

Superpowers' Hurricane Towards *Junkanoo* Inclusion: Performance
Oriented Dramatherapeutic Process to Community Ritual
Participation

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Abstract

SUPERPOWERS' HURRICANE TOWARDS JUNKANOO INCLUSION PERFORMANCE-ORIENTED DRAMATHERAPEUTIC PROCESS IN THE BAHAMAS

Tara R. Buckler

The following paper is a description of an applied project. It describes the therapeutic theater process of the Superpowers Junkanoo group that I led at the Frances Rehabilitation Centre in the Bahamas. All group members were Frances residents. Each participant ranged in age, developmental, and physical abilities. They were generally diagnosed as acute-chronic and for the most part communicated non-verbally.

The Superpowers' performance in the Frances Junkanoo parade was the culmination of a five-month performance-oriented dramatherapeutic process. This paper documents how participants worked towards and reached individual goals of increased mobility, emotional expression, independent choice-making, and communication to reach towards long-term group goals of heightened self-esteem, community involvement, and improved quality of life.

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The following is a descriptive report of a therapeutic theater performance process. Main headings exemplify my session format to guide readers along the textual flow. In sessions, I have found this framework to be most helpful in organizing waves of information into a productive stream because it highlights specific goals while preserving relevance to the entire sequence (Emunah, 1994). The main description will be referred to as Meat and is influenced stylistically by Jones note-taking suggestions (Jones, 1996).

Gathering:**Fire-song**

Many experiences ignited my sparks for this project. Growing-up in Southern-Midwest-America warmed the coals. My family's creativity and compassion cut the kindling. High school ended, and then I sustained a non-visible traumatic brain injury in a car accident. This drove me into the hospital, then therapies. Vigilant rehabilitation designed my life, thus cutting the logs. Later, theater, psychology, and college struck the match of Dramatherapy.

As my academic curriculum progressed, I designed an Intercultural (Bachelor) study towards Dramatherapy agenda in the University of Louisville's (UL) liberal studies program. In this major, credit was accepted from various existing structures

as opposed to limiting classes to one. An example of this expansion was graduate courses in the Expressive Therapies (ET) department. UL's program is mainly art therapy. It especially highlights multi-cultural issues.

Specific classes, taught by Dr. Laura Cherry, involved volunteer work with Caribbean children with disabilities in the Caribbean. This experience provided a practical chance for us "white girls from Kentucky" to work in environments where, outside of the hotels, we were the visible minority. In addition to the inter-racial and international aspects, we also worked in the culture of disabilities.

After graduating, I moved to Montreal, Quebec, Canada to earn a Dramatherapy Master's degree at Concordia University. For two years I continued to work with individuals with disabilities in my practicums. Then in 2003, I joined Dr. Cherry's ET and the Bahamas Association for the Physically Disabled (BAPD) program, working with Bahamian children with severe disabilities.

While in the Bahamas, we attended "Junkanoo in June," a festival which provides a mere glimpse of the ritual that is performed in a series of December parades. From sights, sounds, and conversations, I saw the passionate creativity inspired by the Junkanoo's communal fuel. Later in the week, I visited

Frances Rehabilitation Centre.¹ When I looked in the Thompson ward, all the sparks beating together inflamed a fire-song in my heart.

Check-in:**Focus**

This report will document how the implementation of Dramatherapy was beneficial to a group of persons with disabilities who live in Frances Rehabilitation Centre in the Bahamas. The work was oriented towards their therapeutic theater performance in a Junkanoo parade. It will show how the process worked towards goals that are common for people with disabilities, and then allowed an opportunity for the participants to share their achievements with the community. Ultimately, this project propelled progress in increasing visibility of the abilities of people with disabilities.

Warm-up:

Sub-categories are therapeutic theater, Junkanoo, disabilities and disabilities in the Bahamas. My research perspective has been phenomenological and is infused with considerations of practicing and researching in a foreign context.

¹ Footnote: Names of location and people have been changed to protect confidentiality

Literature reviews / Methodology

Therapeutic theater

This project worked towards a therapeutic theater performance. Therapeutic theater allows persons with disabilities a chance to "deconstruct the current disabling constructions and to reconstruct new and more powerful identities" (Amorim & Cavalcante, 1992, p. 154, as cited in Snow, D'Armico & Tanguay, 2003). The public theater presentation offered a chance for persons who were labeled as different and incapable to parade on the same stage-level as the persons who used those labels. It encouraged everyone to hear past the voices of prejudice to their common heartbeat of goombay (goatskin) drums.

