...I just kinda dealt with it (Participant 7).

Due to the stigma surrounding mental illness and the possibility of "hiccups" if this mother revealed her mental illness in jail, she felt forced to deal with the depression on her own, creating a barrier to both emotional support from her family and access to professional mental health support. Similarly other mothers with preexisting medical conditions, like diabetes, were afraid to access professional physical health support from jail due to this same fear of "hiccups."

Some other mothers talked about their experiences with family members who struggled with substance abuse. One mother revealed her experience with her own mother's substance abuse history as an alcoholic. This mom responded to a question about who she goes to for support by saying:

I'd say my mom but like talking to her is like talking to a freaking brick fucking wall...cause she's a alcoholic, so it's like, she'll be the perfect person to have a conversation with, but you just gotta catch her in a good state (Participant 13).

For this mother, the person she would most like to receive support from, she is unable to due to the barrier of substance abuse.

Mothers who received professional help in regards to health issues viewed this assistance as a support. One mother advocated for professional help due to her own experience in dealing with mental illness: "talk to somebody, anybody even if you gotta

talk to a psychiatrist cause she has to listen no matter what” (Participant 9). This mom, along with a few other mothers spoke to their experiences with mental health professionals who they felt had been a support to them.

### **Theme 5: Experiences of Solidarity and Isolation**

Many mothers brought up solidarity or isolation when recalling various stressful experiences, however most mothers felt supported through solidarity. For example, one mother preferred to talk to those who have been to jail when she felt stressed, exhausted, or was having a bad day. This mother said:

I’d rather talk to a man about it. Cause most women that I know haven’t been to jail. So talking to them about it-with a man, I feel like they’re more stronger than women. And they can break things down for me to understand, you know-when I’m feeling the way I’m feeling (Participant 5).

This mother felt supported through shared experiences with the criminal justice system, and felt understood when talking to those who have also been to jail. This mother perceived jail as an experience more common amongst men, which could explain why she felt more comfortable seeking support from men in her life. Another mother indirectly experienced support from solidarity through her children; she said:

I told her [her daughter] ‘you’re not the only one’ but over the years- my nieces have lost their dads for this...both of their dads are deceased...so it’s like now all of y’all is like a group of kids that’s growing up without a dad...now she sees that she’s like ‘oh I’m not alone’ (Participant 6).

This mother emphasized for her child the support that can come from solidarity.

While the experience of solidarity can act as a support, other mothers described how the absence of this camaraderie and feeling of being understood can be quite difficult. One mother discussed the lack of solidarity she felt amongst her friends when she said, “I was the first to have kids, I was the first to go to jail, you know. All the firsts! First at everything! So it’s like they always ask me about my experiences...” (Participant 11). This mother felt like none of her friends could understand what she went through due to their lack of experience with jail; this feeling of loneliness in turn acted as a barrier to this mother receiving emotional support from her friends.

### **Theme 6: Utilization of Supplemental Supports**

Some mothers talked about their experiences with a variety of supplemental supports outside of the previously mentioned family, friends, and professional supports, notably for support of their parenting practices. These supports included school, technology, sports, and other community engagement and were particularly helpful in aiding mothers with parenting. One mother talked about her children’s school, and said “they have the best school ever and they teach them- the school teach them about that, racism, everything” (Participant 12). This mother trusted her children’s school and felt supported through the school community and resources offered. Another mother felt supported through technology: “I have an app on my phone where I’m tracking him constantly...” (Participant 9). This mother experienced support through the constant knowledge of her child’s whereabouts. One mother kept her children involved in sports in order to help them stay focused and out of jail; she said “my kids are very athletic. I keep them in a lot of sports, Cause that’s [jail] the last road I want them to go down...It’ll keep them occupied and focused on things” (Participant 2). This practice in turn indirectly

supports this mother in parenting her children. A separate mother recalled experiencing support from her community; she said, “you can be whoever you wanna be as long as you get this education...” (Participant 4). This mother experienced support through the knowledge that her children will receive an education. Taken together, we see that mothers were outsourcing parenting support from a number of different outlets.

### **Discussion**

The current study sought to understand how Black mothers of young children from economically disadvantaged communities in New Orleans describe their experiences of social support during and after their families’ interactions with the criminal justice system. The voices of 17 mothers who had been arrested or whose children’s fathers had been arrested during their children’s lifetimes guided this phenomenological study. The current sample is homogenous in that all mothers have young children, low incomes, personal experiences with the criminal justice system, live in New Orleans, and identify as Black or African American. A phenomenological approach was implemented when coding the 17 interviews, which seeks to find the universal essence of a phenomenon as various individuals describe their personal experience. The coding process revealed that all 17 mothers experienced both internal and external supports, however these supports were differentially impacted by six major factors, including (1) incarceration as a physical and emotional barrier, (2) trust and betrayal, (3) dissonance and agreement, (4) physical and mental health characteristics, (5) experiences of solidarity and isolation, and (6) utilization of supplemental supports.

