

Clowning in Zones of Crisis: Treating Laughter as a Serious Matter

- *An Exploratory Study on Humanitarian Clowns in the Humanitarian Field*

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Abstract

This research focuses on the art of clowning as a tool and method of psychosocial support in situations of crisis. As this topic is notably under-addressed in scholarly research, this research aims to deepen knowledge on humanitarian clowns in the contemporary humanitarian world. By analyzing the humanitarian clown from the perspective of members of the organization 'Clowns Without Borders' (CWB), this research asks: What is the position, practice and function of humanitarian clowns in the humanitarian world? Besides a wider pool of data based on relevant literature, the empirical material for the analysis was collected by conducting a total of five semi-structured in-depth interviews with the representatives of the Clowns Without Borders, as well as artists working within it. In addition, secondary data has primarily been gathered from the CWB USA blog. Analysis of this data demonstrated that clowning in humanitarian settings can serve several functions. The results indicate that the humanitarian clown is a complex being and that clowns perceive their position in humanitarian world as defined by the unique human connection they establish with the people they work for. They among others can have the effect to bring about joy, happiness, self-reflection, physiological and psychosocial relief, hope, trust and community and can be perceived as an undervalued method of promoting psychosocial wellbeing in settings of humanitarian crisis.

Keywords: clowns, humanitarianism, Clowns Without Borders, play, laughter, psychosocial support

Preface

I would like to express my greatest gratitude to the artists of Clowns Without Borders, for doing the work they do and for taking time to talk to me. Without their insights this thesis would not have been possible.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

‘Today, we take a ferry and then drive hours down a dirt road, reaching a forest where a group of men have spent between two months and two years trying to cross the border. We perform in the middle of nowhere, in the woods, under the roof of an abandoned building where these guys shelter on cold nights. On the way out, I’m clowning around and ask one of the men for his papers. “Which ones?” he says. “Would you like to see my Serbian passport? My Bulgarian one? Or my Afghani one? I have all of them scanned and ready.”

He has a smile on his face and a lot of anger and sadness in his eyes.’

- Sabine Choucair for Clowns Without Borders USA, 2018.

1.1 Background

By the end of 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated the world’s forcibly displaced population at 68.5 million people. Consisting of 40 million internally displaced people (IDPs), 25.4 million refugees and 3.1 million asylum-seekers, the amount of persons of concern (PoCs) has reached an unprecedented high (Edwards, 2018; UNHCR, 2018). To make the abstract more tangible: this means that 1 out of every 110 people worldwide is displaced and 44,400 people on average were forced to flee their homes every day in 2017 (UNHCR, 2018). In addition, while comprising less than one third of the world population, nearly 31 million out of 68.5 are children; making them dramatically over-represented among the displaced population (UNICEF, 2018).

Migratory journeys that displaced people are forced to undertake are strenuous and often lead to trauma (physical as well as psychosocial), deprivation, violence, exposure and injury. This is especially true for populations defined as trafficked or smuggled migrants, refugees or asylum seekers (Gushulak and MacPherson, 2006, p. 3). In addition, according to The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), ‘forced migration often intensifies the vulnerability of children who are already in precarious situations. Violence and conflict are the hallmarks of too many childhoods and are a common denominator in nearly all the countries of origin for large numbers of child refugees’ (UNICEF, 2018).

While there are numerous national and international agencies and organizations that have taken it upon themselves to support people in need of humanitarian assistance with basic necessities such as food, water, sanitation, shelter and medical attention, other organizations such as Clowns Without

Borders (CWB) aim at supporting people by using their clowning skills (Bouissac, 2015, p. 198). As Mollie Levine, former director of Clowns Without Borders USA, stated in her TEDx talk:

‘We are not as important as food, we are not as important as water, but I think that after that, laughter is pretty high up there on that list. The moment that you smile, after experiencing a trauma, it is an integral step towards keeping hope, keeping a spark. Laughter is the difference between continuing to survive and really living again’ (Levine, 2016, 3:31).

CWB is an international non-governmental humanitarian organization that is focused on providing relief through laughter and bringing fun, play and joy to places that need it most. They work in areas of crisis such as conflict zones, refugee camps and other situations of adversity, aiming to make laughter abundant where resources are scarce (CWB, n.d. a).

1.2 Aims and Research Questions

This thesis deals with humanitarian organizations whose main focus is providing relief by using the art of clowning. Here, these humanitarian clowns are perceived through the lens of the organization ‘Clowns Without Borders’. The aim of this research is to produce knowledge on humanitarian clowns and their position, practices and functions in the contemporary humanitarian world from the perspectives of the artists associated to CWB. As this research is about the relationship between humanitarian clowns and humanitarianism, it is relevant to emphasize that the focus will be on those aspects of humanitarian clowns that are directly related to clowns, the art of clowning and emergency relief.

It follows that the main question of this research is threefold and focuses on the position, practice and function of humanitarian clowns in the humanitarian world. This can be formulated in the following three questions:

1. What is the position of humanitarian clowns in the humanitarian sector?
2. What are the practices of the humanitarian clowns in the humanitarian field?
3. What functions do humanitarian clowns have in the humanitarian field?

1.3 Previous Research

This analysis draws on theory and concepts related to clowns, the art of clowning, therapeutic clowning, laughter, play and humanitarianism. Relevant authors on the clown and their roles and functions from a historical perspective include Bala (2010), Charles (1945) and Jung (1963, 1983). These authors are being addressed to understand the archetypal nature of the clown.

Further, as the clown has often been considered a liminal figure, the concept of liminality as formulated by Victor Turner (1967, 1974, 1988) is used to perceive the clown function and its role in society. Relevant works used to understand the contemporary clown include *The Semiotics of Clowns and Clowning* by Bouissac (2015) and *Serious Play* by Peacock (2009). Huizinga's (1949) theory on play will be addressed and Provine (1996) offers insightful perspectives through his study on laughter.

As no work on humanitarian clowns has been published, they will in this research be related to hospital and therapeutic clowns, about whom relevant work has been published by Auerbach (2017), Adams (2002), Carp (1998), Finlay, Baverstock, and Lenton (2017), Linge (2008) and Raviv (2014). Finally, important authors that have written on humanitarianism include Barnett (2013), James (2017) and Walker and Maxwell (2009) who offer insights that help putting the humanitarian world in context.

1.4 Relevance

As there is no academic literature specifically addressing humanitarian clowns or the role of humor in humanitarian work, there is a knowledge gap in scholarly research examining the relationship between clowns, the benefits of laughter and humanitarian action. While - as mentioned in the previous section - research does address its individual components, it is the relationship to and the positioning of the clown within humanitarian action that is the focus of this study. Therefore, this research can be considered pioneering in a sense that it produces knowledge and insights in a topic that has not been researched yet.

