



4-1-2004

Alms-Giving in Modern Urban Societies as a Biosocial Phenomenon: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

Marina Batovskaya

Center of Evolutionary Anthropology, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Moscow, Russia, butvsk@orc.ru

Ivan Diakonov

Center of Evolutionary Anthropology, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Moscow, Russia

Marina Vancatova

Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

Jaroslavia Pavelkova

Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr>

Recommended Citation

Batovskaya, Marina; Diakonov, Ivan; Vancatova, Marina; and Pavelkova, Jaroslavia (2004) "Alms-Giving in Modern Urban Societies as a Biosocial Phenomenon: A Cross-Cultural Comparison," *Comparative Civilizations Review*: Vol. 50 : No. 50 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol50/iss50/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Comparative Civilizations Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

ALMS-GIVING IN MODERN URBAN SOCIETIES AS A BIOSOCIAL PHENOMENON: A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON

MARINA BUTOVSKAYA AND IVAN DIAKONOV, CENTER OF
EVOLUTIONARY ANTHROPOLOGY, INSTITUTE OF ETHNOLOGY AND
ANTHROPOLOGY, MOSCOW, RUSSIA, BUTOVSK@ORC.RU

MARINA VANCATOVA, FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, CHARLES
UNIVERSITY, PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

JAROSLAVA PAVELKOVA, FACULTY OF SCIENCE, CHARLES UNIVERSITY,
PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

"It's a sin to refrain from alms-giving, it's a stupidity to give alms, and only simple and ordinary people are still able to donate sincerely, without keeping in mind the probability of cheating from the beggar's side."

(Capek, 1926/2000).

Introduction

Judging from cultural anthropological data, gift-giving is a typical phenomenon in traditional and modern societies, and it provides a large part of economic subsistence for certain sociocultural groups (Landa 1994). However, research into giving in modern settings is underdeveloped compared with studies mentioned in the anthropological and historical literature (e.g. Bremner 1996; Davis 2000; Mauss 1968; Heeschen et al. 1980; Wiessner and Tumu 1998).

Begging is a widespread human phenomenon in large societies, observed both in the historical past and present in modern pre-industrial, industrial, and postindustrial economies (Neruda 1875/1951; Bamisaiye, 1974; Butovskaya et al., 2000a,b; Butovskaya et al., 2002; Burns, 1991; Fabrega, 1971; Gmelch & Gmelch, 1978; Heilman, 1975; Iglinoia, 1991; Meir-Dviri & Raz 1995; Misra, 1971; Prujov, 1997; Shaw, 1989). Donations to beggars usually represent a form of charity towards strangers, in contrast to sharing between familiar members of kin groups. But in certain cases, donations could be provided on a regular basis to the same individual or a group of individuals (for weeks and even years) and hence alms-giving is converted into highly personified interactions between familiar people.

Taking into account that alms-giving is based on interaction in the

beggar – giver pair, there are grounds to expect the co-evolution of the beggars' and givers' strategies and, hence, the presence of universal motivational mechanisms of charity. Previous studies have indicated that charity releasers – behaviors or appearances that elicit giving – are severely constrained in form (Butovskaya et al. 2000a). Examples of universal charity releasers are the cupped hand, thanking, or childlike appearance. At the same time, different traditions presuppose culturally specific releasers that are especially or uniquely understandable and touching for a particular group's members. Culturally specific releasers are often religious, such as blessing and crossing in the Russian Orthodox culture, while universal help-eliciting signals will be more efficient in inter-cultural interactions (Butovskaya et al., 2000b).

In a previous study of anonymous alms-giving on Moscow subway trains (Butovskaya et al. 2000a), we suggested that propensity to share with conspecifics is deeply rooted in the species' evolutionary past. From the ethological perspective it is highly probable that it is based on kinship, since humans have evolved in small kin-oriented groups where all members were familiar and often bonded with each other (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1989). Altruism in the form of food sharing between kin and familiar group members is practiced by many species, including apes and the more genetically distant capuchin and tamarin monkeys (Goodall 1986; Silk 1979; Butovskaya et al. 1995; Perry and Rose 1994).