Sessions that orient towards performance include additional intensity and benefit:

Performance transforms the notions about theatre and about therapy. The setting of the therapy scene changes from closed room to public stage; the cast changes from client and therapist to client/actor, and therapist/director, and outside audience. The therapeutic impact of performance is different from, and often greater than, process-oriented drama therapy. The ramifications of performance extend from

groups in communities, from therapy to education, from the personal to the universal (Emunah, 1994, p. 251).

Therefore, performances are educational and therapeutic for the actors and the audience on group and individual levels.

Group-work has many benefits. Participating in a drama group enhances social development and interpersonal contact. It provides an emotional outlet, encourages a sense of positive identity and belonging to the community. Theater increases skills of communication, expression, and emotional development by developing specific skills of listening, eye contact, body awareness, physical coordination, expressiveness, focus and concentration. It also helps individuals develop problem-solving skills, coping strategies, social interaction, healthy identity formation and social integration (Bailey, 1993). Working together with a trained director/therapist greatly emphasizes each of these goals (Snow, 2003).

Junkanoo

The Junkanoo festival is a series of parades that celebrate the ancestry and artistry of Bahamian culture. The annual Boxing Day and New Year's senior parades are anthemicly parallel to the emergence of Bahamian culture. The events are said to have began unofficially with the slaves' only days off of the year,

offering them a chance to "return to themselves" and "reclaim their souls." Disguised in costumes of paper-scrap and feathers, they would meet in an undisclosed location late-late Christmas night and New Year's Eve. Here, twice a year, their voice could once again speak the words of their African hearts via found objects of cowbells, goatskin drums and conch shell horns (Ferguson, 2000). In 1899, the parades ceased under Colonial Britain's Street Nuisance Prohibition Act. In 1925 they resumed on Bay Street as a show of solidarity and strength and are now an integral celebration of Bahamian past, present and future (Thompson, 1985).

Today's parades move in two laps along the main street. They keep to historical structures of music playing standard songs and rhythms with goombay drums, cowbells, and horns. Musicians and dancers participate or "rush" in elaborate cardboard, wire and fringed crepe paper costumes. Senior laps have risen to grand proportions of pageantry, pride and commercialism.

The main competitors are established groups. Every group picks a yearly theme within which costumes and banners are designed. Groups contain roles of leaders, drummers, (cow) bellers, brass horn players, choreographed dancers, free/off-the-shoulder dancers and banner holder. Informal preparations

begin in February, and increase in seriousness in September. Main rehearsals happen twice a week and specific sections meet more often (Thompson, 1985).



Figure 1: 2005 Senior Boxing Day Junkanoo in Nassau, Bahamas
© Tara R. Buckler, 2005

The Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture, National Junkanoo Committee, and Junkanoo leaders started the Junior Junkanoo parade in 1988 to foster Junkanoo awareness, appreciation, and creativity. Staff of each participating school work with students to showcase their talents, patriotism and craftsmanship for the early December event (Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture, 2002).

The latest addition to the Junkanoo line-up is the Frances

Rehabilitation Centre's parade. It was started by Dr. Williams to provide an opportunity for the patients to celebrate their artistic heritage. Staff members on each ward work alongside their clients to create, practice, and perform. Furthermore, it invites the public to observe and participate alongside, thus decreasing separation and stigmatization. Unless brought from home, Frances Junkanooers usually do not have instruments.

An additional element to every parade is competition. Each group battles against the other for small prizes and bigger "bragging rights" (Ferguson, 2000). To decide the yearly winners, trained judges tally scores based on each parade's meticulous specifications. Scored categories include costumes, banners, dancing, and music. Fueled by the competitiveness is secrecy. Construction mainly takes place in Junkanoo shacks, which are locked tight and closely guarded. Within the practices, shacks and performances, groups form cohesive bonds of purposeful solidity (Wood, 1995).

