



Beggars—tourists' interactions: An unobtrusive typological approach



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HIGHLIGHTS

- This paper explores Goffman's public space interaction in the case of begging.
- It draws on unobtrusive research methods.
- It provides a typology of beggars and tourists based on their interactions.

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ABSTRACT

While the perennial phenomenon of begging exists in many historical cities, where tourists tend to concentrate, the topic has not been examined in depth in the context of tourism. By using Goffman's (1955, 1963, 1971) dynamics of public space interaction and taking as a case the historical center of the city of Heraklion (Crete), this study draws on unobtrusive research methods (written records, non-participant observations and photographing), to shed further light on beggars—tourists' encounters by exploring not only the strategies beggars adopt to ensure almsgiving from tourists, but also to provide a typology of beggars and tourists based on their interactions.

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1. Introduction

Begging does not only exist in developing countries, as many people may think, but also in developed ones, where it has become a highly visible activity (Gossling, Schumacher, Morelle, Berger, & Heck, 2004, p. 131). It actually exists across cultures and historical periods and through the ages it was, and continues to be, a common phenomenon in many historical cities where tourists tend to concentrate (Wardhaugh, 2009). Roving beggars, who in their attempt to encounter a large number of tourists create their own space within the city, are an overlooked but crucial aspect of tourism experience and a particularly interesting facet of marginalization. Whilst the topic of begging has attracted a good deal of attention in the media and public debate (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001), the interactions of those involved in begging encounters has attracted only limited attention. Instead, the emphasis is mostly on the activities,

strategies and experiences of beggars, as people who have an unusual livelihood. Thus research on begging encounters and face-to-face interactions between beggars and tourists is limited.

Through a literature review on the dynamics of public space interaction, it is evident that Goffman's (1955, 1961, 1971) notion of 'encounter' provides a thorough understanding to conceptualize 'face-to-face' interactions of modern urban life. Beggars—tourists' interactions are, therefore, of interest and relevance to a sociological understanding of tourist experience. While Goffman (1963, 1971) is credited with enriching the sociological understanding of the details of public space behavior, to the best of the author's knowledge no study to date has been found to approach the topic of beggars—tourists' encounters through Goffman's sociology of public space interaction. Given the dearth of studies on beggars—tourists' interactions, this exploratory study attempts to offer a novel perspective on the begging encounter. Taking as a case the city of Heraklion (Crete) and drawing on unobtrusive research methods (written records, non-participant observations and photographing), this study attempts to shed further light on the often

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problematic beggars–tourists' encounters by exploring not only the strategies beggars adopt to ensure almsgiving from tourists, but also by using Goffman's (1955, 1963, 1971) conceptual framework of analyzing public space interaction to provide a typology of beggars and tourists based on their interactions.

2. Goffman's interaction theory

Berger (1974), in his drama concept, likened society with a stage populated with living actors, who “have options of playing their parts enthusiastically or sullenly, of playing with inner conviction or with ‘distance’, and, sometimes, of refusing to play at all” (p. 15). In our society, everybody participates in social encounters in public space which involve face-to-face or mediated contact. According to Goffman (1961) these encounters are forms of ‘focused interactions’ where individuals share an interactional sacrament of ‘eye communion’, and ‘unfocused interactions’, when individuals, through co-presence pursue a separate line of concern (Kendon, 1988, p. 14). Unknown people in a public space such as beggars and the public comprise a pure example of unfocused interaction, where their concerns differ according to each party's interest. Typically, while in begging interactions beggars might feel unease, they are more familiar with them and, therefore, more adept at managing them. On the other hand, those with advanced social positions are able to exercise their status and often treat the stigmatized beggars as ‘nonpersons’, as if they are not there at all, or as ‘objects’ not worthy of a glance, exactly the same way that, according to Goffman (1963, p. 84), people often treat children, servants, minorities and mental patients.

Hermer (2001, p. 79) in her study on the work of Goffman's notion of encounter, which encompasses the temporal and spatial elements of begging interaction, referred to public interactions, as co-operative efforts of participants to maintain a working consensus (Goffman, 1959). This working consensus is useful to public interactions because according to Spencer (1992),

it provides that, within certain parameters, interactants are expected to honor each other's self-definitional claims. What emerges is a degree of politeness or civility regarding interactants' treatment of each other and their behaviors. This is not to say that violations of expectations, or challenges to definitional claims do not occur (p. 292).

Among these violations, Goffman (1971) viewed begging, as a negative ritual involving avoidance and staying away, as well as a direct threat to civility. To maintain civility, Goffman (1971) supported that pedestrian traffic should be governed by a syntax of rules which must be obeyed, and described beggars as ‘communication delinquents’, who do not only spoil the ‘eye communion’ of public space but also abuse the ‘civil contact system’ (Hermer, 2001, p. 81). In a literal sense, the beggar, by asking for alms, is seen by passers-by as an obstacle (Goffman, 1963, p. 84). In this connection, Goffman's concept of ‘role distance’, which means playing of a role with an ulterior purpose, is a coercive situation produced in begging.

From the standpoint of the tourist, encounters with beggars disrupt the habitual way of being a tourist (Lozanski, 2013, p. 58) and are viewed as an assault on tourists' expectations of peaceful and uninterrupted sightseeing progress. Therefore, the classic expression of tourists' ‘not seeing’ beggars is by avoiding meeting their eyes, and by withholding glances. Apart from glances, verbal communications are an explicit part of public interactions. According to Kendon (1988):

virtually all work that has attempted to undertake a close analysis of interaction has been confined to occasions when exchanges of

spoken utterances constitute the main involvement of the participants. This is true even where the main interest of the investigation has been on the non-verbal aspects of the communication. The number of investigations of interactions where speech is not involved or where it plays only a minor role are very few indeed (p. 34).