This study is the first to analyze the subjective experience of alms givers under natural field study conditions based on a combination of direct ethological observations and psychological interviewing. This approach enabled us to reveal the specific mechanisms of alms-giving and defined the aim of the present study. In this paper we are going to demonstrate the existence of certain selectivity in the attitude towards beggars and to reveal the most effective begging strategies in two cultures (Russian and Czech), subjecting the data to evolutionary interpretation.

The following hypotheses are tested:

1. Universal charity-releasing motivation based on empathy elicits alms-giving behavior in modern urban anonymous society. Empathy releasers are based on the principles of "childish-schema" and similarity between the beggar and the giver.
2. Each culture creates culturally specific stimuli of its own to provoke the act of giving. They are closely connected with specific

religious attitudes and the current socio-economic situation.

3. Sex differences exist in attitudes towards beggars. Females are expected to show a greater empathy towards the beggar's need, while males - greater sympathy for members of same ethnic group.
4. Social status of givers correlates with the amount given, as well as frequency of donation.

Data collection and methods

Attitudes towards beggars were analyzed in contemporary Russian (Moscow) and Czech (Prague) societies. For this purpose a special questionnaire was elaborated and tested by M. Butovskaya and I. Diakonov (Butovskaya et al., 2002). In line with this study, we observed the process of alms-giving and fixed all the detail of interaction between the beggar and the giver. All the characteristics of beggars (particularities of appearance and manner of begging) were fixed on a special sheet according to the following list of oppositions:

Male (Female)

Childish appearance (Elderly appearance)

Handicapped (Healthy)

Russian origin (Non-Russian origin)

Clean clothes (Dirty clothes)

Military clothes (Civilian clothes)

Active manner of begging (Passive manner of begging)

Personal request (Silence)

Eye-contact (Avoidance of eye-contact)

Active mimics (Estrangement, motionlessness)

Cupped hand (Hands down)

Crossing and blessing, presence of icons (No religious rituals)

Written request (No written request)

Presence of a pet (No pets)

Age, sex, and the quality of dress of each giver were fixed on the same sheet. Soon after a giver's departure, one of the members of our team approached that giver and asked for a brief interview. If the giver agreed, he answered a set of twelve questions. The whole interview lasted for about three minutes. Every third giver was ready to answer our questions, but we had been watching all the beggars-givers pairs during the period of our observations. The age and sex of the givers in the total sample were compared to the age and sex distribution of those who agreed to be interviewed; no significant differences were found.

The list of questions raised before the respondents to elicit their attitudes towards beggars was the following:

1. How much money have you donated to the beggar just now?
2. What stimulated you to donate?
 - a. religious feelings;
 - b. feelings of social justice;
 - c. empathy;
 - d. prejudices.
3. How frequently do you usually donate?
 - a. less often than once a month;
 - b. more often than once a month;
 - c. more often than once a week.
4. What could the reasons for those people becoming beggars?
 - a. personal fault;
 - b. life circumstances;
 - c. weak governmental social policy;
 - d. bad luck.
5. Do you think that most of the beggars are really in need?
 - a. Yes;
 - b. No;
 - c. Don't know.
6. Which category of beggars is the most numerous from your point of view?
7. To which category of beggars are you are inclined to donate most frequently———, and to which category would you never donate———?
8. What language do you speak at home?
9. What is your ethnic origin?
10. What is your religion?
11. Where were you born?
12. Please indicate your occupation: _____.

It was demonstrated in our previous study based on interviews with Moscow students that urban citizens do not possess a uniform image of beggars (Butovskaya et al., 2002). Consequently, an individual reaction towards different categories of beggars could be a variable. Our approach allowed us to correlate the immediate motivation of a giver with certain characteristics of a beggar and these characteristics as the stimulus for a particular attitude towards the beggar.

The field observations and interviews were collected between June 2000 and May 2001 in Moscow and Prague. In total, data on 600 giver-beggar pairs in Moscow and 242 pairs in Prague were collected. Our samples of beggars for Moscow and Prague were representative, because they reflect the real sociodemography of the population of beggars in these two cities (Butovskaya et al., 2000b; Pavelkova et al., 2002, Vancatova et al., in press). The data were processed in SPSS-10. For the purposes of this study we used a number of nonparametrical statistical tests including Spearman Rho correlations c_2 , the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test for independent samples and a multiple regression analysis.