Access to social support can play a significant role in the lives of all mothers. There are various forms of social support, and past research has looked at how these

different forms of support can act as a buffer in stressful contexts (Dean & Lin, 1977). In this sample, all 17 mothers interviewed experienced some combination of both internal and external support. As seen in Table 2, internal supports included personal strength and religion, while external supports included mom's mother, other female and male relatives, the child(ren)'s father, romantic partner, friends, and other children/siblings. These various sources of support combine in unique ways for every mother.

Together, these data highlight that women received support from themselves, but also from others around them, challenging the Strong Black Woman (SBW) trope. The SBW schema promotes the dismissal of Black women's experiences of social support, and further endorses the view of Black women as not in need of help, or simply as undeserving of any kind of assistance. The current study challenges the implications of this schema by revealing the importance of external supports in the lives of Black women. The sheer number of external supports experienced by all 17 mothers significantly outnumbered internal supports, suggesting the importance of "outside help" in the lives of Black women. It is important to understand the consequences associated with the SBW trope, and the barriers to support that it can pose for Black women everywhere.

Furthermore, mothers described recruiting from a broad range of supports, including creative supports and coping mechanisms that are more rarely seen in the literature on social support. A study that looked at humor's role as a coping mechanism found that humor coping alone (i.e. the ability to make light of one's difficulties) is not sufficient for optimal well-being (Nezlek & Derks, 2001). In order to derive the greatest rewards from contact with others, an individual must be able to make light of their

difficulties in addition to possessing a positive outlook (Nezlek & Derks, 2001). While the use of humor as a coping mechanism has been researched in other populations, the use of humor amongst Black mothers from economically disadvantaged communities with criminal justice experience does not appear to have been studied. In contrast to humor as a coping mechanism, literature on African American supports has always included extended kin and community supports. Therefore it is not surprising that interviewees from the current study reported similar recruitment of extended support networks, however research should continue to explore alternative sources of support and coping. Some mothers utilized supplemental sources of supports that reduced stress and increased general feelings of support. Mothers specifically discussed their experiences of support regarding children's schools, technology, community engagement, and their children's involvement in sports. These findings support the idea that individuals can feel supported from a variety of different sources, and these feelings of support are in turn utilized in specific ways that are uniquely beneficial to the individual in question.

Mothers specifically highlighted gender and socio-economic status (SES) as important factors relating to access to support. This aligns with intersectional feminist framing and emphasizes that access to social support will vary based on identity and social positioning variables. Some moms identified their own gender identities as barriers to providing support to their family members. Specifically, when fathers were absent from their children's lives due to incarceration, mothers described the importance of their sons having some form of male role model, and expressed concern regarding their lack of ability to provide this. This focus on gender identities relates to intersectional feminism in that many Black mothers are expected to assume the roles of both mother and father, and

their voices are often lost at this intersection of identities. Other physical barriers to support include low SES, which appeared to intensify pre-existing physical barriers to support, such as lack of money for transportation to visit a prison. Financial strain both promoted stress through material hardships and limited access to support for mothers.

The stigma and shame associated with criminal justice involvement was universally endorsed by all 17 mothers, who reported that it was a barrier to their receiving support. Negative experiences in dealing with both physical and mental health problems also proved to be a significant barrier to support amongst some mothers. As previous research has indicated, there is a great deal of stigma surrounding mental health issues, which contributes to access barriers for mental health services (Robert & House, 2000). Prior research has also demonstrated how substance abuse also can impede access to support and contribute to intergenerational outcomes; in a longitudinal study that looked at a sample of 593 parents and their children over the course of 6 years, findings revealed that substance abuse among parents was associated with poorer parent-young adult relationship quality (Stormshak et al., 2019). These results supplement the aforementioned findings regarding parental substance abuse and the negative impact on parent-child relations and feelings of support. However, when mothers described receiving professional mental health help, they also described benefitting from treatment and felt supported through their mental health services.

Findings of the current study suggest that past experiences of lack of trust and betrayal, as well as solidarity, can exacerbate or protect against these feelings of shame and stigma. Many mothers felt supported through solidarity. This knowledge of shared experience brought feelings of comfort to a great deal of mothers, and promoted feelings



of support. Mothers found solidarity through various sources including but not limited to family members, friends, and their own children (i.e. sibling support). However, when mothers described that this presence of camaraderie was absent, it was linked to feelings of isolation that acted as a barrier to support. Therefore, while many mothers described the benefits of solidarity, it is important to be aware that the absence of shared experiences can lead to feelings of loneliness that can discourage mothers from seeking out support.

Given that criminal justice involvement is an emotionally salient topic that can include feelings of stigma or shame, as well as that people's individual identities and experiences change their interpretations of criminal justice involvement, it was concluded that issues of disagreement arose particularly between co-parents and within families. This occurrence suggests that it is important to look broadly at families and systems and dissonance across them, not just at individuals, when thinking about how best to support families and children in contexts of familial arrest.