Whereas research on the benefits of laughter in itself is also limited, there are studies that show that humor and therapeutic clowns have positive physiological and psychological effects. As the world's displaced population has reached its highest in decades and refugee situations are increasingly protracted (UNHCR, 2018, pp. 22-23, pp. 29-30), numerous families, communities and individuals are put under significant social and psychological stress. Facing the challenges of the 21st century humanitarianism, the pressure on the humanitarian sector to address psychosocial needs will most likely only increase. By focusing on a non-conventional way of offering psychological and social

support, this research informs humanitarian actors of the possibilities that clowning may bring in mitigating immediate and long-term effects of psychosocial stress in humanitarian settings.

In addition to humanitarian actors, this study can also prove valuable to recipients of aid. When working in 2016 in Idomeni camp in Greece, I saw firsthand how much laughter, joy and positivity humanitarian clowns can bring to populations in situations of crisis. The camp - originally built to be only a transit camp - was hosting over 10,000 people and was overcrowded, unhygienic, unsafe and detrimental to health; short to say living conditions were far from ideal. However, regardless of this situation the clowns arrived and managed to bring smiles to the faces of children and adults, bringing temporary relief and entertainment in a place where there was little positivity to be found. Therefore, this study could indirectly benefit beneficiaries by increasing understanding of humanitarian clowns, clowning practices and their contributions to physiological and psychosocial health.

1.5 Methods

Besides a wider pool of data based on relevant literature, the empirical material for the analysis is collected by conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with the representatives of the Clowns Without Borders, as well as artists working within it. CWB Sweden has been of particular interest and focus here. A total of five interviews were conducted with four artists with ages ranging between 35 and 45. Three of the respondents were female and one was male. The interviews were conducted in English during the spring 2019, via Skype and in Stockholm. They were recorded, transcribed and used according to their relevance for the issues in question.¹

Secondary data has also been used in the research. This data has been derived from relevant sources such as the websites of CWB international and the national CWB chapters, in particular the blog from CWB USA where numerous reflections written by performers themselves can be found. Other sources include interviews or articles regarding humanitarian clowns published on the websites of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC); a Ted talk by Molly Levine, former director of CWB USA and the video 'Clowns Without Borders - Talks at Google'.

¹ More details of the interviews and the respondents can be found in appendix 1 and 2 of this thesis.

1.6 Limitations

Limitations of this study are the lack of prior research and limited availability of data. The research questions may have been answered more comprehensively if the gathered data would have been complemented with other data, either gathered by myself or presented in prior research. Observing a CWB performance, for example, could have offered many insights. However, the lack of observational data has been compensated by conducting in-depth interviews with people associated to CWB. Related to this, an additional limitation of this research is the scope and time frame given. Due the restricted time frame within which to finish the study, extensive data collection could not take place. While this study offers a deepened knowledge on humanitarian clowns, there is a range of topics that deserve more research to fully comprehend all aspects of the position, functions and practices of humanitarian clowns. A longitudinal study using a variety of methodologies such as interviews, surveys, participant observation and medical data, aimed at all actors involved, such as artists, other NGOs and beneficiaries, would therefore be feasible.

1.7 Outline

This thesis starts off with an introduction part explaining the background, aims, research questions, previous research, relevance of this research, as well as methods and limitations of the research. In the second chapter basic concepts and theories that lead the research will be presented. Concepts such as clowns and clowning, therapeutic clowning, play, and laughter will be addressed and elaborated on, as well the context of humanitarianism. Acknowledging that the clown is neither him nor her, I have chosen to present the clown in this research as 'her' in order to break away from the stereotypical representations of the clown as masculine or as 'they' when grammatically more appropriate. In chapter three the case study will be introduced. This case study offers knowledge and information on the organization Clowns Without Borders. This is followed by an empirical part where gathered data is analyzed and linked to relevant academic theory. In Chapter four the identity and position of humanitarian clowns in the humanitarian world is explored. Chapter five will focus on the artistic practice of the clowns, by looking at the elements that characterize the clown act and the functions that their practices have in the humanitarian field. Finally, a discussion is presented followed by an appendix with illustrative photos and a bibliography of referenced literature.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Clown: Identity and Position in the World

Clowns are historical figures that have appeared in texts and images dating back centuries, the earliest records stemming from about 4500 years ago (Bala, 2010, p. 50). Due to its recurring appearances, the clown can be considered of archetypal nature and can be seen in various historical figures such as the medieval court fool or jester, the harlequin of popular comedy, the European circus clown, the Italian Commedia dell'arte and the mythological trickster.

In addition, the clown is part of the cultural landscape of many societies and made its appearance across various cultures and geographies, serving functions ranging from political to psychological, physical, cultural, religious and social. Comparative study of historic clowns has shown that elaborate clowning has been practiced in Oceania, Asia, Africa and North and South America (Charles, 1945, p. 26), examples of which are the jesters of Chinese courts tracing back 4000 years, the mimes of Ancient Greece, ritual clowns performing in social and sacred ceremonies of the Navaho, Pueblo, Hopi, and Zuni peoples and clown figures in Balinese puppet theaters (Bala, 2010, pp. 50-51).

‘[The clown] is Devil and Vice, as well as Demon, Goblin, and Knave. He merges often into a Churl, Boor, Rustic, Dupe, Dolt, Booby, Simpleton, Noodle, or Nut. He may function as a Fool, Jester, Buffoon, Comic; or Harlequin or Pierrot with a more romantic touch. He may be a Parasite, Scapegoat, Old Man or Old Woman; or an animal’ (Charles, 1945, p. 34).

As Charles (1945, p. 34) highlights above, the clown is marked by dichotomy and duality and is, according to Jung (1983, pp. 211-212), not part of this world but also not out of it. Unsuitable for the animal category because of their lack of instinct and clumsiness and simultaneously superior and inferior to man because of their superhuman qualities, unreason and unconsciousness. The clown can then be considered ‘a forerunner of the saviour, and, like him, God, man, and animal at once. He is both subhuman and superhuman, a bestial and divine being, whose chief and most alarming characteristic is his unconsciousness’ (Jung, 1983, p. 211).

The clown’s position is ‘in between’, they do not have a role in the contemporary social order, yet everyone recognizes them. Drawing on Victor Turner’s concept of liminality (1967, 1974, 1988),

scholars have considered the clown a liminal figure or being, not here nor there and on the boundary between perceived opposites (Robb, 2007, p. 1; Crick, 2017, p. 167).

Based on van Gennep's work (1909), Turner (1974, pp. 59-75) proposed the concept to describe tribal societies' initiation rites or rites of passage, indicating the phase in ritual in which the individual moves from the 'preliminal status' to the 'postliminal status'. He notes that in the liminal phase, the novices are temporarily undefined, have no rights over others while society also has no power over them. It is a place where full human potential, that has been repressed by normative social structures forcing individuals into a certain roles, can be expressed, something which he described as 'anti-structure'. Furthermore, he perceived liminality as 'a complex series of episodes in sacred space-time' which can include 'subversive and ludic events' during which the individual's freedom of expression allow him to play with and distort what is familiar (Turner, 1974, pp. 59-60). While liminality is always a temporal event and the novice is assumed to reach the postliminal phase, the clown is located in ritual: a permanent liminal being who through its performance offers audiences a glimpse into the liminal world.