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of givers

The distributions of male and female givers in the Russian and Czech samples were analyzed (Table 1). In both samples the representation of females was significantly higher than in the total population of Moscow ($c_2=15,2$, $p<0,0001$) and Prague ($c_2=63,5$, $p<0,0001$). The male/female ratio for the Russian sample was significantly higher compared to the Czech one ($z=2,9$, $p<0,01$). The age ratio was also different in two samples (Table 1).

People in the Russian sample were significantly more elderly compared to the Czech sample ($z=9,5$, $p<0,001$). In our Russian sample about 80% of respondents identified themselves as Christians (Table 1), while according to official statistics the percentage of population regularly participating in Orthodox Christian ceremonies is about 5%. This difference was significant ($z=14,2$, $p<0,0001$). At the same time, there were no significant differences between the distribution of respondents according to their religious identification in the Prague study sample (about 31% of Christians) and Prague population in general (36% of Christians) (Table 1). Russian and Czech samples differed significantly in this parameter: more people in Prague described themselves as agnostics ($c_2=9,7$, $p<0,0001$). The percentage of Christians in the Moscow sample was higher than in Prague ($c_2=4,2$, $p<0,01$).

The distribution of respondents according to the prestige of their occupation differed significantly in the Russian and Czech samples (Table 1). There were significantly fewer givers with high prestige occupations in Moscow than in Prague ($c_2=6,3$, $p<0,001$).

Table 1.

Distribution of the Russian and Czech givers samples according to sex, age, religion, and occupation

Characteristic of respondent		Russia n=600	Czech n=242
Sex	Male	243 (40,5%)	59 (24,3%)
	Female	357 (59,5%)	183 (75,7%)
Age	Under 18	31 (5,0%)	41 (16,9%)
	From 18 to 35	111 (18,5%)	110 (45,5%)
	From 36 to 60	344 (57,3%)	67 (27,6%)
	Over 60	114 (19,2)	24 (10,0%)
Religious identification	Christian	481 (80,1%)	75 (30,9%)
	Muslim	14 (2,3%)	0 (0%)
	Agnostic	105 (17,6%)	167 (69,1)
Occupation	Low prestige	129 (21,5%)	32 (13,2%)
	Middle prestige	304 (50,6%)	40 (16,5%)
	High prestige	167 (27,9%)	170 (70,3%)

The amount of donations in the two samples was analyzed. The mean amount in Russia was equal to 4 rubles (\$.13), and in the Czech Republic – 16 Czech crowns (\$.40).

To compare our samples we calculated the charity index: “the mean amount given/the mean salary in the country”. This index was equal to 0.0008 in Russia and 0.0014 for Czech Republic. Thus, in the Czech Republic citizens donated a significantly higher amount per giver than in Russia ($t=4,89$, $p<0,001$). At the same time the amount given was significantly and positively correlated with the giver’s occupation (for the Russian sample: $R_s=0.269$, $p<0,001$; for the Czech sample: $R_s=0.110$, $p<0,01$).

The regression analysis reveals the presence of quadratic correlation between the age and occupation of givers, both in Russia ($F=96,5$, $p<0,0001$), and in the Czech Republic ($F=22,5$, $p<0,0001$). Thus, the most prosperous respondents were between 36 and 60 years old. Similarly, a quadratic correlation existed also between the amount given and the age of giver (for the Russian sample: $F=13.5$, $p<0,0001$; for the Czech sample: $F=4.8$, $p<0,05$).

Attitudes towards beggars: emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions

The frequency of alms-giving was calculated for each of the two samples (Table 2). It was found that people in Moscow usually donated to beggars more frequently than in Prague ($z=16,5$, $p<0,0001$).

The data on motivations of alms-giving, main reasons for begging,

as well as on objective reasons for begging are summarized in Table 2. Empathy was the main motive for Russian givers. This motive was mentioned significantly more frequently than religious considerations ($z=10,9$, $p<0,0001$) or social justice ($z=12,6$, $p<0,0001$). In turn, religious considerations were mentioned significantly more frequently than prejudices ($z=9,76$, $p<0,0001$). Also, gender differences in charity motivations were found for the Russian sample. Female givers were significantly more empathetic to beggars than male givers ($z=4,43$, $p<0,001$) and were less inclined to be driven by considerations of social justice ($z=5,32$, $p<0,001$). Such gender differences were absent from the Czech sample — either for empathy ($z=10,9$, $p<0,0001$) or social justice ($z=12,6$, $p<0,0001$).