I come to get me...I felt a tingle stir in my chest. With those words, the door to our heritage had slowly opened again, and our forefathers were reaching out across the centuries, bequeathing a proud and indomitable heritage through the power of Junkanoo. There was in those of us

called to carry on the tradition, the subconscious realizations that Junkanoo was the place to keep our souls. The real me would emerge in our costumes, the colours of our character, the design of our personalities, the pattern of our tastes, our pride, and our signature. On Bay, in our costumes, we would feel complete (Ferguson, 2000, p. 30).

Disabilities

Society limits the development of persons with disabilities through prejudice and invisibility. These limitations include exclusion from theater and cultural rituals. "Societal rituals perform a unifying function" (Richards, 1992, p. 21). Not participating in rituals targets individuals with disabilities as different (Warren, 1988). This results in deficient autonomy decision-making, social and interpersonal skills. It contributes to a lack of positive physical, intellectual, emotional and social development, and increases stigmatization (Brown, 1997; Cattanach, 1996; Richard, 1992).

Disabilities in the Bahamas

Bahamian awareness, education, and assistance about disabilities are emerging. Government initiations include a National Task Force, a research databank, and a year 2000 presentation of a report that "provides a framework for the

development of programmes and projects, the aim of which is to integrate persons with disabilities into the mainstream of community life, minimizing marginalization" (National Task Force, 2000 p.4). As in other areas, progress and policies are first instigated in Nassau, New Providence. From there it will slowly expand, to include the other 200 (family) islands.

A local radio station reported societal advancements of increased educational funding for student-aides throughout the school systems. As well, Stapleton School for the Mentally Retarded has participated in the Junior Junkanoo. Beginning in 1971, the BAPD has led the way in advocacy fair and equal treatment in the community. The BAPD bill of rights lists civil liberties such as gainful speaking and advocating, raising a family, dignity, and accessibility to public facilities (BAPD, 2001). A member told me about his past Senior Parade inclusion with a group of Junkanooers in wheelchairs.

Despite progress, discrimination remains omnipresent throughout society and in families. Frances staff members and I discussed how many residents have little to no contact with their family for extended periods of time. We speculated that perhaps family persons do not visit to avoid feeling guilty when leaving without their member. Parade preparation could provide an opportunity for the family to be educated on and involved

with a Frances activity. Thusly, it would encourage and share the benefits of the therapeutic community's benefits thereby urging steps towards understanding and resolution.

Stigma/Language

Prejudices often start with language. A society's developmental process when considering persons with disabilities is evident by that society's language. New words to describe disabilities are adopted, enculturated, and included. Words are then adopted and abused. As new words are initiated, the cycle continues (Warren, 1988).

An example of this is Stapleton School for the Mentally Retarded, which I've learned to refer to as the school for "children with developmental delays." Additionally, Concordia supervision advised me to refer to non-staff persons at Frances as "clients" and "residents" instead of "patients." I described my group members as "participants," and said "people with disabilities," while Bahamians say "special needs people." A government member of the Junkanoo committee used the words "differently-abled."

Language-use also applies to race. In Dr. Cherry's classes, I learned to use the words "people of color" or "brown-skinned." Both phrases refer to non-white/minority populations of North American hegemony. The word brown replaces black also because of

the negative connotations associated with black and darkness. The Bahamian minority is persons of international descent other than Africa and "white Bahamians." On my first trips to the Caribbean, I observed and learned about "reverse racism." Paradoxically, I was told on a subsequent trip "there is no racism here." A nurse-friend from a different ward referred to my skin color as "bright."

Superpowers/symbols

As previously explained, every Junkanoo group's concepts and designs come from a yearly theme. In order to officially register with the Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture, the Frances group needed both. I found the namings difficult as I constantly reflected on the group process and dynamics in search of a phrase that could accurately encapsulate the significance of the process. Symbols evolved through journaling, reflections and mandala designs and I still could not find fitting words. I checked the symbols with group members, my Junkanoo supervisor, and the artisans. Finally I realized the process of a group communicating without words could not be summarized in a verbal phrase, and rested at last on symbols. Superpowers became our group name and rainbows, hearts, wheels, and comedy/tragedy faces became our theme.