Nevertheless, this is not the case when beggars interact with the public, something which has been explained by Goffman, when he stated, “while words are the great device for fetching speaker and hearer” into their intersubjective, mental world, this does not imply that words “are the only one or that the resulting organization is intrinsically in character” (1981 cited in Kendon 1988, p. 37). In practice, individuals do not act out only verbally, but also nonverbally, and therefore interactions are often far from a matter of spoken words alone, and are replaced by gestures or moves (Goffman, 1963). In other words, pedestrians may utilize what Goffman (1971, p. 125) calls ‘body gloss’, i.e. signaling their intentions through gesturing. As Hermer put it “by providing a gestural prefigurement a pedestrian transforms himself [sic] into a sign that can be read by other pedestrian bodies” (2001, p. 80). Regardless whether the begging interaction involves facial or manual gestures, or verbal communication, or a combination of them, the pattern of transaction remains the same.

3. Begging and tourism

As a part of the underground economy, begging includes all those informal economic activities that take place off the books and involve an individual asking a stranger for a donation, or in other words a non-reciprocated gift, on the basis of being poor and in need of charitable donations (Adriaenssens & Hendrickx, 2011). In a broader sense, begging involves the ‘pretence’ of performing musical or nonmusical performances which do not always qualify for a financial compensation, and the selling of small items, in return for money that may have little to do with the value of the item (Brito, 2013a; Simpson, 2011, p. 415).

Like many other street-level informal activities, begging serves the same manifest function of working in general, i.e. to yield an income (Adriaenssens & Hendrickx, 2011). Nevertheless, given the unattractive and harsh nature of begging as a degrading and humiliating activity (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001), and the comparison of beggars with hobos, tramps and the homeless, it can be assumed that begging can be less attractive to most other informal activities. While some studies dealing with begging, e.g. Williams and Windebank (2002), believe that begging is a survival activity practiced by those who lack alternative income-generating opportunities, and that the income from begging is considerably lower than the income from formal work, it seems that begging has turned for some beggars into something of a lucrative profession (Malik & Roy, 2012), and that mendicancy for those who beg in tourist areas can be remarkably profitable. This is evident from Gossling's et al. (2004, p. 140) study in Antananarivo, Madagascar which found that 62 percent of the tourists interviewed had given money or made non-monetary donations to street children, and of those who did not, a considerable proportion stated that they did so because they believed that their donations would encourage begging and have negative social consequences in the long run.

Several images of begging which appear in the literature depend on the strategies beggars adopt. Lu (1999), based on the methods of beggars in Shanghai through the ages, categorized beggars into four groups, namely ‘midnight beggars’, those who stand outside theaters, cinemas and other places of entertainment at midnight to beg; ‘bridge helpers’, beggars who offer some sort of service, for the

purpose of receiving a gratuity; 'following a dog', i.e. following pedestrians and asking them for money; and 'public lavatory beggars', those who ask for money for exchange of an empty space in a crowded lavatory. Another study by [Erskine and McIntosh \(1999\)](#) reported that throughout the centuries the representation of people who beg is consistently built upon three associated images: fraudulent beggars, such as children or shamming disabilities who evoke pity; 'professional' impostors working in an organized criminal network; and beggars acquiring great wealth.

A more recent study by [Brito \(2013b\)](#) in the cities of Bangkok (Thailand) and Bombay (India) explored the interactions between child beggars and international tourists, and identified several forms of begging, including: warm-up passive begging, i.e. begging seated holding a cup; irritating begging, i.e. following tourists on long distances; and children trying to amuse tourists. [Brito \(2013b\)](#) also provided a typology of interactions between child beggars and tourists based on the specificities of each type of tourists in relation to begging as follows: tourists insensitive to begging; caring tourists; tourists who search begging and go after child beggars to initiate interaction with them; and patronizing tourists.

4. Methodology

Surveys and interviews tend to dominate tourism research, yet on occasions where the focus of research is to investigate human beings and their social world, methods which do not involve talking with people can result in more spontaneous behaviors. Unlike self-reported methods, unobtrusive research methods are based on the fact that much of what we see around us can be considered as a potential source of data that should not be discarded out of hand even when at first sight data may seem trivial, perplexing or out of the ordinary ([Lee, 2000](#), p. 7).

Underplayed advantages of unobtrusive measures include that the researcher can collect non-disruptive and non-reactive data that focus on actual behavior and the results of this behavior, rather than on verbal expressions of behavior ([Bouchard, 1976](#); [Kellehear, 1993](#)). Also, unobtrusive measures are considered more reliable for the reason that "when subjects know they are being observed, they might skew data, consciously or unconsciously, to create a different impression to the outsider" ([O'Brien, 2010](#), p.4). However, there are authors, who criticize unobtrusive methods. Among them, [Bochner \(1972\)](#) blames unobtrusive methods for selective recording and an over-reliance on single methods and [Albers and James \(1988\)](#) believe that observing and photographing people without their knowledge or consent can be an ethically questionable practice. In addition, [Kellehear \(1993\)](#) claims that "unobtrusive measures are dogged by the usual emic/etic problems. This means that interpretation of physical traces or observations may be from the point of view of the stranger or outsider (etic) and therefore may fail to grasp important in group meanings (emic)" (p. 9).

