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Imaginary Dialogues: Witnessing in Prison-Based Creative Arts Therapies

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Highlights

- Prisoners described 3 types of witnesses to self initiated and therapy based art
- The witnessing crowd learns from prisoners struggle and validates their life choices
- The witnessing self is an intra-subjective dialogue between the prisoner and himself
- The witnessing artist validates skill and gives access to fantasy artist communities

Abstract

This qualitative study examines the perspectives of US-American prisoners (N=21) on art-making and creative arts therapies in prison through the lens of ‘witnessing,’ that is, the empathic presence of an Other, who attends to the prisoner’s artistic testimony to affirm it as valid. Our analysis explores the concept of witnessing through the lens of constructivist, psychodynamic, and social justice perspectives. Our research questions delineate the specific kinds of dialogues

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