During a "forced vacation" caused by the hardest hitting

hurricane, the name Superpowers solidified after I had watched some Superhero movie on TV. Like the superhero, this group was removing layers of pretense to reveal true disguised powers. Session plans developed into expanding on hero/villain/guide sessions that would isolate the hero and encourage the powers of each individual (Landy, 1993; Buckler class notes, Silverman 2003). Working with this as a foundation would challenge the members to enact a 'Superhero' role while encouraging them to build their individual and community powers.

On Sept. 28 and 30, we played with this in a superpower variation of an exercise called 'Magic Shop' (Emunah, 1994) as illustrated in the following session notes:

LaToya played shop-keeper while I translated her head-movements about what to give. Karl, the first customer, got a flying cape. I led a guided imagery of flying to the ocean- getting too hot- then flying back. John asked for a flying suit but LaToya said we were out by shaking her head 'No.' He got super running shoes instead. We found the pretend shoes under the table then John ran around the room as I pushed his wheelchair fast and faster. Beatrice wanted flying suit and LaToya laughingly said we're still out. I suggested a shipment came in that she had missed. Beatrice

(who is usually very distracted) held attention while my words flew us over the roof, the yard, the school buses, the ocean, to another island and back (Buckler, field notes, Sept. 28, 2004).

Weather and nature influenced the rainbow symbol. A major hurricane season, there were many storms and showers. After each one cleared, I went to my front yard to look for rainbows. In November I saw six. I equated this phenomenon with the peace and beauty that people could feel after releasing pent-up emotions. I planned the rainbow into the banner and hats. Group members then picked their costume colors by pointing to roles of paper that an assistant and I held out. So many different colors were picked; I asked if they wanted rainbow costumes. My suggestion was met with strong affirmative excitement.

Throughout the process, designs were created, discussed, and modified with input of group members, consultants and artisans. On one occasion, Andrew adapted the wheel I had drawn to create another design he liked better.

The wheel is a circle that connects us all, we all depend on the wheel for mobility to some extent. Some residents of this ward are non-ambulatory and, therefore, depend on a

chair with wheels. In the center of our wheel is a heart. The container of Junkanoo allowed Superpowers' hearts to emanate their story of ability, heritage and emotion outward through the spokes of the wheel. It shows that their hearts are not different. The drumbeat resonates in their heart same as any other Bahamian. They are not separate (Buckler field notes, Oct. 19, 2004).

The ward's occupational therapist designed the comedy and tragedy faces.

The faces on the hat and top of the banner are the universal comedy/tragedy symbol for theater. This relates in that this is all part of a dramatherapeutic process. One of the goals for this group is emotional expression that is evident in the theater symbol's happy and sad appearance. Emotional expression comes about in many ways, through words, facial expressions, body language, etc. As I have learned to listen to the people on this ward, they have all at one or many points expressed their emotions to me; through their faces with and without words or sounds (Buckler field notes Nov. 11, 2004).

Finally, all the designs were shared with the artisans. Due to time constraints and ward rules, this year's participants were not able to make their own costumes directly or to cooperate with the artisans. Instead, another ward's shorter-term clients volunteered their skills and occupational therapy group-time to assist in the creation of Superpowers' Junkanoo art. All artisans, especially three, worked tirelessly to paste crepe and paper and newspaper to shirts and pants, create hats and make the Superpowers' banner.

Goals

The project concentrated on 4-10 residents of the Frances Rehabilitation Centre. The work took place during five-months of performance-oriented Dramatherapy sessions. The performance goal was a Junkanoo parade. Specific individual and group goals sessions focused on were an increase in mobility, emotional expression, independent choice making, and communication. These goals encourage long-term effects of community involvement, heightened self-esteem, and improved quality of life (Bailey, 1993; Brown, 1997; Cattanach, 1996; Emunah, 1994; Richard, 1992).

In addition, my personal goal was to avoid appropriation. Ways of doing this included focusing the performance on a Bahamian ritual and practicing to Bahamian music. Additional

ways would have been to read from Bahamian stories, sing the Hello and Goodbye songs to Bahamian tunes and directly include Bahamian staff and persons from the community throughout the duration. (Warren, 1988)

Meat

Presence/ Independent choice-making

While setting-up this program, I expected to work with children, as that is how the residents of the Thompson ward are described. Upon arrival, however, I learned that most of the individuals are, in fact, adults. In order to keep close to the Jr. parade's general age, I initially selected participants by the criteria of persons who were closest to eighteen. The goal strove for the Junior and not the Senior parade because the 5:00 p.m. rather than the 2:00 a.m. start-time was more conducive to the participants' medical and psychosocial needs. Two participants were from a different ward.