Despite their disadvantages, unobtrusive methods can be according to the Code of Ethics of the [International Sociological Association \(2001\)](#) "the only method by which information can be gathered, when access to the usual sources of information is obstructed by those in power". Due to the fact that in street observations information are public and the researcher is a legitimate member of the public, data collection does not involve an invasion of subjects' privacy ([Kellehear, 1993](#)), but instead it may be considered that "there is an implicit consent to general observation by all actors within public space" ([Wardhaugh, 2009](#), p. 335). This is especially so in light of the constant use of cameras by tourists and the common CCTV monitoring of public spaces by authorities including police. Only when observations are intrusive for observed people and their activities are being disturbed by the researcher's activities, permission should be sought.

Taking into account [Marshall and Rossman's \(2011\)](#) proposal that in order to anticipate potential difficulties of street ethnography the experiences of previous researchers should be considered and applied, in the current study observations were made discreetly and it was ensured they were harmless and non-disturbing to subjects. Therefore, permission was not required. It is believed that this 'ignorance' of the subjects resulted in natural reactions, objectivity and emotional distance and it did not bias collected data. Therefore, the validity and reliability of the findings were increased.

From another context, in street ethnography a main issue to be considered is the safety of the researcher. As [Marshall and Rossman \(2011\)](#) state "unfamiliar settings where strangers are unwelcome, where illegal activities may be observed, or where the researcher's race or gender makes her (or him) unwelcome require careful sensitivities." (p.117) Thus an essential part in designing this research was to protect the physical safety of the researcher. In line with past research, see for example [Milgram \(1965\)](#) and [Page \(1982\)](#), which asserted that their findings would have been significantly different if the participants had been informed of the deception involved, this study gained insights into the beggars' environment by having beggars as the object of research rather than part of it. [Bemak \(1996\)](#) also calls social researchers to become 'street researchers' by entering and understanding the street environment and culture. Based on this, the current study acknowledged that blending unobtrusively into the beggars' environment to collect information resulted in findings alien to the researcher.

The last years many tourism studies have used unobtrusive data collection methods. However, such studies have used these data either as complementary to interviews and questionnaires (e.g. [Andriotis, 2009](#); [Jäger, 2013](#)); or as a single collection method without any attempt for triangulation (see for example [Andriotis, 2010b](#); [2011a](#); [Bhandari & Bhandar, 2012](#); [Volo, 2010](#)). To overcome these limitations, a multi-method unobtrusive approach was adopted which allowed the strengths of individual methods to compensate for limitations in others.

An important point of this research, however, was that problems may arise when sensitive topics are involved. Given the fact that the population of beggars is complex and difficult to reach, due to general distrust and significant language barriers (the vast majority of beggars under study were not able to communicate satisfactorily in Greek or English, the two languages spoken by the author); and considering that the meaning of any spatial order is not intrinsic, but can evoke through practice ([Andriotis, 2010a](#); [Moore, 1996](#), p. 8), this study adopted three unobtrusive methods: written records, primarily articles, books and reports; non-participant observations and photography.

To construct accounts of beggars and tourists' interactions, data were systematically collected in two tourist spots of the city of Heraklion (Lions' Square and Saint Titos' Church), where begging activity is prominent. Heraklion's historical center is a resort for shopping, entertainment and sightseeing for locals, cruisers and tourists on day trips and creates a favorable environment for begging ([Andriotis, 2011b](#); [2003a](#); [2003b](#); [Andriotis, Agiomirgianakis and Mihiotis, 2007](#)). Thus it has become a beggars' paradise, and a place where a range of interactions of beggars with the passing tourists are turned into everyday routines and allow an openness to engage in chance encounters, which benefit the beggars. As a result, the city presents a useful site to reflect on issues of begging and tourism.

Begging in Greece is not considered work, but rather a request to a stranger to show mercy on the grounds of poverty or destitution ([Papantoniou-Frangouli, Dourida, Diamantopoulou, Barla, & Kapsalis, 2011](#), p. 141). It is included within criminal offences

practiced mainly by immigrants, and it is criminalized by Penal Code Art. 407, and punishable with imprisonment of up to 6 months or a fine of up to 3000 euros (3366 US\$). In 2009, from the 1351 persons begging in Greece who came into contact with law enforcement, 1,160, or 85.9%, were foreigners (European Commission, 2012). It is estimated that from a total of 15,000 beggars in Greece, each of them had 'turnover' of 200–300 euros (270–410 US\$) per day (GR Reporter, 2009). For the reason that tourists tend to give beggars higher amounts of money, beggars in Greece tend to concentrate their efforts more on tourists (Bureau of Diplomatic Security, 2012), and move during the summer to the larger Greek islands where there are large numbers of tourists.

To understand how beggars and tourists' interactions changed throughout day and week, the author spent extended time observing, photographing and mixing with people in the city. While somebody may think that the types of interaction and the typology of beggars could be ascertained from one or two days observing beggar–tourist interactions, there were beggars who made their appearance only a few days. In addition, the situation changed all the time due to various factors, as explained in Section 5.2. Therefore, in order to increase the reliability of the study, the decision was taken to observe begging activities over an extended period of time. Thus the researcher started data collection on July 10 and stopped on September 10 2013, when redundancy was reached and little new information was obtained. Data collection started every day at 11:00 and stopped at 18:00 when the number of tourists was very low.

