

# Inmates' Experiences with Prison Visitation

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Prison visitation is an important tool used to strengthen inmates' social ties and incentivize good behavior in prison. Nevertheless, prison visits do not always go well for inmates, and we know little about why that is. Accordingly, in the current study we examined inmates' varied experiences with prison visitation. We used data collected from 228 visited inmates who reported on 701 of their adult visitors, and identified whether visits typically made inmates feel guilty, stressed, sad, loved, comforted, and/or supported, and if inmates often argued with their visitors. Results from multi-level models indicated marked variability in inmates' experiences with visitation, shaped by: who visits, how often they visit, inmates' pre-prison behaviors, prison life, and demographic factors. These findings suggest that resources for conflict resolution may be needed during visitation, and that family-centric correctional interventions that recognize the variation we have uncovered here might hold promise in maximizing the effectiveness of visitation.

*Keywords* prison visitation; incarceration; inmates

Prisons tend to inflict a wide array of harms on inmates. These include the worsening of physical and mental health problems (Fleury-Steiner, 2015; Massoglia & Pridemore, 2015), the disruption of romantic and familial relationships (Siennick, Stewart, & Staff, 2014; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014), and exposure to violence and victimization (Listwan, Colvin, Hanley, & Flannery, 2010; Wooldredge & Steiner, 2013). And while attempts have been made in

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