2.2 The Contemporary Clown

Compared to some of its predecessors, the clown of today has a less prominent role in most of the world's societies. While clowning is a complex practice that requires skill and experience, the prioritization of and focus on reality in contemporary industrialized societies has resulted in the perception of clowns as a simple form of entertainment for children. However, the clown's archetypal nature ensures its continued existence and its functions that go beyond entertainment. As Peacock (2009, p. 14) emphasized: 'The clown clowns not simply to amuse his audience but because he has observations about the world, about life, to communicate to them'.

Modern clowns can be identified by their use of physical comedy and 'otherness' which generally is expressed through their quirky physical appearance and the way they use performance to convey their attitudes towards life. In addition, they have the power to turn failure into success and can have a wide range of physical skills such as juggling, acrobatics, circus or mime. While clowns are not easy to define, the clown persona is usually created by the performer and based on their individual characteristics, making the clown non-transferable and linked to the performer for life. This unique and personal character has been described by Beré (2013) as the 'essential clown'. It follows that - due to

this personal element of the clown character - there is a difference between a performer that is a clown and an actor that acts as a clown (Peacock, 2009, pp. 13-17).

Béré (2013, p. 211) adds that the clown only exists in relation to the other and that the clown-audience relationship is of a different order than that of conventional theater. The clown, he notes, 'invites the audience to [...] perceive the *normal* through transformed eyes' (2013, p. 211). This connection to the audience is essential to the clowning performance and revolves around the sharing of the experience of the performance. The strong relationship between the clown and its audience is also called 'complicity' or as it was originally coined in French by Lecoq (2002 cited in Peacock, 2009, p. 33) 'complicité' and can be described as a 'silent communication, an unspoken understanding'. Furthermore, complicité has a symbiotic relationship with play and can also occur between performers.

The 'normal' as Béré refers to, means the way the clown perceives objects outside of conventional frameworks of function. In addition, it can also mean the clown's ability to question what the 'normal' is. As Bouissac (2015, p. 113) shows, social and cultural rules that govern society are dependent on those who enforce them. By breaking rules and challenging conventional norms and functions, the clown can reveal their arbitrary nature. From all this it follows that popular representations of clowns, that often portray them as scary, generally do not grasp the complexity of what a clown is.

2.3 Laughter and Play

Just as clowns are archetypal and universal figures, humor and laughter can be considered pervasive social phenomena and universal human traits. While laughter is considered a prime indicator of humor, research has found it is not necessarily its product (Provine, 1996). Provine (1996, pp. 41-42) has shown that humans are 30 times more likely to laugh when surrounded by other humans and that comedy may not be the prime instigator of laughter. He found laughter is contagious and can induce laughter, even in the absence of comedy. Furthermore, as people are more likely to laugh due to mutual playfulness, in-group feeling and positive emotional tone, laughter is a form of communication associated to the relational aspect of the social situation. He therefore also criticized conventional research on humor for neglecting the social function of laughter by focusing on the audience instead of the relationship between performer and audience.

In addition to its social function and nonverbal expression of emotion, laughter has multiple psychological and physiological effects such as reducing stress, anxiety and depression, improving resilience, heart rate and respiration and increasing immune defense, flow of endorphins and metabolism (Linge, 2008; Bala, 2010; Scott et al., 2014; Finlay, Baverstock and Lenton, 2017, p. 597).

Besides generating laughter, Peacock (2009) has shown that the most relevant element of clown performance is play and argues that it is the role of the clown to connect with its audience and engage them to play. Play and clowning, she writes, can enhance self-awareness, show that failing is a legitimate way of learning and enable people to react spontaneously to situations in life over which they have no control. In addition, as play is a means of bonding it can also create or enhance a sense of community (2009, p. 55, p. 155).

Johan Huizinga (1949, pp. 7-13), a prominent play theorist, has described play as a voluntary activity that is acknowledged to be ‘unreal’, an interlude from real life into a temporary sphere of activity. Furthermore, it is unconnected to material interests and limited - occurring within a certain time and space - with an element of order as all play has its rules. Perceiving play as a social manifestation and integral part of life, Huizinga (1949, p. 9) argued that play is a necessity ‘both for the individual - as a life function - and for society by reason of the meaning it contains, its significance, its expressive value, its spiritual and social associations, in short, as a culture function’.

2.4 The Therapeutic Clown

As there is no relevant academic literature related to humanitarian clowns, an introduction to hospital clowning literature will be presented. Although not the same, these two clowns can be considered comparable in the sense that they both have a therapeutic purpose and aim to relieve stress and anxiety, as well as improving mental, physical and emotional well-being (Finlay, Baverstock and Lenton, 2017, p. 597). In addition, hospital clowns work is child-centered and uses clowning in order to bring play, joy and laughter to places where these are in short supply. Among these places are ‘hospitals, refugee camps, war-devastated regions, and factories that thrive on cheap labor’ (Bouissac, 2015, p. 198).

According to Carp (1998, p. 246), clown therapy involves improvisation, drama, character clown techniques and movement and has the purpose of eliciting the individual’s clown character. The integration of this character into daily life and consciousness, she argues, is relevant for the individual as the psychotherapeutic value lies in the relationship between this archetypal image and the Jungian

idea of the Self (1963). The Self being the totality, the conscious and unconscious of the individual, the function of the clown is to create a connection between both by touching upon the unconscious and therefore helping the individual to better understand its true nature. In addition, by perceiving the hospital as an institute in which patients lose part of their independence and identity, Raviv (2014) argues that the “clown’s carnivalesque laughter arouses the patients’ opposition to their alienated state [...] and the depression often brought on by the illness itself. The very fact that they are rebelling against their dislocated and weakened state strengthens their spirit and lifts their mood” (Raviv, 2014, p. 601)

However, clowning is a complex intervention that has a potential to affect many aspects of the health sector and research on the therapeutic value of clowning is still limited. Critical voices have argued just that, noting that there is no hard evidence for the therapeutic value of clowning, little understanding of the relationship between the physiology of laughter and its meaning, and insufficient attention to professionalism and coulrophobia – the fear of clowns (Bouissac, 2015, p. 199).

While scholars acknowledge more research needs to be done, studies do confirm that hospital clowns overall are beneficial for patients (Auerbach, 2017, p. 6) and have found that therapeutic clowning plays a significant role in alleviating or reducing anxiety and fear in both children and parents (Raviv, 2014, p. 601; Sridharan and Sivaramakrishnan, 2016, p. 1357).

2.5 The Context: Humanitarianism

There is no simple definition of humanitarianism and the term has a rather loose and expansive past. Historical investigation has shown that denotation of acts considered ‘humanitarian’ has fluctuated over time and that use of the various meanings of the term can not be placed in chronological order (Walker and Maxwell, 2009, p. 1; Davies, 2012, pp. 1-2). As Barnett (2013, p. 10) also emphasized, we should speak of humanitarianism, noting that there are varied approaches to and alternative conceptions of humanitarianism among different actors. However, as he further shows, the arguably most widely accepted definition is one suggested by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which considers humanitarianism ‘the impartial, neutral, and independent provision of relief to victims of conflict and natural disasters’.