For the reason that beggars moved among several locations, the research had to move along with them. To prevent interaction the author positioned himself at a fair distance from the beggars (between 5 and 30 m depending on the occasion), walking around and sitting in several occasions at coffee shops. Certainly, the appearance of the researcher, dressed with shorts and carrying a camera, gave him the position of a tourist and from time to time he was approached by beggars asking for donations. Nevertheless, because of the crowded nature of the spaces under study and the fact that many locals were sitting at the coffee shops on a daily basis, note-taking and photographing were not conspicuous, and it was assumed that the author hardly received any attention.

Apart from direct observation, photographic recording served as a supplementary instrument for illustrating and illuminating aspects of transcribing the reality of beggars–tourists' interactions. Data collected through observations and photographs included: who does what (the nature of interactions); whether beggars engaged in activities auxiliary to begging, such as selling small items, singing or playing a musical instrument; when (the times in which begging did or did not take place); where (spatial distribution in key locations); and for how long (duration of interactions). Although unobtrusive data do not suffice to make exact assessments of socio-demographic characteristics, when possible some data were collected through observations, such as gender, as well as ethnicity and age. In addition, behavior characteristics, such as body movement and facial expressions, glances and eye contact, gestures, postures, clothing style, were collected.

In this study, it was evident that it is not the observations and the photographs themselves which inform, but rather their analysis. To co-ordinate photographs and observations the author kept fieldnotes detailing his activities. At first, following Patton's (2002) suggestion fieldnotes were read and re-read, bracketed, and compared to identify the essence of the phenomenon, uncontaminated by extraneous intrusions. Following this, data were clustered around themes related to different types of begging. The final step was to undertake a delimitation process whereby irrelevant, repetitive, or overlapping data were eliminated (Patton, 2002, p. 486).

As far as analysis of photographs is concerned, each photo was

coded independently by the researcher together with a second coder. Coding included sequential numbering, location, time and image contents. Individual shots were copied into subject folders, one for each type of tourists and involved comparison of beggars–tourists' interactions. As the compilation and coding of the data progressed, it became apparent that the collection of photos, which originally had been intended to serve merely as a sidebar to observations, became, in itself, a primary realist evidential document to support observations and to understand daily begging processes, spatial patterns and behaviors. In order to provide a more interpretive discourse in the notes, links across the relevant literature were sought.

Finally, while interviews were not performed, the author was able to overhear tourists' and locals' comments about begging around them, and locals and tourists talking with beggars. Hence, although no attempt was made to undertake interviews some non-obtrusive data were collected and are presented in the text where appropriate. Finally, the fact that the author lived in the city of Heraklion for most of his life made him familiar with begging activities, as well as cases in the media dealing with the phenomenon of begging.

5. Findings

5.1. *Beggars and tourists' profile*

Tourists under study were composed almost entirely of white people. This finding is also supported by official statistics (HNTO, 2013) which report that from the 1.9 million tourists who arrived in Heraklion airport by charter flights in 2012, 92.8% were from European countries (18.5% Germans, 14.4% Russians, 13.1% British and 11.6% French). The same year, 185,467 cruisers arrived, although no statistics are available for their nationality.

Various sources, e.g. Delap (2009); US Department of State (2013), report that begging in Greece involves mainly Roma, who historically are subject to marginalization and therefore more vulnerable to becoming involved in begging (Delap, 2009). This study also found that begging was to be a phenomenon linked to the Roma population, originated from Bulgaria and Romania. Another factor often associated with begging is the disability status of beggars. Even though many beggars pretended to be disabled deaf, dumb and lame, the author through observation and articles from local newspapers could realize that in most instances their disability was fraudulent (For instance, the author could see several beggars who pretended they were speechless to talk each other). Finally, begging had a gender dimension with all performing beggars being males and all flower vendors female.

5.2. *Begging in time and space*

Having explored the socio-demographic characteristics of the study population, this study attempted to assess the exact number of persons engaged in begging. This was a difficult task since beggars were distributed over a large area and their number fluctuated on a daily basis and during different hours. Therefore, police statistics were sought, mainly data from cases where beggars came into contact with law enforcement. However, there was no systematic data collection on this issue across public sector agencies. Thus the only possible source to obtain numbers was observation and photographing. Through these methods it was found an estimated number of twenty beggars regularly roaming the city's historical center during morning and early afternoon. In addition to them, several other passing-by beggars were noted. Based on the appearance and the begging types, nicknames were given to the most distinct types of beggars. These descriptions were made

mainly for frequent beggars, defined as those who were observed to beg on a daily basis.

Most begging activities took place after 11:00 am when numerous tourists were moving around the city's attractions, and stopped around 18:00 pm, when the stream of tourists ceased. Most days there were around five permanent beggars outside Saint Titos' church. The most frequent ones were 'the Gods', a woman in her late forties wearing a loose robe and a white hat making continuously the sign of the cross, and 'the Musicians', two Albanian Roma children, singing and playing accordion. The situation around Lion's square was more confusing. Presumably because all tourists visiting the city take photographs in front of the Lion's square fountain, 'the Charlie Chaplins', composed of three young male adults and two children who appeared to be about eight years old, were based there. The two minor Charlie Chaplins were observed to be watched from afar by adults and sometimes begged accompanied by an adult. It appeared that these adults used the children for begging and collected all their earnings after each begging session.

