

# Ninth Fulbright International Conference “Education for the New Age: Tradition, Reform, Innovation” and Ninth Fulbright International Summer Institute Bansko, August 7-21, 2010

The summer of AY 09-10 was marked by two important events of national and international significance: the 9<sup>th</sup> international Fulbright conference and the 9<sup>th</sup> Fulbright International Summer Institute.

The biennial conference on *Education for the New Age: Tradition, Reform, Innovation* took place in the town in Bansko on August 7-8. The conference was officially opened by Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission, Susan Sutton, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy, and Alexander Kravarov, Mayor of Bansko. A total of 85 participants from Bulgaria, the US, Greece and Poland took part in panels, plenary sessions and workshops covering a wide range of topics relating to the global and regional trends in education, the increasing role of international education, the ongoing reform in Bulgarian school and university education, good practices and innovative projects, and many more. The conference was closed with a lecture on *Education at Sofia University* by Professor Ivan Ilchev, Rector of Sofia University. The conference proceedings are now available at [conference.fulbright.bg](http://conference.fulbright.bg).



**Official Conference Opening:** (from left to right) Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director, Fulbright Commission; US Embassy DCM Susan Sutton; Alexander Kravarov, Mayor of Bansko, and Diana Leseva, Ministry of Education, Science and Youth



Conference participants

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The ninth edition of Fulbright International Summer Institute also took place in the historic town of Bansko immediately following the Fulbright conference. Between August 9 and 21, a total of 96 participants from 15 countries (Bulgaria, the U.S., Afghanistan,

Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Macedonia, Pakistan, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, and Sweden) attended sixteen courses in a rich variety of fields such as political science, sociology, international relations, finance, cultural studies, history and art. The importance of the topics can be easily illustrated by the course titles: *American Foreign Policy and the International System in the Era of Globalization*, *Peace and Conflict Resolution in the 21st Century*, *Projects Writing and Projects Management*, *Seeing Films Philosophically*, *Logic in the Continental Tradition*, *The Philosophical Issues of the XXI Century*, *Words and Worlds of Thinking and Art*, *North America and Europe in the Indochina Conflict*, *Canadian Studies: Culture, Literature and Identity*, *Cultural Traditions in Bulgaria* (specially designed for the new group of US Fulbrighters), *Negotiation and Conflict Resolution*, *Debate. Argue. Reason. Examine*, *International Investing: Opportunities and Risks*, *Perspectives on Public Diplomacy and Foreign Policy*, *Development Struggles in a Globalized World: The Political Economy of Asia, Africa, Latin Ameri-*

*ca and the Middle East, Court Annexed Mediation* (introduced jointly with the Sofia Regional Court). The Ambassador of the US to the Republic of Bulgaria James Warlick participated in the closing ceremony of FISi; DCM Susan Sutton delivered a greeting address at its opening; US Embassy PAO and Commission Board Chairman Ken Moskowitz conducted a workshop on practical cultural diplomacy, and press officer Vincent Campos made a presentation on US foreign policy and cultural diplomacy.

The 9<sup>th</sup> summer institute was yet another memorable continuation of the FISi tradition started in 2002. Once again it fulfilled its many-faceted goals: to promote the Fulbright idea and program; to promote international education; to improve the quality of education; to introduce the new US Fulbright grantees to the Bulgarian cultural environment; to promote Bulgaria by showing its beautiful nature, rich culture, long history, and promising future.



Panel Session on "Tradition and Reform in Secondary School"



Prof. Ivan Ilchev, Rector of Sofia University, delivering a closing lecture on "Education at Sofia University"



**Official FISi Opening:** (from left to right) Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director, Fulbright Commission; Susan Sutton, DCM, US Embassy; Alexander Kravarov, Mayor of Bansko; Ivanka Tzankova, Program Director, America for Bulgaria Foundation



FISi class



*FISI class*



*David M. Korn from Phelps Dunbar LLP, New Orleans, LA, teaching a class on "D.A.R.E. - Debate, Argue, Reason, Examine"*



*Prof. George Siedel from the University of Michigan, Business School, MI, teaching a class on "Negotiation and Conflict Resolution"*



*Trip to Okoto Lake, Pirin Mountains*



*Dancing at the farewell party*



*Trip to Dobarsko Village*



**FISI Closing:** U.S. Ambassador James B. Warlick, Jr. and Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director, Bulgarian Fulbright Commission, awarding certificates to 2010 FISI graduates



*2010 FISI participants*

## FISI Impressions

**Sophia Kleinsasser**  
 English Teaching Assistant  
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 AY 2010-2011