While earliest records of humanitarian acts stem from the twenty-third century BCE, the global system that we know today arose parallel to increased globalization of the mid 19th century (Walker and Maxwell, 2009, p. 17). Not exactly a logical construct or intentionally designed system, the

humanitarian world consists of a rather loose collaboration of governments, research and academic institutions, donors, humanitarian agencies and aid organizations.

Acting as intermediaries, humanitarian agencies operate between donors and beneficiaries and can be roughly categorized into four types: agencies that are subsets of individual countries, multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, organizations part of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and structured groups of private citizens such as non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations (Walker and Maxwell, 2009, pp. 2-3). Further, these organizations can also be distinguished by other aspects such as age, size, origin, religious or secular affiliation, mandate and main sector or focus. The most common sectors organizations focus on are: immediate survival needs such as food and nutrition, water and sanitation, health and shelter; protection; cross-cutting themes and rehabilitation and development (James, 2017, p. 25).

Chapter 3: Case Study: Clowns Without Borders



Image 1.1 CWB in Lesvos, Greece (CWB, 2015).

Clowns Without Borders (CWB) is an international non-governmental organization that is focused on providing for the immaterial and direct needs of people. In the role of ‘humanitarian clowns’, the organization goes into crisis zones and perform for people affected. Emphasized in her TEDx talk, Mollie Levine - director of CWB USA – stated that Clowns Without Borders ‘take the experience of laughter, elevated emotion, the release from stress that comes with being able to sit back, take an hour and be entertained and laugh [...] and share it with folks who don’t have the luxury of relaxation or entertainment’ (Levine, 2016, 2:05). While CWB is arguably the largest humanitarian clowning organization, there are multiple organizations that have a similar focus, such as Clown Me In², Humanitarian Clowns³, the Gesundheit Institute⁴ and the Caring Clowns International⁵.

2 <https://clownmein.com>

3 <https://www.humanitarianclowns.com>

4 <http://www.patchadams.org>

5 <https://www.caringclownsinternational.org>

Founded in Barcelona in 1993, CWB came into being as a result of a visit to a refugee camp in Croatia by founder Jaume Mateu, better known as Tortell Poltrona (the red nosed clown). Performing for audiences of more than 700 children, the trip showed Poltrona that entertainment and clowns are very much needed in crisis situations and that humor could be used as a tool to offer psychological support (CWB, n.d. a). In an interview with the UNHCR Poltrona recalls:

‘When we started, it might have seemed like a joke to some people. An NGO with clowns in the middle of a war! It was surreal. At first we wondered what we were doing, but after the first experience it was such a powerful and emotional feeling’ (Poltrona cited in Dobbs, 2011).

Today, the organization has fifteen chapters worldwide⁶ whose mission is to “relieve the suffering of all persons, especially children, who live in areas of crisis including refugee camps, conflict zones and other situations of adversity” (CWB, n.d. b). The chapters all follow the same ethical guideline⁷ and have a mutual understanding of how they operate, but are independent in their own countries. Although CWB international was created in 2012, the organization is still in the process of finding out what the common ground between the chapters is.

CWB operates on a global scale but never goes anywhere without being invited by another humanitarian organization already established in that specific place. This collaboration partner can be a small local or national NGO or a large international organization such as Save the Children, Terre Des Hommes, UNHCR, UNICEF, Warchild, Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) or Plan International. In addition, the organization increasingly aims to work together with local artists in order to facilitate cultural exchange, sustainability and to spread the practice. CWB Sweden also has an ongoing collaboration with the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts, where they have hosted basic education programs and summer courses training artists in CWB tools and techniques.

The chapters have a network of professional performing artists, among whom are musicians, actors, circus artists, dancers, clowns, magicians, and street artists. In the case of CWB Sweden, the artists hold an artist membership at the organization and can apply to participate in upcoming projects, which always is on a voluntary basis. As the composition of a group is very important, the artist coordinator and the project manager make a selection of applicants based on skills, experience and past

⁶ Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

⁷ <http://www.cwb-international.org/our-ethic/>

experiences of working together. A clown tour usually takes 10 to 20 days and is done with three to five performers, of whom one is the tour leader in charge of communication with partners on the ground and the CWB office. Tours include workshops and performances and differ from each other in duration, collaboration partner, audiences, country and type of performance locations. In addition, CWB Sweden also runs and collaborates with projects that aim at training other humanitarians such as play leaders, community workers and parapsychologists in applied theater and trauma informed approaches.

Besides touring, CWB Sweden engages in advocacy, emphasizing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)⁸ and the The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) during information events at schools, for political parties or for other organizations and businesses targeted specifically to raise awareness about encountered situations. They also try to raise awareness through media by publishing articles, speaking with journalists on the radio and television.

⁸ According to Article 31 of the UN Conventions of the Right of the Child, the child has the right ‘to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts’ (UNICEF and UN General Assembly, 1989).

Chapter 4: The Position of Clowns in the Humanitarian World

Clowns Without Borders is a rather versatile organization that does not focus on just one aspect of humanitarianism. However, they characterize their organization and activities as primarily aimed at providing emergency relief and psychosocial support. In order to understand the position of humanitarian clowns in the humanitarian world, this chapter explores who the CWB clown is and how they position themselves in the humanitarian field.

4.1 Who is the Clown

As argued, there is no simple definition of what a clown is. In response to the question ‘what is a clown’, respondent 4 answered that he was not sure, but that the clown with the typical toy store costume and plastic nose look, the ice-cream clown and Ronald McDonald were not clowns. Especially Ronald McDonald, he argued, is the opposite of the clown (Respondent 4, pers. comm., 15 May). Compared to these type of characters, a CWB clown can be considered more as a classical clown, wearing a limited amount of make-up and less exuberant outfits.

Peacock (2009, pp. 12-15) described the clown as being a type of ‘other’ identified by appearance, physical skill and a different way of looking at the world, as well as having an inherent relationship between performer and clown persona. This coincides with the respondents perceptions, who emphasized that the clown is a expression of the self, innocent or child-like and curious, vulnerable, open, playful and in connection with its audience (Respondents 1,2,3,4, pers. Comm., 8, 13-15 May). Corresponding to Beré’s (2013) ‘essential clown’, respondent 1 pointed out that ‘the clown is based on you as a person and on your vulnerabilities and your... *egenheter*, your peculiarities’ (Respondent, pers. comm., 8 May). This does not mean that the clown is a static character, rather it is a foundation on which can be built during performance. Also respondent 4, after much deliberation, concluded that ‘the clown is you, it is your cousin from the country or it is just yourself with more... you let out your odd diagnosis’ (Respondent 4, pers. comm., 15 May). He furthermore explained that the identity of the clown is related to being honest and sincere to yourself and the audience. If you are faking yourself and trying to act funny, the audience will see and recognize that, even if you go to a country where they have no clown culture and do not really know what a clown is (Respondent 4, pers. comm., 15 May). Respondent 3 described the clown as following:

‘Clown is a character, it is a way of seeing the world and life. It is a character that normally wears a little mask, the clown nose they say is the smallest mask in the world, but that mask in comparison with other ones that are hiding yourself, this one reveals the humanity of the one wearing it. Clown is about vulnerability and innocence’ (Respondent 3, pers. comm., 14 May).