There were also several Roma women with children, some of which were selling balloons and flowers, as well as some passing by beggars such as 'the humpback', a man in his mid-forties, wearing a hat and another man having a bandage around his neck, both holding a walking stick. After one o' clock a quivering woman made her appearance.

Freedom of movement is one of the major features which characterize begging activity. Therefore, the situation changed all the time due to various factors. First, it was part of the beggars' profession to know in advance the times that cruise ships arrived and their passengers poured in the city center in order to beg from them. Second, on Sundays the number of beggars was smaller because the main attractions of the city, such as Saint Titos' church and the municipal gallery were closed, and as a consequence the number of tour groups reduced. Third, beggars changed their strategies according to the number of tourists in the city centre during certain times and seasons. For example, the 'Gods' barely addressed Greek nationals during the summer, but begged from them off-season. Fourth, state policies affected beggars' number. For instance, their number increased during August when the Greek government carried out an agreement with its creditor (the Troika which consists of the European Commission, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank, and supervises public finances on a quarterly basis), concerning the abolition of municipal police all over Greece.

Fifth, there were days when the police arrested beggars in order to maintain the 'decency' of the area and drove them out of the city center, as happened at 4 October 2013, when the police arrested 19 people for violations of laws of begging (*Newspaper Patris*, 2013). It appeared that Bulgarian and Romanian beggars controlled the respective district and they did not allow other beggars to trespass on their districts. Locals described these beggars' group as something mysterious and shadowy. On this ground, tensions were created between local and foreign beggars and the author was able to listen to a Roma woman while she was shouting to two policemen: "we are Greeks and not Bulgarians".

5.3. Types of beggars

It is evident that begging is performed in various ways and there is a wide range of different forms that may be deemed begging. This section explores situations involving tourists' behavior towards different kinds of begging and associated activities. Based on these situations three distinctive types of beggars emerged: 'classic beggars', those passively waiting for passersby for alms, using also some psychological pressure on those unwilling to give; 'table-to-

table beggars', asking for money or selling small items in return for money that may have little to do with the value of the item; and 'performing beggars', those playing a music instrument, singing or presenting a pantomime and whose annoying performance often irritated tourists.

5.3.1. Classic beggars

Traditionally, some religions have encouraged almsgiving to those of need. Thus holy places are favorite places for begging. In this sense, the area around Saint Titos' church was the haunt of several miserable mendicants who aimed to evoke the pity of those who wanted to fulfill their religious obligations through almsgiving. The presence of outstretched hands, with a marked act of object-holding, mainly an empty cup, perhaps the universal symbol of begging, accompanied either by doleful expressions or exhibiting handicaps could arouse intense feelings and exert influence over tourists' mental judgment. As a result, these actions were proven to be the most appropriate actions for soliciting alms.

The passivity of classic beggars and the lack of any verbal communication with passersby could be interpreted as a deliberate strategy to communicate their claims visually by incarnating an image of poverty and allowing their pitiful condition to speak for itself rather than using any words. In line with Goffman (1963, p. 105), the elementary strategy of this type of beggars was to arouse the human compassion and to subject prospective almsgivers to the possibility of having their sympathy and tactfulness exploited.

In reality, most classic beggars adapted body techniques in accordance with the demands of particular situations. As Crossley (1995) put it, "the existence of body techniques is dependent upon their exercise, and their exercise is always situated in relation to conditions which they must accommodate if they are to be successful and competent actions" (p. 137). This influence of body techniques over tourists was evident in the case of a quivering woman who received large amounts of money. This woman wore black and a veil covering her head and tended to use her body in spectacular and impressive ways that suggested pain. She also placed her hands on the ground and placed her face close to the ground avoiding any face-to-face confrontation (Fig. 1). The body posture of this woman aimed to hide the fact she was young and without any obvious disability, as many locals witnessed and local newspapers reported. A second example was a man who showed his stunted leg, an action which is heart wrenching and further flaunted tourists' sympathetic condition. In addition, in the moment of encounters with tourists many classic beggars used different kinds of gestures, for instance when tourists refused to support the humpback, he made a gesture indicating he was



Fig. 1. The quivering woman.

hungry.

To a casual observer, 'sit-at-place' begging in the expectation of benefactors to come and give at will is done in a passive posture and is less dynamic than all other begging forms. However, becoming increasingly passive can be considered less deserving of alms. Against this backdrop, wandering beggars had less specified sites to beg and moved around a lot. These beggars had as a common strategy to follow tourists and ask for money, as Lu (1999) reported in Shanghai. They repeated their demand even when they were refused. In practice, they turned a deaf ear to tourists' apology of refusal and it was hard for tourists to get away from them if they didn't want to give any money. A classic case of this form of begging is vividly illustrated at the following excerpt from the fieldnotes:

A female beggar placed herself in front of two tourists taking photos. She extended her hand holding out and shaking a cup with coins. Tourists through gestures indicated their unwillingness to donate to her and walked fast. The beggar carried on with her requests for money by chasing them and preventing them to move forward. Although initially the tourists had no intention to donate her, they finally gave her a coin in order to get rid of the harassment.

This excerpt reveals that the beggar deliberately escalated harassment in order to force tourists to pay for her leave. This coercion strategy has been described by Brito (2013b) as a forced attempt to persuade passersby to donate and relies on a psychological pressure that includes threats and intimidation. In the words of Brito (2013a), the beggar's aim is "to bring the passerby to a psychological breaking point beyond which (he or she) would rather give money to the beggar than continue to suffer the inconvenience created by the begging" (p. 236). The discomfort of tourists to this form of aggressive begging was visible through their gestures.