# The Fulbright International Summer Institute – Impressions and Reflections



I wasn't sure what to expect when I arrived in Bansko for a two-week academic program shortly preceding the start of my English teaching grant in Bulgaria. When I found out about FISI I imagined that it would be a helpful introduction to Bulgarian culture (obviously, with a required course on the subject being my primary purpose for being there) and probably a good way to make friends. My expectations were exceeded on both counts, and there was much more added to my experience in Bansko that made it a truly unique and unforgettable one: the breathtaking beauty of the Pirin Mountains surrounding the ski resort town, the charming character of traditional Bulgarian architecture and winding cobblestone streets, the affability and openness of the instructors and Fulbright staff, not to mention the incredible energy that comes from a group of students living in close quarters and sharing every moment in a new environment together. It was a part-university orientation, part-summer camp, part-indescribable experience. The Introduction to Bulgarian Culture course was made up of varied components, including history, economics, politics, demographics, archaeology, folk music, art and tourism. I learned a lot about Bulgaria and the class has undoubtedly helped me transition to life here. There were

two weekend excursions: first to the American University in Blagoevgrad and the village of Dobarsko (where two of our participants were "married" in a mock traditional ceremony), and then a hiking trip in the mountains. Both were great bonding experiences and were certainly among the highlights of the two weeks. Some of the other highlights were exploring the town of Bansko, listening to world class music at the Jazz Festival and meeting the US Ambassador at our farewell dinner. In the end, what mattered most to me were the connections I made with fellow participants. This year's program was both the largest and most diverse FISI to date, and I had the incredible opportunity to meet people from all over the world, including Bulgarians, Russians, Pakistanis, Macedonians, Canadians, Americans and many more. As one of the ten Fulbright English Teaching Assistants this year I found it reassuring and useful to meet other Americans in the same boat as me, and to have contacts around the country in case I feel homesick or need advice. I made several Bulgarian friends as well who I am looking forward to meeting again when I am in Sofia. All in all the Summer Institute was a perfect introduction to life in Bulgaria and an invaluable opportunity to learn, explore and make real connections with colleagues and friends. I wish to extend my sincerest gratitude to the America for Bulgaria Foundation and the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission for making the event possible. Thank you!

**Disclaimer:** The text is published in its original and unedited version.



**Laura Geier**

**Fulbright graduate student, Violin Performance  
California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA, USA  
AY 2010-2011**

## FISI Leads to Contacts for Life



The village of Dobarsko offered quite a treat—a sneak peak into the lives of Bulgarian villagers and the inherent good that lies at the heart of these people. The women of the village were so welcoming in their traditional folkloric attire as we entered the courtyard to the Church of Theodore Tyro and Theodore Stratelates. We were welcomed with sprigs of fragrant geraniums, Bulgarian yogurt, floral corsages, and homemade banitsa. Yum! The ladies then put on a performance for us singing traditional songs from their region. Watching their joyous faces in song was so special that I knew I had made the right decision in coming to Bulgaria. The richness of the music is present in the close harmonies, full sound, and pure beauty of the Bulgarian vocal style. Now living in Plovdiv, I am singing in the National Academy Choir at the Academy of Music, Dance, & Fine Arts & the experience is irreplaceable.

With the encouragement of Lea and my friend Pedro Henrique de Melo, I volunteered to play violin for the closing ceremony & I was met with a great reward in doing so. I have never witnessed such an enthusiastic, supportive, and international audience as I saw in the faces of the FISI audience when I finished playing! I was met with a standing ovation & many smiles. Everyone was so grateful for the music that I shared that it makes the long hours of practice worth every minute. The reward is great for those who take small risks. Thanks to my friend Katya Blakitnaya from Russia, I now have video recordings of this performance.

The Fulbright International Summer Institute gave me more than a two-week seminar of Bulgarian history, politics, archaeology, culture, and music. It gave me connections to people of the world that come from different backgrounds, different worldviews, and different disciplines. Engaging in conversation with these bright human beings, I am reminded once again that the heart of a country lies within its people and not its government.

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I have to admit that before coming to FISI 2010 in Bansko, Bulgaria that I knew little about the Fulbright International Summer Institute. This past March I was informed that I received a Fulbright Graduate Study Grant to study folk music in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. After accepting the grant I received an email from Program Coordinator Rada Kaneva stating that I was allowed to participate in FISI. Since I was finishing up my graduate studies in the Los Angeles area and teaching downtown, I scanned briefly through the email & accepted that I would love to participate in FISI thinking that it was an orientation for Fulbrighters.

When I arrived at the Pliska Hotel in Sofia to ride the bus to Bansko, I soon realized that FISI involved more than the Fulbright scholars, graduates, & ETA's selected for the year 2010-11. I was impressed by how many students I began meeting from not just the United States & Bulgaria but from many other countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Brazil, Croatia, Macedonia, & Russia. FISI lasted only two weeks but it brought with it an incredible wealth of information, diverse experiences, lasting friendships, and served as an exquisite appetizer to my year in Bulgaria.