The red nose, Peacock (2009, p. 15) notes, is of service especially in silent performances as it draws the audience’s attention to the performer’s facial nuance and expressions. Furthermore, it serves to create just enough separation between audience and performer to reinforce the sense of ‘otherness’. The otherness, as we have seen, is an important feature of the clown as it places them in a category of their own, giving them special status and powers.

The child-like being of the clown can further be related to Turner’s (1974, p. 75) concept of the liminality as an anti-structure where the individual is free to be creative and express, liberated from ‘normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses, enacting a multiplicity of social roles, and being acutely conscious of membership in some corporate group’ (Turner, 1974, p. 75). This can be recognized in the words of respondent 3, who explained that the clown can be compared to a child not just because they do silly things and are clumsy, but because children do not have any social or cultural filter. When children want to say something they will say it and when they want to do something they do it. Furthermore, like the child, nobody takes the clown the wrong way because everybody knows that they do not have any bad intentions (Respondent 3, pers. comm., 14 May).

4.2 Who is the Humanitarian Clown

In his book on the semiotics of clowning, Bouissac (2015, p. 181) argues that the contemporary spread of clowning as social activism is a step away from professional clowning and trivializes clowning ‘in the name of commendable concerns’. Following this, he notes that ‘projects such as ‘Clowns without Borders’ are paved with good intentions in their emulation of ‘Doctors without Borders,’ but they are largely utopian and rest upon a superficial understanding of clowning’ (Bouissac, 2015, p. 199). While not elaborating much further, Bouissac implies that professionalism in therapeutic clowning is relevant because individual’s needs have to be understood. He furthermore emphasizes that handing over

balloons and doing ‘instant gags and skits’ is a simplistic job that cannot be compared to the complexity of a professional clowning performance (Bouissac, 2015, p 199).

However, while Bouissac may be right in his latter statement, his comments about CWB arguably lack some nuance. For example, all respondents that participated in this study had extensive experience with clowning and performance as well as substantial theoretical knowledge on the topic. Respondent 3 emphasized the importance of professionalism by saying that artists sometimes meet very shortly before the tour starts and may have just two days to put together a show. This requires a lot from the artists and in these situations it is important that they have some tools and knowledge in order to work efficiently and bond together (Respondent 3, pers. Comm., 14 May).

Having said that, all artists may be professionals, not all artists are professional clowns. Respondent 4 explained that some may be circus artists, jugglers, mimes or actors and may lack experience and knowledge of what clowning really is. As he further noted, in line with Peacock (2009, p. 14), there is a difference between an actor who takes on a role as a clown for one mission and someone who actually works as a clown. He also noted that performing on a tour is challenging and quite different from what the artists are used to. Therefore, it is also partly the experience that the artists gain by participating in many tours that makes them become more and more of a clown (Respondent 4, pers. comm., 15 May).

Following that, it can be argued that besides nuance, Bouissac’s suggestion also shows a lack of understanding about the nature of humanitarian work. Humanitarian actors are exposed to contexts and situations that are challenging and can bring out emotions such as anxiety and depression, emotions that can make working as a clown in those settings even more challenging. Although stress is an everyday occurrence, James (2017, p. 216) emphasized that relief workers are exposed to additional levels as they may live in difficult conditions, miss loved ones and can witness poverty and violence. Respondent 1 told an personal story to illustrate this:

‘I think it was on my first trip in 2011, I went to Rwanda to a huge camp [...] and when we arrived there was an adult who was using a stick to organize the children and was lashing out towards the children, which today we have strategies for [...] but then in 2011 it was a very stressful situation. So when we arrived and this adult was dealing with it in this manner, I was very upset and very angry with the person but our tour manager was stopping me from taking that discussion with the person. As we were coming in we needed to disperse the crowd and focus on the children and on the activity that was happening, so

that it would not create chaos, but I was totally incapable of playing with pleasure. That was a big learning experience of also how to be emotionally ready' (Respondent 1, pers. comm., 21 March).

She furthermore explained that in situations when she do not feel playful or have access to her inner clown, she needs to rely on the techniques she knows in order to be able do her job (Respondent 1, pers. comm., 21 March).

4.3 A Humanitarian Clown in a Humanitarian World

Referring to Maslow's hierarchy of needs - which states survival related needs must be met before emotional and cultural needs – Peacock (2009, pp. 150-151) argues it is necessary to consider the relevance of humanitarian clowns when basic needs have not been met. Here she points to a clear distinction between hospital and humanitarian clowns, as she is of the opinion that children's basic needs in hospitals have been met, opposed to those in crisis situations. Although she notes that the work done by CWB is often valuable and clowning is a therapeutic tool, she warns not to over-state clowning and to perceive it as a panacea.

However, while CWB receives a lot of praise, the organization does seem nuanced about their position in the humanitarian world. Diana Hahn, former vice-president of CWB USA, stated in an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC):

'We are very specific about the kind of relief that we provide and we don't go outside of that boundary. We try to partner with an aid organization or an educational organization that's already working in the field and that is providing things like education, water, shelter, food – the very necessary relief forms. Then we come in and provide what we think of as the humour side of things' (Ross, 2012).

Respondent 1 agreed with this by emphasizing that they usually go in once the food distribution is set in place and people have shelter and access to medical care. However, she also mentioned that it is hard to say when basic needs really are met and although the artists cannot cure hunger by playing, she argued that playing can perhaps help forget the thought of hunger for some seconds (Respondent 1, pers. comm., 21 March). As can be confirmed by Huizinga (1949, p. 9), play serves a function that is external to the material needs that people may have. It is not necessarily higher or lower, rather just another way of contributing to wellbeing.

Therefore, CWB does not claim to be a panacea, they do argue that there is a gap in the humanitarian field that they are filling. As there are other organizations that also have incentives and projects aimed at improving psychosocial wellbeing, this gap is not necessarily related to offering psychosocial support, but mostly to the ‘human connection’ that they found lacking in the relationships between other NGOs and beneficiaries. As respondent 4 emphasized:

‘We do the healing of the soul, the mental health, we are doing what no other organization doing. It is meeting people, looking them in the eyes and having fun together, share joy and laughter. Also, we make people feel like ‘someone saw me today, they came for me, and there are maybe 500 or 1000 other people as well, but they came for us’ (Respondent 4, pers. comm., 15 May).