I did not make formal assessments of group members. Informal assessments can describe participants as moderate to highly delayed with mild to severe physical disabilities. Most of their communication was non-verbal.

Member consistency was attempted, but not possible to maintain. In the beginning, I limited the group to a manageable number of five persons, all in wheelchairs. Eventually the group

expanded to include residents who were ambulatory, suggested by staff, and interested in attending sessions committedly. Karl, Danny, and Ronnie were in it from beginning to end; Andrew and Ricardo joined about half-way; LaToya, John, Beatrice, Shanique, William, Joseph, Angel, and two other members were involved in part of the sessions, but not the entire process. Members came and went for a variety of reasons.

An example of attrition is Beatrice. She asked to be included to the group and was eager to come to sessions. She made considerable progress towards individual goals of following instructions, concentration and vocal development, and seemed excited to be included. After we had closed for the day, however, she had difficulty going back to the ward. Upon her refusals to move locations, she was coaxed back with bread or pulled. I also found that Beatrice responded to behavioral techniques of positive rewards for positive behavior (Skinner, 1953). Throughout her attendance, we made a verbal contract before each session agreeing that if coming to group, she would "leave the dayroom and go back to the ward" when we had finished. She remained with us for two months and made exceptional progress with continuous attendance. After some sessions she received bread for following through our agreement.

In early Oct., Beatrice broke our contract and chose to

quit as shown in the following field-notes:

I attempted to discipline Beatrice as usual, making a strong verbal contract...While walking with her to the dayroom she went to a distraction (*by trying to leave me and go to another activity*), sat and refused to move. Residents helped pull her back to the sidewalk, and I explained that today could be her last chance to be in the group. She came in the dayroom. After the session, I repeated that this was her last chance. She again followed the distraction and refused to do the practice lap. She can no longer be in the group (Buckler field notes, Oct. 12, 2004).

This example illustrates pre-emptive communication and respect for Beatrice's capacity to make independent choices.

Often other residents would come in the group circle or watch. Throughout sessions, and especially in the un-contained spaces, I involved those who were watching or standing close. These residents were referred to as visitors and observers to help them feel included. When performance time drew nearer, we declared them "cheerleaders." Towards the end of Nov., staff members and a student volunteer came regularly to assist in the

sessions and practice laps².

Times / Communication

From Aug. 12-Dec. 23, 2004, the Superpowers met for a total of forty sessions. Sessions were held twice a week. In Aug., we met in the morning. Starting Sept., the time changed to the afternoon. This happened to adjust to another group's use of the dayroom, which was the only container, or space without distractions. A container is essential in any therapeutic setting with basic foundational goals of attention and concentration. The shift from mornings to afternoons made remarkable difference in energy levels as the afternoon-time was previously scheduled for sleeping.

One session was cancelled unexpectedly because of a hurricane. Before other hurricane watches, I discussed what had been forecasted with the group. I said that in the last one I felt scared. I also explained how something that made me feel better was to think of the wind-sound as nature singing a song. Talking about my feelings modeled emotional communication to the group.

Two weeks of sessions were cancelled in mid-Oct. due to an accident that occurred when we were leaving the dayroom. Mostly

² There were a number of people who were present invisibly. This included my grant donor, sponsors, supervisors, Junkanoosers, and artisans.

because of the limited number of staff persons, I did not have staff assistance when leading the groups. When we started practice laps, ambulatory participants were enlisted to push the wheelchairs. While one such member was pushing Angel out of the dayroom, her wheelchair tipped. She fell to the ground, knocking out two teeth and sending her into shock. Although her shock subsided and she soon recovered, this incident caused emotional turbulence in everyone who witnessed the event.

