Formerly Incarcerated Men’s Negotiation of Family Support
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Prior research about prisoner reentry has identified an assortment of needs for formerly incarcerated men. In addition to concerns such as finding employment, securing housing, and complying with supervision requirements, they must navigate complicated family relationships. These relationships are especially important for men reentering society after a period of incarceration because family members often provide support and assistance that is not readily available through other channels; a place to sleep, transportation, job leads, meals, and encouragement. Yet, the provision and receipt of support requires substantial negotiation of fluid and shifting relationship dynamics. Through analysis of preliminary, in-depth interviews with formerly incarcerated men in Newark, New Jersey, this paper examines how formerly incarcerated men identify potential avenues of familial support, how they maximize resources gained from family members, and how they manage strains in family relationships that potentially jeopardize their access to support. Implications for understanding both the benefits and limitations of family support for formerly incarcerated men will be discussed.