In addition, where other organizations usually hand out material items, creating long lines of people waiting among others for food, water, tents and medical assistance, humanitarian clowns are able to reach large groups at once and can serve as a means to ease tensions by offering entertainment between the waiting. Respondent 3 added that the clowns never approach the people they serve as victims or with pity. They go everywhere with the joy and excitement of meeting new people, as the human beings they are, to celebrate that meeting and to fill up the space of hope through the discharge of energy that laughter provides. ‘For us the people that we meet are not only numbers on paper, we see the people we are meeting from really close - and that is beautiful’ (Respondent 3, pers. Comm., 14 May).

As we have seen, the clown is an archetypal character that is not really part of this world, but also not exactly out of it. The ‘true’ clown is one that is honest and sincere and based on elements of the character of its creator. CWB clowns therefore also perceive their contribution to and position in the humanitarian world mostly related to the ‘human connection’ that they establish with the people they work for. In the following chapter the complex activity of clowning and the functions that this activity may have in humanitarian settings will be explored.

Chapter 5: The Practice of Humanitarian Clowns in the Humanitarian World

Although CWB engages in a plethora of activities, this chapter specifically focuses on the performances as their aim is to offer psychosocial support and relief through the art of clowning. As we have seen, the clown character is very much part of its creator. The clown act is therefore also closely related to the performer and can be considered an expression of the ideas and attitudes of that specific individual (Peacock, 2009, p. 14). While the clown can draw on a range of techniques, CWB clowns mostly use slapstick or other types of physical comedy, which includes ‘falling on your butt, juggling and dropping the clubs on your head’ (Respondent 4, pers. comm., 15 May).

Despite the fact that the relationship between performer and clown character means each clown performance is personal and individual, there are some features common to all clown acts. It is therefore not the purpose here to describe in detail what the clown act looks like visually, but rather to highlight certain relevant elements of the clown act, with an emphasis on the humanitarian context.

In order to answer to the question on what the practices and functions of humanitarian clowns in the humanitarian field are this chapter will explore the elements that characterize the clown act and the functions that these elements have. Focusing on key concepts that emerged in the interviews, it can be said that through connection and communication, a clown shows its vulnerability, engages in play with the audience and generates laughter.

5.1 Communication and Connection

As emphasized by Bouissac (2015, p. 107), the act of the clown is one of signification and communication and while some clowns use language as a tool of communication, the body is the most important tool. This is especially true for humanitarian clowns as they often operate in places where they and the audience do not speak the same language. As Alex the Jester explains:

‘We like to communicate in that special clown way - and I do not mean birthday parties, balloons and big shoes. Red nose is cool though. Nonverbal communication - two horrible words - I call it ‘primal talk’. And primal talk is what CWB does when they go, as I do, to countries all over the world. It is the language we have, and I think you can see the feelings, the emotions in the communication’ (Talks at Google, 2014, 8:20).

In addition, respondent 2 argued that the clown has the advantage of the theatrical language of physicality, eye contact and complicity and that the body on stage can be a powerful common language, that needs no translation and that instantly speaks about shared humanity (Respondent 2, pers. comm., 16 May). Complicity - the connection and shared understanding between audience and performer - is very relevant and unlike the relationships created in conventional theater: audiences are not passive observers, but are an integral part of performance, where they are heard, seen and reacted to (Beré, 2013, p. 211).

Respondent 3 explained this difference clearly by pointing out that in conventional theater and other performing arts, besides the walls surrounding the stage there is also a 'fourth wall': an invisible wall between the actor and audience. The clown tears down this fourth wall and is in contact with the audience all the time, not only looking at them but also feeding itself from their reaction (Respondent 3, pers. Comm., 14 May). To explain this, respondent 1 stated:

'It is also the ability of the clown to see, ah this is a fun game and it worked yesterday, it made people laugh, but now it is not working. But then when I touched my nose they did think it was very funny. So I will continue doing that and we will see if they connect with me and accept this proposal of a game, so you are playing with the reactions of the audience' (Respondent 1, pers. comm., 21 March).

That means that even though the clown may have an act prepared that goes from A to B, if there is any reaction from the audience they have to be able to improvise and change their performance. Respondent 3 called this 'an interchange of energy' (Respondent 3, pers. Comm., 14 May). Establishing this relationship with the audience is essential for the clowning performance as it builds trust between clown and audience and facilitates the audience's engagement with the clown in play.

5.2 Play

As argued, play is the most important element of a clown performance (Peacock, 2009) and can be characterized by being voluntary, an interlude from real life, limited, non-material and bounded by rules (Huizinga, 1949, pp. 7-13). For CWB performers, play starts from the moment the clowns arrive at the location, doing a parade or doing playful activities as they go to set up the stage. The clown invites the audience to play by eye contact, complicity and by addressing them (Respondent 1, pers. Comm., 21 March).

As the clown functions within the liminal, or in Peacock's (2009, p. 155) words, in the 'land of imagination and metaphor, rather than in the mundane world of the everyday', play can be seen as an interlude from real life and limited in time. This, according to respondent 2, allows audience members, whether laughing, engaged in the show or just bored, to be themselves, naked of social roles that are put on them (Respondent 2, pers. comm., 16 May). Furthermore, it helps the audience to separate their status as displaced person from their inner selves. As respondent 1 emphasized, the act of clowning is related to a very deep humanity, of exploring human qualities, vulnerability, not knowing and making mistakes (Respondent 1, pers. comm., 8 May). Relating this to Carp (1998, p. 246), it can be said that the clowning practice of play benefits participants by showing them those aspects of life that are generally overshadowed and repressed. By exposing her own inner self, the clown shares with the audience her humanity and invites them to find their own inner clown that will help them to better understand their true nature.

The play is furthermore voluntary, as respondent 1 explained that the clown needs to connect and invite whoever they meet to engage, without forcing them to do anything they are not comfortable with. If someone does not want to play the clown should not force them or push them, but might just start playing with something they find funny - it can be jumping over a small stream or something else - and maybe someone will join in and then they do it together and jump from one place to the other (Respondent 1, pers. comm., 21 March). Respondent 2 also pointed out that CWB performers play games after each show, so children participate both during the show by coming on stage and later in the games. The rule element that comes into these games is based on knowledge from clowns who are also teachers, play psychologists, applied theater facilitators and is not invented by CWB.

'The focus on our side is to allow each child to participate equally, that children can lead in the game and that there is no differentiation between adults and children when we play and last but not least that we have fun! The games also aim to model a positive interaction, friendship, collaboration, fair play and togetherness. [...] All the other matters are put on pause until you exit that space of play. I believe that freedom comes from having those boundaries in space and time that allow you/give you permission to be fully present and engaged in play' (Respondent 2, pers. comm., 16 May).

As James (2017, pp. 83-85) showed, in crisis situations, child-friendly spaces and play are essential as children will bounce back more easily when engaging in normalizing activities such as 'acting, drawing, games and most forms of play'. Respondent 1 emphasized this by arguing that if children are

in distress for a longer period the risk of trauma increases, while playing and remembering and awakening all these other positive emotions can reduce the effect of the trauma (Respondent 1, pers. comm., 21 March).