Elderly people were more inclined than younger givers to consider governmental social policy as the main cause of begging ($z=4,05$, $p<0,0001$). The most widespread reason for begging in the Czech Republic was considered to be nothing but life circumstances (Table 2). The absolute minority of the respondents suggested that beggars themselves were responsible for their hardships. Significant cross-cultural differences were revealed. The Russian respondents were more inclined to blame governmental policy ($z=10,44$ $p<0,001$), while in the Czech Republic people believed that the main reasons for begging were personal life circumstances ($z=2,98$ $p<0,01$) or bad luck ($z=15,34$ $p<0,001$).

Were beggars really in need? Slightly more Russian respondents replied that in reality beggars were not in need (Table 2), yet almost the same number of people suggested that beggars were really in need. In the Czech Republic the situation is the opposite: the majority of givers suggested that beggars were in need ($z=80,1$, $p<0,0001$) (Table 2). Significant cross-cultural differences were revealed. Russians were significantly less inclined to believe that beggars really needed their help ($z=6,40$, $p<0,001$).

Table 2.

Motivations of alms-giving, main reasons for begging, and suggestions on objective reasons for begging expressed by givers-respondents in Russia and the Czech Republic

Points of questionnaire		Russia n=600	Czech n=242
Motivation of giving	Religious motives	118(19,8%)	15 (6,1%)
	Social justice	92 (15,2%)	41 (17,0%)
	Empathy	390 (65,0%)	157 (64,8%)
	No answer	0 (0%)	29 (12,1%)
Reasons for begging	It is their own fault	85 (14,1%)	31(12,8%)
	Life circumstances	164 (27,3%)	93 (38,4%)
	Weak governmental social policy	333 (55,6%)	37 (15,3%)
	Bad luck	18 (3,0%)	81 (33,5%)
Beliefs about the real need for begging	Really in need	228 (38,0%)	150 (62,0%)
	I doubt	123 (20,5%)	40 (16,5%)
	Not really in need	249 (41,5%)	52 (21,5%)

Which category of beggars did the givers prefer to help?

The Russian givers were most sympathetic with elderly people and mothers with infants. In the Czech Republic the majority of givers preferred handicapped individuals. The givers in both countries expressed negative attitudes towards alcoholics. There was a special category vigorously rejected in Russia only, presented by refugees (Tajik and Central Asian Gypsies). This category was rejected by males significantly more frequently than by females ($\chi^2=5,42$, $p<0,05$). Both male and female givers were least inclined to donate to alcoholics ($\chi^2=1,01$, NS).

Table 3.
Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients based on four independent
Regression Analyses

Dependent variable	Russia n=600				Czech n=242			
	Characteristics of beggars	Beta	T	Sig.	Characteristics of beggars	Beta	T	Sig.
Amount of donation	Clean clothes	-,129	-2,635	,009	Dirty clothes	,201	-2,915	,004
	Active manner of begging	,120	2,113	,035	Personal request	,523	4,193	,001
	Personal request	,171	3,037	,002	Active manner of begging	,177	3,608	,001
					Avoidance of eye-contact	-,403	-3,890	,001
					Estrangement – motionlessness	-,350	-3,632	,001
Religious motivation	Females	,118	2,820	,005	Handicapped	,094	2,331	,020
	Clean clothes	,104	2,517	,012	Blessing	,108	2,670	,008
	Silence	-,098	-2,341	,020	Personal request	,139	2,099	,037
	Estrangement – motionlessness	-,084	-2,087	,037				
Motivation of social justice	Males	-,126	-2,419	,016	Clean clothes	-,285	-2,204	,028
	Russian origin	-,162	-3,089	,002	Hands down	-,116	-2,272	,023
	Military clothes	,113	2,390	,017	Personal request	,144	2,686	,007
	Cupped hand	,132	2,766	,006				
	Personal request	,097	2,013	,045				
	Presence of a pet	-,098	-2,338	,020				
Empathy	Childish appearance	-,081	-1,936	,050	Passive manner of begging	-,198	-3,872	,001
	Civil clothes	-,154	-3,741	,000	Presence of a pet	,136	2,118	,035
	Hands down	-,104	-2,522	,012				
	Personal request	,084	2,014	,044				
	No written request	-,153	-3,537	,000				
	Presence of a pet	,120	2,915	,004				

Dependent variable 1: amount given; dependent variable 2: religious motives of donation; dependent variable 3: motivation of social justice; dependent variable 4: empathy toward beggars was used as an independent variable in this analysis.