When my roommate Lea Kaspar from Zagreb, Croatia came bouncing into my room in Bansko, I knew that I'd been put in the right place. Lea is an exceedingly smart young lady full of vivacious energy, a great sense of humor, and enjoys a good discussion or laugh. It was in late night talks with Lea or coffee breaks that I learned about her interest in MSc Global Governance & Ethics and the complex situation in former Yugoslavia. Since the media feeds us so much misinformation these days, it was nice to hear information regarding politics & conditions in Eastern Europe from Lea. Being young & full of energy, we also enjoyed hiking in the Pirin Mountains to Okoto Lake and listening to Lea's IPOD in the back of the bus on our way to the quaint little village of Dobarsko.

## Mary Lemmer University of Michigan, Ann Arber, MI, USA **You're going where?!**



**A**fter my acceptance to FISl 2010 whenever I told people that I would be going to Bulgaria in August they would typically respond with a perplexed look on their face and ask, "Bulgaria – what are you doing in Bulgaria?" Of course, I would explain the FISl program and my excitement to visit a country that I had never been to before.

Since I returned from FISl 2010, when I tell people I spent two weeks in Bulgaria, and they ask either what I was doing there or how I liked it, my response is always similar, in that I rave about how much I enjoyed the FISl experience in Bulgaria. In particular I point out the great people, scenery, and culture.

First, the people. At FISl I met people from around the world,

and was especially impressed by the kindness and intellect of everyone. I was inspired by other students and made lifelong friends at the program. In Bulgaria specifically the people were hospitable, kind, and welcoming. For example, a Bulgarian student I met at FISl invited myself and my roommate (also from Michigan) to stay with his family in Sofia the night before our flight out of Bulgaria. When we arrived we were welcomed with a delicious feast and we felt like part of the family!

The country of Bulgaria, from what I saw, was breathtaking. The mountains, lakes, and the Black Sea, all had me taking constant pictures while basking in the beauty of the area. Now, when I share my pictures I am reminded of the beautiful landscape that I was able to experience during the two weeks.

At FISl I also had the opportunity to learn about Bulgarian culture. From a traditional Bulgarian wedding, cuisine, to music and dance, I valued the opportunity to learn about the culture alongside people that were willing to explain certain aspects more in-depth.

All in all, my experience at FISl was enriching and memorable. FISl upheld it's acronym meaning: Fun, Interaction, Study, Integration – all four of which I experienced throughout the two weeks at FISl!

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## To Chicago and Back

# My Three Cities

**Nikolay Naydenov** is associate professor of politics at the Department of Political Science at Sofia University. As a Fulbright visiting scholar in AY 2009-2010, Dr. Naydenov conducted research on Law as the Last Shelter of Corruption: Comparative Analysis of Bulgarian and American Law at George Mason University, VA.

## My First Washington Research Experience

The role of citizens in constituting democratic public institutions is the cornerstone of democratic theory. Public protests are among the most eloquent way citizens impact political institutions. The main weapon of public protests is the verbal and nonverbal public discourse, organized around the slogans people carry. That is why I was extremely lucky to have the opportunity to enrich my Bulgarian database of slogans with those from the health care protests and rally on 12 and 13 September, 2009 in Washington DC. How did this happen?

On 12 September, a couple of days after my arrival in Washington, I decided to see the US Capitol. As it happened there were protests there against the health care reform at the same time. I joined the protesters as a tourist but left them as a political scientist. I was not so excited by the pro and con arguments of this reform as much as by the protest atmosphere there. I have always treated such an atmosphere as a proto-political singularity (to use the astrophysical term) out of which emerge all political relations, positions and institutions. Respectively, slogans play the role of "political genes" of this transformation. These protests reminded me of my old passions from the Bulgarian Street Democracy (1989-90) when I collected and analyzed thousands of documents and about 1500 slogans. Unfortunately, on this particular day I was unable to stay late and left the National Mall with the bad feeling that I had neglected to come earlier and take as many pictures as possible of the protesters and their slogans.

On the next day, however, the fortune smiled on me unexpectedly. I knew that there would be a rally and march in favor of the health care reform and was prepared appropriately. To my surprise, I didn't find any supporters of the reform before the Capitol. They were around the fountain in the small park on the



Santa Monica Bay, CA

Nord of the Congress and Constitution Avenue. I took pictures of almost all the slogans people carried and, partly compensated for my omission on the previous day, decided to go around the Capitol Hill. The day was sunny, the visitors scarce, and I regained my tourist attitude.