The effects of play, as Huizinga (Huizinga, 1949, p. 14) argued, are not lost after playtime is over, they continue to have an impact on ‘working security, order and prosperity for the whole community’. Respondent 4 confirmed this, by explaining that if the event is magical enough, it will linger with the child for a long time (Respondent 4, pers. comm., 15 May). Considering that young children may re-enact violence in play (James, 2017, p. 83), a statement by respondent 1 points out the potential benefit of clowning:

‘We have reports from for example, when we were in Jordan, in the Zaatari camp - and this was one the early trips in 2013 - we have accounts from staff who said, after your visit the children were not playing war anymore, they were playing clowns’ (Respondent 1, pers. comm., 21 March).

In addition, respondent 2 noted that play is a means of bonding and it is a powerful tool to build trust and community, as well as giving people other things to talk about then the scary things that are happening (Respondent 2, pers. comm., 13 May). Respondent 4 furthermore pointed out that the clowns give people tools and other new memories that stay on; ‘we are there for maybe one hour, but the memories stay for a lifetime’ (Respondent 4, pers. comm., 15 May).

5.3 Vulnerability and Failure

Being open, vulnerable and accepting of failure are important elements of the clown act and play. It is part of the clown to be clumsy and repeatedly fail. However, this failure is always placed in the context of her positivity and optimistic life view, while her vulnerability is expressed through her authenticity and unconditional love (Peacock, p. 14, p. 110). Respondent 2 explained this in more detail:

‘What particularly raised my interest in clown was that the personal growth and learning took place in an environment where vulnerability and making mistakes were not only allowed but celebrated. Regardless of your context, as a person when you see a clown getting in trouble, stumbling on stage you immediately think, ‘oh that’s how I feel sometimes but I can never show that’. Perhaps then, there is some sense of gratitude at bringing visibility and sharing this very human trait: not being perfect.

Clowns are honest about their vulnerabilities; they play with failure and laugh at their own shortcomings” (Respondent 2, pers. comm., 16 May).

Showing the success that can be found in failure, the clown teaches her audience that failure is an important tool for learning in which there is no shame. Here she speaks especially to the vulnerability of those that bound by social norms that allow no space for failure (Peacock, 2009, p. 24). As respondent 2 emphasized, the way the clown deals with failure and learns from it is the opposite to exam-based competitive neoliberal mainstream education where you are meant to learn by yourself, not copy, not ask for help and compete in job finding markets (Respondent 2, pers. Comm., 13 May).

5.4 Laughter

‘Beyond all cultural, generational, and social differences—beyond the language barrier—human spirits connect, hearts become one, peace emerges and love becomes a powerful reality. A young man, who I’ll probably never meet again and whose name I’ll never know, shares laughter with me that shakes my deepest essence. “PAZyaso” or Clown For Peace. That’s what I want to be for the rest of my life’ (Aguilar, 2018).

Laughter is a common language spoken by everyone across the globe and can be considered the lifeline of professional clowning. As Bouissac (2015, p. 201) argued, when clowns fail to evoke laughter they simply fail at being a clown. While their main target group is children, CWB aims to share laughter with everyone. As respondent 4 illustrated: ‘I have seen adults on shows, old men or women, they can not control themselves and sit in front among the children and laugh their asses off with the children. That is a wonderful event’ (Respondent 4, pers. comm., 15 May).

However, it is not easy to define what aspect of the performance exactly is responsible for outbursts of laughter coming from the audience. Why people laugh or why people find something humorous is an ongoing study and discussion between scholars (Meyer, 2000) and humor generally is considered to have cultural implications. According to Bouissac (2015, p. 182), while the image of the clown may be an universal one, clown acts are rarely transferable from one place to another and are embedded in the context in which they produce meaning. Slightly more nuanced, Raskin argues that humor is not necessarily only shared by individuals of a certain group, but shared social values, norms

and culture do make humor more effective (Raskin, 1984, pp. 3-5). Acknowledging that it is a challenge for the artists to work in different contexts from their own and drawing back to the importance of connection and communication, respondent 1 noted that it has to be the skill of the artist to be very attentive to the audience. It is also for this reason that the artists try to work more with the mechanisms of laughter (Respondent 1, pers. comm., 8 May).

In line with Provine's (1996) findings, respondent 1 pointed out that humor only accounts for a small percent of laughter occurrences. Based on her experience she noticed that laughter is connected to the joy of playing and is contagious. For example, she explained, if the audience is seated close to each other in a dark room especially, it is the best situation for laughter. If you have an audience that is spread out, you have to work much harder to get them to laugh. Once you manage to start the laughter, and especially with younger children, it will be contagious and the group will laugh together (Respondent 1, pers. comm., 8 May).

Referring back to section 2.3, laughter has numerous functions. It has several physiological functions such as the reduction of stress, depression and anxiety, as well as social functions such as being a nonverbal expression of emotion, bonding people together and creating a sense of unity. According to Charles (1945, p. 33) laughter is 'one of the purest and most spontaneous expressions of the sudden happiness of release, of rebirth into consciousness and acceptance of an element needed for personal balance and progress'. As respondent 1 noted, through the experience of just enjoying the show and being in the moment children relax, adults relax and laughter serves as a stress relief (Respondent 1, pers. Comm., 8 May).

'We believe that the performing arts offers psychosocial support. Gathering together and have a positive experience together and the children laugh, and the parents see their children laughing and the children see their parents having fun and enjoying themselves, creates such a sense of companionship and a sense of community and it gives new positive memories to return to, together which is also creating like bonds of attachment between the people who've seen it' (Respondent 1, pers. comm., 21 March).

Emphasizing this, respondent 4 also pointed out that adults sometimes tell him that they have not seen their children laugh for days, and that during the show the children laughed for 30-40 minutes straight. This, he noted, arguably impacts the parents as much as the children (Respondent 4, pers. comm., 15 May).

This chapter has shown the clown act is a combination of different elements that are all relevant for a clown to pull off a successful performance. Their practice relies on connection and communication, play, vulnerability and laughter. The clown aims to show that emotions of joy and happiness can coexist with emotions of sadness or distress and their work is about awakening these emotions that might have been forgotten or set aside. By approaching people in crisis with playfulness and the joy of being together, as one human encountering the other, they help people relax and reconnect with the unconscious layers of the self, free from normative social roles that reduce them to their ascribed status.

Conclusion

This study focused on humanitarian organizations whose main purpose is providing relief by using the art of clowning. The aim of this research was to produce knowledge on humanitarian clowns and their position, practices and functions in the contemporary humanitarian world. In the subsequent paragraph a summary of the findings and conclusions of this research will be given, followed by the limitations and recommendations for the humanitarian and academic community.