Regression analysis revealed the main factors influencing the amount given (independent variable) to beggars (Table 3). In the case of the Russian sample this variable was predicted by the following factors:

clean clothes, active manner of begging, and personal request. In the Czech sample, the amount given was predicted by another set of factors, including dirty clothes, active manner of begging, personal request, avoidance of eye contact, and estrangement-motionlessness. It was demonstrated that religious motivations were induced in Russia by the following characteristics of the beggars: feminine appearance, clean clothes, silence and estrangement-motionlessness. In the Czech Republic this variable was predicted by the beggars' disability, personal request, and blessing. Motivations of social justice were stimulated in Russia by the following parameters: male appearance, Russian origin, military clothes, presence of a pet, cupped hand, personal request (Table 3). In the Czech sample this variable was predicted by: clean clothes, hands down, personal request. Empathy was provoked in the Russian givers mainly by: childish appearance, hands down, active manner of begging, presence of a pet. In the Czech sample this variable was best predicted by the following beggars' characteristics: passive manner of begging and presence of a pet.

Discussion

Begging is a widespread cultural phenomenon, and people's attitude towards beggars is deeply rooted in cultural traditions (Bamisaiye, 1974; Fabrega, 1971; Meir-Dviri and Raz 1995; Prijov, 1997; Shaw, 1989). At the same time, the attitude towards beggars in Eastern and Central Europe has been largely ambivalent (Polacek, 1936; Capek, 1978, 1984; Kukla, 1996; Prujov, 1997). Beggars practically vanished during socialist times both in Russia and Czech Republic, but with recent social and political transformations the begging subculture has enjoyed a sort of Renaissance. The everyday interactions of citizens with beggars in Prague and Moscow are quite sympathetic and tolerant despite active official propaganda and this could be due to strong evolutionary-based mechanisms of altruism and support by group-mates in humans (Alexander, 1987; Buss, 1999; Butovskaya, et al., 2000a).

Our data confirm the idea that both ethological and cultural factors influence alms-giving behavior (Butovskaya et al, 2000a,b; Butovskaya et al., 2002). In most cases the causes of individual givers' preferences for certain categories of beggars are subconscious, generating empathy in response to strong ethological releasers.

Searching for social portraits of alms-givers in Russia and Czech Republic

Our study has revealed significant differences between the demographic structures of the Moscow and Czech populations and that of the givers samples in these cities. Thus it is reasonable to conclude that givers represent a specific category of citizens. A cross-cultural difference in the givers' age-sex structure was revealed. There were significantly more males in the Moscow sample. It is possible that specific present-day social conditions in Russia create more beneficial conditions for males' charity. Besides, there were many more elderly givers in Russia than in the Czech Republic.

The majority of the Czech givers sampled were people with high income (70.3% of the sample), while the most numerous category of givers in Russia belonged to the medium income strata (50.6%). These findings have allowed us to conclude that while in the Czech Republic the level of personal income could be regarded as the main predictor of alms-giving, in Russia this is definitely not the case.

The Russian and Czech samples of givers differed significantly in the percentage of Christians and agnostics: Christians prevailed in Russia and agnostics in Czech Republic. We have grounds to conclude that religious motivations are among the leading factors of alms-giving in Russia. This can be explained as an old cultural tradition deeply rooted in the Russian pre-revolutionary past (Prujov, 1997).

Difference in attitudes towards various categories of beggars in Russia and the Czech Republic

Modern beggars do not comprise a homogenous social group; as a result it would be incorrect to look for a stereotypical attitude towards a beggar (as a representative of a marginal urban subculture). Most probably, an attitude towards each beggar is highly personified and determined by a set of specific characteristics of a particular beggar.