5.3.2. Table-to-table beggars

Unlike the previously mentioned form of begging, there are other street activities, such as performing and vending which do not directly fall under begging, and for some people they may be considered as work in the informal sector. Based on this, Brito (2013b) supports that "the distinction between begging and work is prone to a subjective interpretation" (p. 163), and states that in several countries, such as India and Malaysia, people asking for alms under the guise of singing, performing or vending in public spaces can be labeled as beggars (Brito, 2013a, p. 231). Even when a passerby receives essentially useless items and services, they can satisfy the rudimentary 'principle of reciprocity' and therefore make the interaction less problematic (McIntosh & Erskine, 1999, p. 195). The difference between such actions and begging is that:

the beggar publicly tries to demonstrate that his [sic] actions are designed to provide benefits to the bystanders and therefore do not directly and immediately fall under the definition of begging. The bystander's gifts are presented by the beggar as a payment for services or goods, though they could not claim to be compensated in ordinary situations (Brito, 2013a, p. 237).

In any sense, a singer singing on the street can be considered by some passersby an artist, while others may consider her or him a beggar and a vendor who sells small items at a high price can be also considered a beggar (Brito, 2013a, p. 237) (Performing beggars present many differences compared to vendors. Therefore, each form of begging is analyzed in different sections). This study does

not deal with street vendors, but table-to-table beggars who approach tourists sitting at coffee shops and restaurants to collect alms and/or at the same time to sell items.

The most common item for sale was flowers (Fig. 2). Selling flowers was carried out exclusively by girls and women. Flowers did not really have a fixed price. At first, sellers were asking large amounts, such as five euros (5.61 US\$) for a rose, but in cases where tourists refused, they were asked to fix their own price, or to offer them alms. While the relationship of sellers with tourists was limited to a customer and seller interaction, there were cases of aggressive begging where the beggars were standing in front of the tourists' table for long time to persuade them to buy. These beggars' target was fairly in line with coercion strategy aiming to compel tourists to donate so they could be at peace. Nevertheless, even when tourists willingly supported them, there were cases where harassment was witnessed by other beggars. These experiences are related to the fieldnotes as follows:

A young girl approaches a couple at a cafe. The girl establishes a good relationship with the couple and the man buys a rose for his partner. Following this, the girl heads towards a Roma woman who collects the money. Correspondingly, the woman approaches the same couple to beg. This time the couple looks annoyed and reluctant to donate.

While at first the couple was supportive to the child, perhaps because it is easier for young children to win sympathy and compassion; there was a particularly high discomfort when they had to face begging for a second time by an adult beggar.

In contrast to the aggressive strategies of table-to-table vendors, a less dynamic subtype of begging was practiced by those beggars who, in an attempt to elicit feelings of pity and empathy, moved



Fig. 2. Flower girl.

through the tables of tourists sitting at the cafes saying nothing but passing small cards along the lines of:

Hello my Dear Friend and Gentlemen,

Offer me happiness from your good heart. Give something to me, anything you wish.

Deaf.

These beggars returned to each table to collect a contribution and to retrieve the card. The fact that the messages were written in different languages indicates that these beggars were addressed to different nationals. In addition, these beggars in their face-to-face confrontations with tourists symbolically proclaimed their loss of voice as their excuse for deserving alms. Since these beggars indicated they were deaf there was no verbal communication involved. Due to the discomfort beggars generated, most staff at the restaurants and cafes prevented beggars from approaching their customers.

5.3.3. Performing beggars

For some tourists, the provision of token services, such as dancing, singing or playing a musical instrument, can be considered as auxiliary begging activities, though having as main difference to all other forms of begging that supporters are getting something back, which can contribute to their entertainment. As a female respondent in the study of McIntosh and Erskine (1999) explained: “buskers are just making an extra bit of money... it's about giving and receiving, you pay them for watching them for a few minutes” (p. 194). It is undeniable that busking differs from begging. To set buskers apart from beggars this study, considered ‘performing beggars’ as those performers whose annoying performance irritated tourists, or whose performances did not really qualify for a financial compensation and not those ‘buskers’ whose performance was uplifting.

As opposed to classic and table-to-table beggars, who are seen as a nuisance to tourists, performing entertainment in a public place, while soliciting money it may be considered as a tourist attraction itself. For instance, the photo of the two musicians has been included in a guide book on various aspects of daily life of Heraklion, and the author witnessed an occasion where a tourist was sitting and singing with them (Fig. 3). However, this was an exception since tourists did not very often establish any physical contact with performing beggars and performing beggars did not have to engage into any particular action, but merely to perform when tourists watched and/or photographed them.



Fig. 3. Musician's interaction with a tourist.

As a general rule, the strategy of most ‘performing beggars’ was to persuade tourists to donate them. For instance, the musicians played accordion and sang discordant and repeatedly the popular song of Manos Hadjidakis ‘the Children of Piraeus’, which gained great success throughout the world and won an Oscar for Best Music in 1961. By doing this, they managed to entertain some tourists and to give them a positive impression. Their performance was profitable, since the author heard them while talking to a local resident that each one earns more than 50 euros (70 US\$) on a daily basis.