The accident became a catalyst that revealed the communication gaps that had been present since August. I took one session to assess the safety of the residents who witnessed the accident. Then I came twice a week to informally discuss with participants about what was happening; then I attended meetings with the doctor, occupational therapy director, nurses or administration. The year prior to coming, I had discussed, and certified the project with the center's administrator. Upon arrival, I assumed communication had filtered throughout the entire staff, and promptly started working. The staff around me, however, was not aware of what I was doing and why. I did not know they didn't know, and assumed they were too busy to be included physically but would ask if they wanted a verbal explanation. Dr. Williams advised me to open doors of communication by saying, "It seems like we are having a problem

communicating. What can I do to help?" This proved effective and I learned the necessity of communicating through all links in the chain of command. The accident and subsequent meetings resulted in major changes to better ensure the participants' safety.

One such shift was the revelation that not enough staff would be available to assist with the downtown parade. As a result, the spotlight transferred to the Frances stage. The next few sessions involved discussing the accident, break, changes, and feelings that the break and changes caused.

When I saw Angel a week after her accident, her newly gapped smile beamed out as she excitedly squealed with delight when hearing my voice. During attendance she made tremendous progress in attention, emotional expression, responding to verbal cues, vocal expression and movement. Despite this growth, she was no longer allowed to participate and remained in bed all day. When sessions resumed, LaToya said she was mad and also wanted to quit the group. Despite continued attempts, I could not determine the cause of her anger. LaToya expressed her desires and emotions non-verbally with more articulation than a great number of speaking persons. She had been a dynamic presence and engaging example for everyone else in the group.

Emotional communication

In part because LaToya quit, Danny started saying he did not want to come. He then told me "I'm mad at you." The first time I asked why he looked at the nurse pushing his wheelchair and joked it off, "'cuz you won't buy me a snack." I told him I believed he really was mad for other reasons and I wanted him to talk about why, that he should think about it and we'd talk before the session on the next day I was there. When we saw each other, he did talk about his feelings and their reasons. This reached goals of emotional expression and communication.

Significant therapeutic retrograde occurred amongst the participants. Our task became greater while time was lesser, creating a crucial pivotal point. Words I used to re-enforce morale were...

The most important part of everyone who works at the hospital's job is making sure everyone is safe; Angel got hurt in an accident that wasn't anyone's fault, but everyone's safety was questioned. One thing that would help everyone feel safer is for only nurses to push wheelchairs, and there are not enough nurses to push wheelchairs downtown. Everyone was improving so much in goals of concentration, paying attention, following instructions,

playing drums, shakers, and whistles until the accident happened. Everyone in the group should be so proud of what you have accomplished. The parade is a chance to show everyone -communicate to everyone- what you are able to do. This is a chance to show that you are able to play the drums, you are able to ride a bike³, you are able to be a part of the community of the ward and of the hospital and of the Bahamas (Buckler field notes Nov. 11, 2005).

Things slowly progressed as needed and plans for costume and banner construction were passed to another ward.

Sessions were again in the morning when more staff-persons were on-site in either the ward lobby, or dining area. As these spaces were not contained, the group was often interrupted and attention dispersed. Eventually we moved outside. The timing to be outside was ideal because at this point Karl and Danny focused on our familiar activities despite the many distractions around us. Towards the end of November, we met five days a week until the performance.

Sessions

The consistent session pattern provided structure and comfort. Group members always sat in a circle so everyone was

³ Ronnie had told me during the break that he wanted to play a bicycle rider

facing each other. In the beginning, Karl, who pedals his chair with his feet, turned away from or left the circle. In order to keep him present, I sat next to him and placed my hand on the armrest when he started to wander. To keep the same height, everyone sat in a chair. Outside we sat on cubes. Once everyone was in the circle, each session began with our hello song check-in. The tune greeted each participant by name; then gave instructions to "show us your stretch" which everyone then reflected. I used the progressions of initiation and reflection as a continual assessment of mobility, concentration and attention to self and others.

Every member responded to hearing their name, and initiated a movement that the rest of the group reflected. In August participants took some time to initiate a movement, and I would go around the circle verbally prompting each individual to reflect. Some members gestured intentionally while other showed unconscious movement which I picked-up and, with their permission, encouraged everyone to reflect. Members usually used the same stretch in every session. Movements ranged from jaws, neck, and arms to laughing, which "reminded us to warm-up our voice," (Linkletter, 1976). Usually only one part-time participant or I initiated leg-stretches and reflection of this was slow. As we continued, everyone made significant advancement

in responding when it was their turn in concentration and reflection as shown by attention to others, and mobility as shown by moving parts of their body. Specifically, December leg-stretches were readily reflected.