To what extent are the attitudes towards different categories of beggars differentiated? What makes a category the most rejected or the most accepted? Our data have allowed us to solve the problem: first, by analysis of questions concerning the respondent's attitude towards different categories of beggars; and second, by analyzing characteristics of those beggars who obtained donations during our observational study.

It was possible to identify a certain universal category of beggar that was evidently more rejected by the public than other categories: alcoholics. This may be because that behavior and the appearance of

these people provoked disgust and aversion in citizens. In addition, in the context of the models of social exchange, this rejection could be interpreted as a negative reaction towards an especially low potential investment in the public welfare.

The elderly seem to be the most accepted category of beggars in Russia, while in the Czech Republic, the public was less sympathetic. Grandmothers were actively applying religious symbols in their begging practices (icons, crossing, blessing), and interactions between beggars and givers in this context present highly ritualized religious behavior. We suggest that highly expressed sympathy towards elderly people, especially grandmothers, reveals a long-lasting religious tradition (Prujov, 1997). In fact, this tradition has never terminated even during the Soviet times, because grandmothers were permanently begging at the entrance of churches. By using religious symbols, grandmothers induce the religious ritual of alms-giving that is still effective in present Russia.

On the other hand, handicapped people were the most accepted category of beggars in the Czech Republic, while in Russia this category of beggar was less successful. It is quite puzzling that disabled people in Russia provoke less sympathy than they do in the Czech Republic, because disability is considered to be the most obvious sign of real need all over the world (Capek, 1926/2000; Polacek, 1936; Fabrega, 1971; Iglinoia, 1991; Meir-Dviri & Raz 1995; Misra, 1971). Disability is a universal releaser of alms-giving, and handicapped people were also respected widely in pre-revolutionary Russia. In the Soviet period this tradition was terminated, and there were no beggars outside the religious sphere. Contemporary disabled beggars do not use any religious stimulus and because of this they may be less successful compared to grandmothers. In addition, general intolerance towards disability was found to be typical for modern Russia, in contrast to attitudes in Western countries. Handicapped people there are more isolated and stigmatized, and citizens usually try to ignore them.

Russians were evidently sympathetic with mothers and children and this is also in line with Russian cultural stereotypes, but it is practically impossible to make any comments on the attitude of Czechs towards this category, because no Czech mothers and children were begging in Prague. Only a few Gypsy mothers were present there. Russians were negative towards refugees, but there were none of them begging in the Czech Republic. This fact could serve as an indicator of strong ethnocentric tendencies in contemporary Russian society. As has

been demonstrated by us earlier (Butovskaya, et al., 2000a,b; Butovskaya et al., 2002), the rejection of refugees was more evident in males compared to females.

Releasers of altruism, motivation to donate and amount given

Multiple regression analysis has revealed two universal factors determining the amount of donations given to a beggar: the beggar who addressed givers personally in a gentle and polite manner with verbal and nonverbal signals was most successful in both cultures. Personification of interactions, then, is the main attribute of the beggar's success. This is in line with our idea that the beggar and the giver comprise a co-evolved system. Humans spent most of their history in closely-related kinship groups, and sensitivity towards relatives in need was highly important for survival (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1989).

Apart from universal predictors of the alms-giving amount, we have found a number of culturally specific factors. Czech people were more sympathetic to marginalized and asocial beggars, dressed in dirty clothes, smelly and depressed, which is typical of beggars in this culture (Capek, 1926/2000). In contrast, Russians were inclined to give more to people in clean clothes, and those trying to save their social identity, struggling against marginality.

Russians motivated to donate due to religious motives were mostly sensitive towards females, dressed in clean clothes, with expressions of grief on their faces. Such parameters are mostly present in elderly females. The question is: Why are religious patterns not on this list? A possible explanation is that religious feelings are highly formal among Russians, and grandmothers are associated with religious rites. In contrast, in Czech culture the main stimulus for religious motivations of alms-giving is close proximity of a beggar to a church gate, along with the blessing ceremony. The beggar's age and physical condition is of minimal importance.