While performing beggars used entertainment, and therefore, they often seemed to be more likeable to tourists than other types of beggars, this was not always the case. There were particular instances where performers actually harassed tourists. Such an example is the Charlie Chaplins, who contrary to the common image of beggars as wretched-looking tramps dressed in rags, they painted their face white, placed a small mustache in the center of their upper lip, worn a bowler hat, oversized pants and shoes and a wrinkled shirt, and held a stick imitating the acting techniques of Charlie Chaplin (Fig. 4).

While in most street performances the passers by approaches the performers, Charlie Chaplins were engaged in more elaborate begging tactics. While just their appearance was a source of attraction and they adopted behaviors that attracted attention, most of the times they were a nuisance to tourists. Charlie Chaplins were the only ones who were able to interact to an extent in English, with phrases, such as: “Hallo”, “Where you from?”, “Photo?” Following this initial approach, Charlie Chaplins either gave their hand, or placed themselves next to tourists posing for a photo. After each photo session, Charlie Chaplins were holding their hat to ask for money. On occasions, where tourists gave them one or two euros (2–3 US\$), they were requesting more, usually 10 euros (11.22 US\$). It seemed that Charlie Chaplins attempted to get money by any means, and those tourists who were resistant to their requests; they would bring themselves into trouble.

The anger expressed by Charlie Chaplins when they were refused alms could not be thought of as only a pretended one. Instead, it was evident to their reactions, such as chasing tourists, asking them to delete their photos from the camera, or in the worst case covering tourists' camera lenses with their hats while taking a



Fig. 4. The Charlie Chaplins.

photo. Their acts could be interpreted as the tactical behavior aimed at leading the negotiation for their own benefit.

There were several instances where in line with Goffman (1955), tourists' acts were defensive and at the same time they protested against the shrewd begging activities of Charlie Chaplins. Although Charlie Chaplins' dishonest methods actually felt under fraud and naturally reduced sympathy for begging, they generated high income. Typically, encounters with tourists whom they would not expect to meet again, left them, as Goffman (1955) reported, "free to take a high line that the future will discredit, or free to suffer humiliations that would make future dealings with them an embarrassing thing to have to face" (p. 223). Therefore, they were not concerned about leaving a bad impression on tourists and demonstrated no interest in initiating good relationships with them.

It was certain that the troubling nature of the begging encounter with Charlie Chaplins in terms of actions created hostility and affected negatively the experiences of tourists. The author experienced several instances of tourists' negative feelings towards Charlie Chaplins harassment and he was able to listen to locals who berated beggars in their attempt to protect tourists from being harassed. Given these circumstances, Charlie Chaplins were perceived by locals as cunning and brassy beggars who took advantage of tourists to "make a fortune". It is noteworthy that Charlie Chaplins' behavior contrasted to the tactics of other performing beggars who although they were not talented they often managed to provide a positive experience to tourists.

6. Conclusion

Tourist spots are favorite begging places and begging has become part of the on-going scene of many historical cities (Wardhaugh, 2009). As a result, many tourists are experiencing the effects of begging when on holidays. Apparently, beggars and tourists reflect a social gap between two worlds. On one hand, tourists symbolize a cosmopolitan elite and are perceived as wealthy and as such suitable targets for begging. On the other hand, beggars represent social exclusion and often are perceived as an annoyance for tourists. Nevertheless, in spite of the interest begging has generated for social researchers, it still remains poorly researched area in the context of tourism. Bearing this in mind, the current study was conducted to explore the phenomenon of begging as well as begging activities and beggars–tourists' interactions in the city of Heraklion.

Because by their nature traditional data collection methods, such as interviews and questionnaires, are limited to those who are accessible and willing to cooperate, the core approach of this study was to use three unobtrusive methods, namely written records, non-participant observations and photographing. In more detail, while observations worked exceptionally well to identify tourists–beggars' interactions, it is well-documented, see for example Bouchard (1976), that no individual measure is perfect. Therefore, observations were supplemented with photographs which helped the researcher to obtain a concrete visual picture of interactions and symbolically represented truth and spontaneity. In addition, the use of secondary sources supplemented data collected, and helped to identify some similarities and differences with other destinations. However, the choice of a single Greek city offered limited opportunities to generalize the results to other destinations and circumstances. Therefore, it is suggested that future research should 'test' the proposed typology further, in an attempt to ensure whether it has a wider relevancy in different contexts.

From a methodological point of view, the combination of data from different sources which has been used in this study revealed concrete details of everyday activities and the contexts in which

they occurred. In this respect, it provided data that allowed more insight on beggars–tourists' interactions, which could not have been achieved as effectively by the use of obtrusive methods.

The crowded historical center of Heraklion was indeed a 'paradise' for both, passive and active begging techniques. In line with Gmelch and Gmelch's (1978) study of beggars in Dublin, this study found that many tourists attempted "to ignore beggars or else communicate with them in the quickest, most impersonal manner possible by simply shaking their heads in refusal" (p. 443). In most cases social interactions with beggars were brief and superficial, and tourists ignored beggars, suggesting that they regarded them as 'non-persons'. There were limited occasions where compassion was viewed on some tourists' emotionally expressive faces. Based on the techniques of beggars three main types were identified: the classic beggars, those who attempted to evoke pity; table-to-table beggars, who either sold small items or stand in front of tourists sitting at the cafes to ask for donations; and performing beggars, those whose performances did not really qualify for a financial compensation. Despite their differences, all these face-to-face interactions had a spontaneous, but determined structure.