Disagreements about parenting and lifestyle proved to be a significant barrier to support for mothers, which aligns with previous research. While mothers described how concurrent dissonance can be detrimental to their feelings of support, many mothers additionally brought up past disagreements. These past disagreements were mostly intergenerational in nature, and had quite significant impacts on mothers' parenting practices and general outlooks regarding parenting in the context of familial arrest. These findings are generally cohesive with what quantitative research has demonstrated previously. For example, one study discussed the importance of intergenerational conflict among African American families, and the associated lower feelings of solidarity

reported by younger generations, observing associations between conflict, feelings of solidarity, and offspring psychological well-being (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Silverstein, & Wang, 2000). Thus, our findings together with quantitative evidence support the conclusion that intergenerational conflict can negatively affect feelings of and access to family social support, which can have implications for overall well-being. While mothers described that intergenerational conflict and dissonance in general have a negative impact on experiences of support from family members, agreement and solidarity across generations appears to lead to positive feelings of love and support.

### **Limitations and Strengths**

There are various limitations present in the current study. The homogeneity of the sample also makes it impossible to generalize results to other populations. Every mother interviewed shared the same race, economic status, residential location (New Orleans), and some sort of criminal justice experience. Additional interviews with more heterogeneous samples (i.e. groups of individuals that differ by race, gender, or geographical location) are warranted in order to see if the essence of people's experiences remains consistent or differs by these variables. Furthermore, each mother was interviewed only once regarding her experiences of support in the wake of criminal justice involvement, therefore the lack of follow-up interviews could limit potential results.

Despite the homogenous sample, it is important to note that experiences of arrest are significantly different from experiences of incarceration. The two were combined in this study to include a "justice-involved" sample in order to capture a population that is often overlooked in research: families impacted by arrest, but not incarceration. Future

studies may choose to parse out the experiences of familial arrest as compared to those of familial incarceration. Similarly, short-term jail sentences compared to longer-term prison sentences also differentially impact social support and wellbeing. Future studies may want to look separately at these populations as well.

There is an undeniable need for more research with the current population. Still, the implementation of qualitative methods to promote participant voices highlights individuals' unique experiences, while simultaneously synthesizing to create a universal essence of the phenomenon at hand.

### **Future Research**

Future studies could implement a quantitative longitudinal model in order to see how differential access to the types of support described by mothers here may change outcomes for both parents and children over time. Additionally, diversifying and increasing the size of the sample could allow for generalizability to other populations. Future research could also look at the function of the six main themes as moderators or mediators to the associations between social support and wellbeing within the sample.

In regards to future policy changes and clinical directions, these findings highlight the importance of continuing to reduce the stigma surrounding criminal justice involvement, along with substance abuse and mental health, in order to facilitate access to social supports and experiences of solidarity. These topics remain as “taboo subjects” amongst numerous individuals and households alike, and raising awareness as to why this needs to change is a crucial part in elevating countless voices. Promoting communication about the necessity of social support in the contexts of criminal justice experience, substance abuse, and mental health could be essential to increasing feelings of support

amongst a wide range of individuals. Support groups may play a key role in encouraging this open communication; they could withhold the potential to foster solidarity experiences, offer specific co-parenting support that could help parents avoid dissonance, and work to promote supplemental sources of support; leveraging existing community resources that parents described, including religious and educational institutions, as sites of support services may contribute to the destigmatization of service utilization.

Table 1: *Parental Arrest Histories*

Participant Number	Child Sex	Child Age	Maternal Arrest During Child's Life	Paternal Arrest During Child's Life
1	Male	3	None	Yes - Misdemeanor
2	Male	5	Yes – Misdemeanor	Yes – Misdemeanor
3	Female	3	Yes – Misdemeanor	Yes – Felony
4	Female	4	Yes – Felony	Unknown
5	Male	5	Yes - Misdemeanor	Yes - Misdemeanor
6	Female	4	Yes – Misdemeanor	Yes – Felony
7	Male	4	Yes – Felony	Yes – Misdemeanor
8	Male	3	Yes – Misdemeanor	None
9	Female	4	None	Yes – Felony
10	Female	6	Yes – Misdemeanor	Yes – Felony
11	Male	6	Yes – Felony	None
12	Female	5	None	Yes – Misdemeanor
13	Male	7	Yes – Misdemeanor	None
14	Male	7	Yes – Misdemeanor	None
15	Female	5	Yes - Misdemeanor	Yes – Felony
16	Male	5	Yes – Misdemeanor	Unknown
17	Male	7	None	Yes - Felony

Table 2: *Sources of Support*

<b>Sources of Support</b>										
Participant #	Personal Strength	God	Mom's mom	Other female relatives	Male relatives	Child's father	Romantic partner	Friends	Children/siblings	TOTAL
1		X	X							2
2	X		X	X	X					4
3	X			X	X	X		X		5
4	X	X	X	X	X					5
5	X	X	X			X	X	X		6
6	X		X	X					X	4
7	X			X		X	X	X		5
8	X	X		X				X		4
9			X	X	X			X		4
10			X		X				X	3
11	X	X		X					X	4
12	X				X	X	X	X	X	6
13	X			X	X		X			4
14	X		X					X	X	4
15	X		X	X		X				4
16			X	X	X		X		X	5
17			X	X			X			3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	

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