After the hello and goodbye songs we had 10-60 seconds of silent time. This combined Joanabbey Sack's "take a minute," and Viola Spolin's "Send out your sound" (Buckler class notes, Sack 2003; Spolin, 1986). It encouraged a silent space to recognize and appreciate the physical and mental transition between activities and settings. My direct instructions were "close your eyes, close your mouth, send out your sound," sending out sound coaxed attention past the roof, the noise outside, and the clouds to the stars. When the quietness ended, I directed to bring the sound back to "your breath and your place." In November, we held hands at the closing silence then made eye contact with "the person on your side...the other side...and across the circle. These are your teammates...your community...your friends." Eventually Danny used the silent time for a solo, trying to quicken the segments by instructing, "Open your eyes" just after I'd said to shut them.

The Meat was each session's main activity. It incorporated the day's goals. In the beginning we used the projective container of books. This introduced a frame, then expanded

within it. I chose the first story, Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears, because it was one that I'd used with Dr. Cherry in the past (Aardema, 1975). While reading I stood in the middle of the circle and went around to each participant. Holding the book in front of them, I instructed to touch a specific character, or make one of the animal sounds. This technique was modeled to me on my first trip by the BAPD's speech therapist. It encourages attention and multi-sensory recognition of sight, sound and touch. While using this book, Angel's visual focus increased and she began to make sounds. Other achievements were an increase in Ronnie's arm extension and John's roar with the lions.

The next book I read was Yo! Yes because it highlights a social conversation using single words and physicality (Raschka, 2001). Also, the story's characters were children of color, which made them more familiar to the participants. Projective material is more valuable if its characters are chosen in a recognizable and applicable context.

Sept.'s sessions included taped Bahamian music that members played along with on practice instruments. The instruments were box tops and one-gallon water jugs containing rocks. A few days' activities included participant's placing the rocks in the jug. During this period, John, Lisa, Karl and Angel reached daily

goals of grasping and releasing the stones thus making progress in manual manipulation. The practice-time increased to build-up endurance and concentration. Because of the group's official registration, the Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture donated the Superpowers' drums and cowbells. One Family Junkanoo group donated whistles.

October began the Superpowers practice laps. At first, practice laps were at the end. In Dec., they became the entire meat. Practice laps focused on starting, stopping, and staying together. They also increased stamina and generated excitement.

Performance

On the day of the performance, nurses helped to get all the Superpowers dressed in their papered shirts, pants, hats and shoes. Our line-up included a total of ten residents including one (un-costumed) cheerleader that Shanique pulled along, another former member who had quit coming to rehearsals, three newer, two older, three original, and five staff members. The banner, which the building department had designed to roll between two wheelchairs, fell down. A nurse and I faced front to carry it during the two laps along with eight other wards, and therefore missed watching our group parade behind us.

While the judges were determining scores, the Superpowers had a showcase segment. This involved my small written out



Figure ii: Karl and nurse costumed and ready
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speech describing the group's therapeutic process, then an invitation for the audience to participate while we held a sample session. We began with a group hello song-stretch then shared a silent-time. On cue, Danny spoke-up "Quiet time...Open your eyes" although he'd been quiet with stage fright all day. Next Ronnie, Andrew, and Karl and played a solo while everyone chanted, "Follow me, follow me, follow (the team member in the middle of the semi-circle), follow me." The audience responded

enthusiastically while Ronnie beat his drum harder and harder, Andrew's drumming resounded magnificently, and then, they cheered Karl to shake the bells. We sang a goodbye song then the whole parade moved on for an encore third lap. Karl, who was no longer holding his bells, burst into a dance solo in front of people who exclaimed "He stop the show!" Karl beamed with the praise.

Afterwards, the sun was going down and someone said I needed to get all the residents back before they got cold. A short while later, a staff member came into the ward with the trophy and stereo that the Superpowers had won for placing first in their division! I shared it with each of the group members saying, "This is yours, look what y'all won!" Ronnie responded by grabbing it saying "Want it in bed!"