While at the distance where the author was, he could not in the majority of cases listen what was being said between beggars and tourists, it was evident that the communications of beggars with tourists were mainly based on gestures. As Goffman (1963) reiterates, and it was also evident in this study, passersby engage in a sort of gestural dialogue, each signaling their course and intentions. In this study, tourists were observed to communicate their intentions by demonstrating negation signs such as shaking their heads, or waving their hands.

From the findings it is evident that not only the form of begging techniques varied, but also tourists' behavior toward them. While space limitations did not permit a thorough and comprehensive review of the types of tourists based on their reactions towards beggars, it was evident that beggars performed certain tactics for alms and tourists reacted differently to each individual tactic. Although tourists under study were of various nationalities and different profiles, based on the reactions towards beggars and their tactics, they can be grouped into three main types.

First, presumably due to the negative view of the public towards beggars, and the persistent stories about 'organized begging' and exploitation (Adriaenssens & Hendrickx, 2011, p. 37), a type of 'unconcerned tourists', the largest within the sample, was found, i.e. those who walked past beggars indifferent, without even noticing they were asking for money. For the unconcerned tourists, encounters with beggars were merely banner moments and ignorance was their most common reaction towards begging. Their behavior can be associated with Travers' (1999) description as follows: "the non-donor stiffens his or her body with the self-consciousness of pretending that the beggar, even less than a non-person (Goffman, 1953, p. 217), is a thing one should be expected to not see" (p. 125).

Second, a segment of 'supportive tourists' was found; those who gave donations to beggars voluntary and without any need for beggars to do anything to persuade them, other than leaving their dispossessed and thrifty condition to speak for itself. However, even in occasions where supportive tourists gave donations, their gestures were grounded by a certain minimalism. In fact, they avoided establishing a visual contact or any verbal communication with the beggars, perhaps because their advanced social positions did not allow them to interact with 'stigmatized' people. In this sense, the entire transaction was conducted without a word being spoken either due to language barriers, or, because as Goffman put it, "interaction sequences establish slots, and slots can be effectively filled with whatever is available: if you haven't got a sentence, a grunt will serve nicely; and if you can't grunt, a twitch will do."

(1971, p. 149).

Third, while tourists' interactions with beggars were not personal, a very small segment of 'sympathetic tourists' was found. In contrast to unconcerned and unsupportive tourists, these tourists, attempted to establish a physical contact with the beggars. They were also emotionally involved to beggars and expressed their sympathy not only by supporting them, but also by establishing physical contact with them, such as stroking their shoulder. Finally, a segment of 'harassed tourists' was found, composed of those who were annoyed by aggressive begging which imposed psychological nuisances. The type of harassed tourists had the most varied reactions and either was forced to donate beggars in order to get them to leave, or they had to find a way to prevent an unwanted intimidation escalation.

The seemingly unfocused situations of beggars-tourists' interactions encountered in this study have been also reported elsewhere in the world, not only nowadays, but for centuries. Nevertheless, this does not mean that other types of beggars and tourists do not exist. For instance, Brito (2013b) identified in India a type of tourists who acted as patrons and regularly visit and have privileged relations with individuals belonging to the begging community. While a small number of sympathetic tourists were found in this study, tourists supporting regularly beggars were not identified, perhaps because the city of Heraklion is not known for the poverty of its population.

As far as Greek state policies toward begging are concerned, up to now they have been directed to outright ban begging in public places by criminalizing it. However, from a pragmatic point of view "criminalisation of begging and associated activities will not provide a cost-effective and long-term solution to the problems of poverty and inequality in our society" (Burke, 1999, p. 232). Instead, there is a need for authorities to act in partnership with other public and voluntary institutions to ensure beggars' reintegration back into the mainstream society. The fact that the vast majority of beggars were Bulgarian and Romanian Roma, rather than indigenous beggars may lead to the conclusion that these people are primarily in need of social support instead of criminal disciplining. In order to rehabilitate these people, education and incentives should be provided, such as employment and training. Only then it will be possible to bring them into an attitude which will be helpful to society, rather than harmful. In addition, schemes will be required to provide financial assistance to those beggars in need and keep them away from taking up begging. Religious institutions in Crete take several steps towards curbing begging through the provision of free food on daily basis. However, the ease with which beggars can get monetary help from tourists is the main reason behind begging. There is a need to educate tourists to stop offering alms by informing them that their donations would have negative social consequences in the long run.

To conclude, the begging methods discussed in this study are a few examples of how beggars take advantage of tourists' prosperity and density in the historical city center of Heraklion. Through observed interactions between beggars and tourists it was evident that while Goffman does not say much about the importuning phenomenon of begging, his discussion of passing-by encounters, throws a considerable light upon the interactional nature of beggars with tourists. In this setting, the qualitative data collected in this study suggest a number of theoretical, empirical and methodological questions, as well stimulating further research. Nevertheless, due to the impressive variety of begging methods and the different behaviors of tourists to each of these methods, it is important to stress the limited possibilities to generalize the findings of this study to other destinations. Thus the relevance of this research is explorative and provides a consistent and empirically based starting-point for research on beggars-tourists' interactions

elsewhere. This study attempted to open up new areas of exploration and the employment of Goffman's theories in a slightly different way. However further research is required on the pre-occupations and activities of the local people in order to identify differences and similarities in attitudes toward begging between tourists and local people. Finally, whether the background or the researcher has influenced the interpretation of the results is an issue which needs further examination.

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