Motivation of social justice was also stimulated by different releasers in Russian and Czech samples. This motivation in Russian culture was mainly driven by the combination of males' appearance plus military clothes, plus Russian origin, plus cupped hand. Military clothes were the central parameter here; no real indicators of need were necessary. Given the fact that motivation of social justice was typical for males (Butovskaya, et al., 2002), there is no surprise that donation to former soldiers represents the act of male solidarity and is a reflection of male cooperative alliances (Butovskaya et al., 2000a). The former

could be viewed as a reflection of a universal male feature, present in social primates. In the meantime, in Czech society motivation of social justice is mainly stimulated by indicators of marginality, stigmatization, and by the desire to support "a poor fellow."

The results reported in this paper provide additional evidence that alms-giving preferences are strongly influenced by biosocial factors (Butovskaya et al., 2002). These include universal charitable motivations such as signs of disability and extreme youth or age, as well as group identity and reciprocal altruism. Empathy could be treated as a universal motivation for alms-giving in both cultures. This is a deeply rooted subconscious feeling provoked by ethological releasers of altruism: childish appearance, personal request for help (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1989). In the situations when such basic releasers are absent (the Czech sample here) the childish schema is realized in the form of pet appearance.

Why do Russians donate more frequently than do Czechs?

This study has revealed that Russians donate to beggars significantly more frequently than Czechs; at the same time Czech donated more per time than their Russian counterparts. This difference could be attributed to differences in mentality. Until now, alms-giving in Russia represents a ritual sign, a kind of appeal to God (if connected with religious motivation) or fulfillment of social duties. Donating alms in pre-revolutionary Russia was and still is thought to increase the chance of receiving absolution, since "the holy alms opens the gates of heaven" (*Annals of Russian Literature* 42, xxiii, cited by Prujov, 1997). In other words, givers are inclined to donate in their own interests, particularly, to feel better and more comfortable, to get God's blessing, and to earn respect in the eyes of other citizens. In Czech culture alms-giving is much less an outcome of ritualized symbolism, but it is more an expression of empathy.

The Russian sample revealed significant gender differences in motivations to donate, while in the Czech sample no differences were found. Russian females were much more frequently driven by empathy when compared to males and less frequently by social justice motives. Females were found to donate more to those categories of beggars that displayed childlike appearance, female sex, disability, or helplessness. Possibly emotion-based motivations for sharing are more expressed in females because of their evolved socialization for the role of mother. Females did not seem to be stimulated by any type of social identity

when deciding to give alms. Rather, their charity was more understandable in terms of interpersonal interactions and personalization. In our earlier ethological observations we had frequently observed various cases of close personal contact between female givers and beggars (Butovskaya et al, 2000b). Women talked to beggars, gave advice and recommendations, and sometimes promised to bring them food and clothing in the near future.

Males were more same-sex oriented in their choices. Group solidarity was evidently the main motive for giving. In this study and earlier, males, not females, reported a significantly greater willingness to donate to military veterans and male alcoholics. Feelings of comradeship expressed in alms-giving could be rooted in the male adaptation of competitive alliances (Wrangham and Peterson 1996).

Acknowledgements:

This study was supported by RSS, grant N.138/1999. We are grateful to anonymous respondents who participated in this study, and to A.Demianovitsch, E.Boiko, A.Maurer, A.Smirnov, and P. Davidovitsch for support in data collection. Special thanks to D. Bondarenko for support with English translation.

References:

- Alexander, R.D., 1987. *The Biology of Moral Systems*. New York, Aldine de Gruyter.
- Bamisaie, A., 1974. Begging in Ibadan, Southern Nigeria. *Human Organization*, 33(2), 197—202.
- Bremner, R. H., 1996. *Giving. Charity and philanthropy in history*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Burns, M. M., 1991. Responding to beggars. *Wisconsin Law Review*, 1991(5), 1101-6.
- Buss, D., 1999. *Evolutionary Psychology*. Needham Heights, MA, Allyn & Bacon.
- Butovskaya, M. L., L. L. Suhova, T. G. Kuznetsova, 1995. Begging and sharing in juveniles chimpanzees. *Journal of Physiology* 81, N. 2. 89—94.
- Butovskaya, M. L., F. Salter, I. Diakonov, A. Smirnov, 2000a. Urban

begging and ethnic nepotism in Russia: An ethological pilot study. *Human Nature*, 11 (2), 157—82.