As has been shown, the clown is an archetypal character that can be considered ‘other’, not human nor inhuman. A clown is generally based on elements of its creator and as a liminal being she is not subjected to normative structures of social life, perceiving life from a perspective that goes beyond conventional frameworks of thought. The clown is optimistic, accepts failure with a positive attitude, loves unconditionally, is curious, vulnerable, child-like and wears her heart on her sleeve.

By connecting, communicating and creating a sense of complicity with her audience, the clown establishes a relationship of trust and invites the audience into her magical world. Through play, the clown educates and allows its audience the freedom to fail, showing that failure is a right and a necessity to learn. In addition, by operating within the liminal, the clown helps to reconnect the conscious with the unconscious and exposes the audience to their self, free from normative social roles and therefore increasing self-awareness. Stripping away social roles and norms furthermore encourages a sense of community, in which audiences unite in the space-time of play and laughter. Finally, the laughter that the clowning performance generates serves multiple physiological as well as psychosocial functions, including the relief of stress and anxiety. Besides fulfilling all these functions, the humanitarian clowns from Clowns Without Borders perceive their position in the humanitarian world mostly as providing a human connection with the people they work for, something they see as often lacking in the relationships between other NGO’s and their beneficiaries.

Concluding it can be said that while clowns and clowning have had important roles and functions in many societies throughout history, clowning is an art that by contemporary industrialized society is unappreciated and dismissed as ‘children's entertainment’. However, when delving deeper into clowning, it can be seen that clowns still fulfill many functions that could be relevant for societies today. This is especially true in humanitarian contexts, where joy, happiness, laughter, humanity and hope are in short supply. Therefore, considering the current state of the contemporary humanitarian

sector, the global humanitarian situation and the increased need and attention for psychosocial support, humanitarian clowns offer a method of supporting psychosocial wellbeing that could potentially play an important role in humanitarian support and relief. At the very least, it can be said that their practices and functions have been undervalued and under-researched.

Although this work achieved the aim it set out for, which was to produce and deepen knowledge, its scope is far too limited to provide a complete and comprehensive account of humanitarian clowns, their practices, position and functions in the humanitarian world. While this aim can be considered rather ambitious considering the scope and time frame of this study, the exploratory nature of this study justifies this broad approach and some groundwork has been produced on which further studies could draw. This study has therefore contributed to the knowledge on humanitarian clowns, as well as pointed out the gap in knowledge that still exists.

Important limitations that were encountered could be considered time, scope and the limited sample profile. A greater time frame and scope would have allowed a more complete analysis, while knowledge would be increased if other perspectives would be incorporated as well, such as those of CWB's collaboration partners and beneficiaries.

As clowning can be considered an undervalued method of promoting psychosocial wellbeing in settings of humanitarian crisis, it is recommended that their practices and functions are further researched. Specific examples of topics that have been discussed with the artists but fell outside of the scope of this study are the (non-formal) educational aspect of their work, cultural implications of humor and performance and challenges the artists face, which are all deserving of attention. In addition, a longitudinal study may prove useful in exploring the functions and long-term effects of clowns on populations. Considering the general lack of research, developing more knowledge on the extent to which humanitarian clowns could contribute humanitarian world, will therefore benefit humanitarian clowning organizations, beneficiaries as well as the humanitarian sector as a whole.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

- Introduction
 - Objective
 - Consent
 - Introduce myself
- Opening questions
 - Who are you, can you introduce yourself?
 - How are you related to CWB?
- Key questions
 - Who is CWB and what is their mission?
 - How does CWB operate?
 - How would you describe or define a clown?
 - How do you feel when you clown?
 - What do you think is the function of the clown?
 - What does the clown do?
 - Why do you think people find clowns funny?
 - How would you define or describe play?
 - How have you experienced performing for people from different cultures?
 - Do you think there is a cultural element to humor and clowning, do people from different cultures perceive the clown differently or have a different sense of humor?
 - What challenges do you face as a CWB clown?
 - What effect have you experienced CWB performances have had, short and long term?
 - Do you ever get negative feedback?
 - How relevant do you think professionalism is in this field of work?
 - How do you experience the relationship between CWB and other humanitarian actors?
 - How do you experience the relationship between CWB and beneficiaries?

- What do you think humanitarian clowns can achieve that other humanitarian actors cannot, in other words, where is your niche in the humanitarian sector?
- Closing questions
 - Can you tell me about one tour or performance that was important to you?
 - In general, what do you think CWB has to offer to the humanitarian world?
 - Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 2: List of Respondents

Respondent number	Role as artist and role in relation to CWB	Place, date, length and means
Respondent 1	Respondent 1 joined CWB Sweden in 2011 and her work is mainly focused on training, skills enhancement, method development, artist recruitment and exchange. She holds a MA in physical comedy with international focus and started clowning since before 2002. Being a part-time employee, respondent 1 also works on a freelance basis as a performing artist. She has toured with CWB in Sweden and to Rwanda, Moldova and Greece and is now involved in a project focusing equality and play, for which she will travel to Bangladesh and Nigeria.	Uppsala, 21 March 2019, one hour, Skype.
Respondent 1	See above.	CWB office in Stockholm, 8 May 2019, one hour and 10 minutes, face to face.
Respondent 2	As volunteer for CWB UK, respondent 2 has been on tour to Greece and Bangladesh, focused on performance as well as providing training for trainers. She is mostly a drama facilitator and uses clowning in facilitation work with marginalized young people that fall under the category of vulnerable, at risk or out of reach. She holds an MA in applied theater and studied how to use theater as a tool in communities, mostly focused on the connection between clowning and attachment theory and young people and adults who have suffered trauma. Respondent 2 answered some	Uppsala, 13 May 2019, 40 minutes, Skype.

	follow up questions via email on the 16 th of May.	
Respondent 3	Respondent 3 has been a professional artist for 13 years and started her collaboration with CWB in Barcelona. She has worked with CWB as an artist, tour leader, and artist coordinator. Currently she is associated to CWB Sweden as a volunteer. The 9-10 tours she has been on since 2010 has brought her among others to Congo, Palestine, Jordan, Myanmar and Bangladesh.	Uppsala, 14 May 2019, one hour, Skype.
Respondent 4	Respondent 4 is a volunteer for CWB Sweden and member of the CWB artist council. He studied at the circus gymnasium and at a theater school in California. When returning to Sweden he continued to study circus, clowning, physical comedy and slapstick and went on his first CWB tour around 15 years ago. Since then respondent 4 has been on numerous tours, somewhere in the range of 10-20. His professional career is in hospital clowning.	Uppsala, 15 May 2019, one hour and 30 minutes Skype.
Respondent 2	See respondent 2 above.	Uppsala, 16 May 2019, email.

Appendix 3: Images of CWB⁹

CWB play with children on Lesbos in Greece, 2015.



CWB stage in Nepal, 2015.



⁹ All images derived from <https://www.flickr.com/people/clownerutangranser/> with permission of CWB Sweden.

CWB performance in India, 2015.



CWB performance in Lesvos, 2015.



CWB in Burma, 2013.



CWB in Cambodia, 2014.