Cool down

The next week we had our last session. Members took turns holding the trophy and I emphasized they had earned it by working hard and making many improvements in specific goals. I also reminded them about termination, explaining, "I am leaving to share your story with my school." To complete the program, we had a party in the ward. Attending the party were the artisans. One said he felt like they'd won by making the Superpowers costumes even though another ward held his division's trophy.

Another said he would come and hang out with Karl.

Closure

Analysis

Examples that illustrate achievement of group and personal goals such as communication, movement, and emotional expression are stated throughout the text. As well, the Superpowers continued to communicate their force with the instruments now owned by Frances. A specific example of this is Andrew, who is non-verbal. The drum gave him a voice, as I heard him shout throughout the grounds until the day I left. This project also succeeded in communicating ability awareness into the larger community; an awareness that reached as far as government levels in the annual National Junkanoo talk.

The consistent physical movement increased mobility. An example is Ronnie who doesn't usually use his arms as they rest in his chair drawn-up. When he beat his drum in the showcase his strength was heard by all. Danny also played the drum, and cheered loudly throughout the practices. Nurses were surprised when told that Karl could "shake bells." This participation thusly took focus off the dis- part of their -abled bodies.

Danny spoke about his feelings, and other members were respected in decisions to quit. Throughout the time, everyone increased weekly in listening and expressing. Session goals of

attention, focus, and ability to concentrate were met reliably. As well, our time together fostered social interactions and connections. The Superpowers brought together a microcosmic community that positively affected the lives of everyone involved with the team.

Evaluation

This work pushed me to swim without all of the flotation structures I had learned to wear. At times I felt like drowning as stress constricted my snorkel and labored my breath, causing murkiness and panic in close-range sight. Although diving deeper, I kept swimming and remained afloat. Keeping my eye on the purpose and goal, I grew stronger. More buoys of support answered my prayers of distress, as I learned to accept not expect, and to depend on myself.

This project also took place and excelled through an international network of support. My most advantageous advice came from supervision with my cultural advisor, the assistant director of culture. Dr. Williams, the Edu-culture administrator, and Johnson's occupational therapist also provided invaluable insight. Although ultimately successful, this project suffered because it lacked direct communication and inclusion with nursing and therapy teams. Johnson ward workers are few and work hard to maintain the basic needs of many

residents. The head nurse, Sister Michaels, and many other nurses were not aware of the psychological impact of the project, and were slow to embrace my presence and accommodate requests. Even so, by the end, Sister Michaels told me she would recommend I work in the ward upon returning to Frances. An Aug. in-service would have significantly aided understanding. Increased staff communication could also have helped to continue the therapeutic benefits. Additionally, communication and involvement of the BAPD could have increased the project's effectiveness and visibility.

Personal response

My personal growth occurred in a myriad of ways. At work and walking around my neighborhood, I at first, felt isolated, separate, insecure, judged by my whiteness and labeled as a tourist. Frances clients and Johnson residents, as well as my adult friends and the children in my neighborhood accepted my presence and plan, by responding with enthusiasm and appreciation. As time passed, I grew to think more about my purpose than my differences. Eventually I stopped thinking about my separateness and as a result stopped feeling so isolated; the less I acted separate, the less those around me reacted with separation.

Additionally, this work brought perspective about my brain

injury treatment. As I looked, I speculated on potential reasons for such vast recovery. Maybe it was tireless involvement in formal and informal rehabilitations, such as physical, occupational, psychological, theatrical and educational activities that constantly stimulated my spirit and thoughts to heal. Probably further success is due to the strength and prayers of my family, mainly my mom. She came to the hospital every day always pushing me forward not voicing regrets of the past out loud. Lastly, I consider that everyone urged my recovery because the wounds were not externally visible. Maybe people would have treated me less capable had the injury been open and possible to see. For whichever reasons, my recovery drove me to place of deeper empathy and support and skills. My personal journey of healing speaks full circle through this work and this descriptive text. All the flames rising together culminate my academic progression with the therapeutic performance of the Superpowers.

Goodbye song

Embers

I am drawn by the rhythms of Junkanoo
Because of its non-verbal heart
The music/ ritual/ pageantry
From ancestors who did long part

Bahamians gathering bleeding
One resonant African beat
All drawn to a place of competing
Where national languages meet
I was drawn because I felt home there
When I heard all them island folks drum
And I wanted my friends to sing with me
Where our non-verbal songs could soon come.

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