Butovskaya, M. L., Diakonov, I., Salter, F., A. Maurer, 2000b. Beggars as urban subculture: Territorial distribution, begging strategies and relationships with local population. In *Ecopolis 2000: Proceedings of the International Conference on Ecology and Sustainable Development of Cities*. Moscow, 24-25 November 2000. (ed. D. Kavtaradze). Moscow: Moscow State University, pp. 44-45.

Butovskaya M.L., Diakonov I., Salter F., 2002, Effects of sex, status and ethnic similarity on willingness to donate to beggars: a questionnaire study // *Anthropologie*, vol.XXXX/1, pp.95-104.

Capek, Karel, 1978. *Na brehu dnu*. Ceskoslovensky spisovatel, Praha.

Capek, Karel, 1984. *Vecne dobrodruzstvi*. Cesky spisovatel, Praha.

Capek, Karel, 2000. *Trapne povidky*. Levne knihy Kma. Praha.

Davis, N. Z., 2000. *The gift in sixteenth-century France*: University of Wisconsin Press.

Eibl-Eibesfeldt, I., 1989. *Human ethology*. Aldine de Gruyter, New York.

Fabrega, H. J., 1971. Begging in a southeast Mexican city. *Human Organization*, 30(3), 277—87.

Gmelch, G., S. B. Gmelch, 1978. Begging in Dublin. *Urban Life*, 6(4), 439—54.

Goodall J., 1986. *The Chimpanzees of Gombe: Patterns of behavior*. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Heeschen, V., W. Schiefenhövel, I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt., 1980. "Requesting, giving, and taking: The relationship between verbal and nonverbal behavior in the speech community of the Eipo, Irian Jaya (West New Guinea)," in *The relationship of verbal and nonverbal communication. Contributions to the sociology of language*. Edited by M. R. Key, pp. 139-66. The Hague: Mouton.

Heilman, S. C., 1975. The gift of alms: Face-to-face almsgiving among orthodox Jews. *Urban Life and Culture*, 3(4), 371—95.

Iglinobia, P. E., 1991. Begging in Nigeria. *International Journal of*

- Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 35(1), 21—33.
- Kukla, K.J., 1996. Prazske bahno. In: Zidovska rocenka 1996-1997.
- Landa, J. T., 1994. Trust, ethnicity, and identity. Beyond trading networks, contract law, and gift-exchange. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press.
- Mauss, M., 1968. Die Gabe. Form und Funktion des Austausches in archaischen Gesellschaften [The gift. Form and function in archaic societies]. Frankfurt/M: Surhkamp.
- Meir-Dviri, M., A. E. Raz, 1995. Rituals of exchange in the social world of Israeli beggars: An exploratory study. Symbolic Interaction, 18(2), 99—119.
- Misra, P. K., 1971. Nomads in a city setting. Man in India, 51(4), 317—33.
- Neruda, Jan, 1951. Povidky Malostranske. Orbis, Praha.
- Pavelkova J., Krajcova J., Vancatova M., Butovskaya M., 2002. Problematika bezdomovcu a zebraku. Ekosystemy a Clovek, Editor: Vaclav Ziegler, Praha.
- Polacek, Jan, 1936. Okresni mesto. Nakladatelství Lidove noviny, 324 str.
- Perry, S., L. Rose, 1994. Begging and transfer of coati meat by white-faced capuchin monkeys, *Cebus capucinus*. Primates 35(4), 409—415.
- Prujov, I. G., 1997. The history of begging, public bar manners and hysterics in Russia. Moscow: Terra.
- Shaw, T. A., 1989. Review of D.C. Schak, 1988, A Chinese beggars' den: Poverty and mobility in an underclass community, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh. American Ethnologist, 16(3), 579-80.
- Silk, J. B., 1979. Feeding, foraging, and food sharing behavior of immature chimpanzees. Folia primatologica, 31,123—42.
- Vancatova, M., Pavelkova J., Butovskaya M., in press. Strategie zebrani v Ceske republice. Lide mesta, Praha, Vol.9
- Wiessner, P., A. Tumu, 1998. Historical vines: Enga networks of

exchange, ritual, and warfare in Papua New Guinea. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press

Wrangham, R., D. Peterson, 1996. *Demonic males: Apes and the origins of human violence*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.