When I walked down on the South Capitol Circle I went past a small fenced place, about 4 m. in diameter, with a sign posted, "for Recycling." Surprisingly, I noticed that what was for recycling were slogans from the 12 September protests. My first instinctive reaction was to take pictures of those which were on the top but this was enough for me to get into mood of taking pictures of all of them. I left my bag, opened the fence and started ordering all the slogans outside. I started putting them one by one on the ground and took pictures of them with my camera. Then I put them back behind the fence. For almost 3 hours I took pictures of about 250 different slogans, many of which, especially the printed ones, appeared repeatedly.

During this time I tried to look like a worker who cleans the area. Many passersby walked close to this, my first American job.

Some of them asked me whether “we” are going to recycle the slogans or to preserve them. My answers were always short as it becomes to a very busy worker. Other passersby for a joke took some slogans to take pictures with it as if they were protesters. No one, however, dared to ask me why I took pictures of the slogans. Only one man stopped and started saying political comments. He was obviously influenced by the leading idea of the protests and defined the health care reform as socialism. This provoked me to say, “You don’t know what socialism is.” “Why?” he asked. I told him that I am from a former socialist country and this reform is completely far from building socialism. His respect to me grew up when he discovered that I am a political scientist and, finally, he was completely satisfied to know that these slogans will be analyzed.

I finished my work proud that I did my best as a researcher in an unknown environment and was more enthusiastic about this unexpectedly good start of my Fulbright fellowship.

## The Poles of LA

At the end of my stay in the US, I profited from the opportunity The Occasional Lecturer Fund gives and flew for a lecture to California State University (LA). I had only 2-3 day to see the Los Angeles metropolitan area and decided to concentrate only on some prominent places – Hollywood, Beverly Hills, and Santa Monica.

I arrived at LAX airport on 31 January, when the winter is in its height in my country. In LA, however, many flowers and trees were in bloom and the people wore t-shirts. I put up at a hotel near Hollywood Boulevard at noon and had free 5-6 hours by the end of the day. I decided to dedicate this time to Hollywood. As a passionate mountaineer, I immediately was attracted by the high hills, probably a branch of Santa Monica mountain, where I noticed the famous sign of Hollywood. I took this direction without a clear idea how far I will go, following the principle: the closer to the sign, the better. Green and colorful pictures alternated all around and most impressive were these unusual January flowers. At the same time I kept walking higher I came closer to the Hollywood sign. When the streets steepened and the last houses emerged, the famous sign was too close to go back.

A lane led to a flat place and then slopped up to the fenced top above the sign, used for various communication installations and an iron tower. I resolutely started climbing up though the lane which forked and became narrower. I have climbed up so many times without a path that I was not impressed at all. After a couple of minutes I was in the middle of the slope, when I heard a loudspeaker ordering someone to do something “right now!” I turned and saw a policeman who was talking to me. I turned back without knowing what was going to happen.



*On top of Empire State Building, New York, NY*

When I drew closer to the policeman he ordered me to stop. “What are going to do there?” he asked. “To see LA from above,” I answered. “Do you know how many people have been blocked below the top and I have helped them?” he rhetorically asked. “I wasn’t scared because I am a pretty experienced climber,” I answered. “How could I know?” he said and the dialog calmed down. He explained me that there is an asphalt way which leads just to the top. I apologized for not seeing the sign that prohibits climbing up, thanked him, and took this alternate way with the same eagerness.

When the way led to the ridge, I saw on the other side the San Fernando Valley. Then the way wound round my cherished top and emerged above the Hollywood sign. I was really happy to see the back side of this sign and the whole ‘map’ of LA behind. Two girls helped me to differentiate the main areas of this immense “map.” It was not by chance that on the next days I coped with the city without a map.

I dedicated the next day to the Pacific Ocean. The latter is probably the geographic phenomenon I have mentioned most in my childhood and adolescence. I spent several hours on the Santa Monica coast. I walked into the water and took as momentum some mussels casted ashore by the waves. Then I went up to the end of the Santa Monica pier and stayed there about an hour. The whole atmosphere and many small details deepened my extraordinary sense of the contact with the Ocean. The nicest detail was connected with a pelican which was adapted to fly and stay close to the visitors on the pier. I was the only one, however, who managed to caress the head of the bird. The Ocean and its representatives were obviously friendly to me. So was the music of the street musician there.

In the evening I realized that unconsciously I have touched

the spatial limits of LA – the top of the Hollywood sign and the level of Pacific Ocean. All of the rest of LA, that I couldn't see, was in between and somehow in my heart.

The next day added another aspect of the LA limits. When I was ambling along the Walk of Fame, I noticed a man without legs who was cleaning the names of the stars on the sidewalk. The outcast of fortune was taking care about the inscriptions of world famous stars. This man probably profited by this polar contrast but, nevertheless, the huge space between the cripple and the stars revealed another aspect of the limits of LA. In fact, these are limits of the modern life, qualified by Red Hot Chili Peppers as "Californication."

## The Glamour of New York

Though my Fulbright fellowship was based at George Mason University in Washington, New York was my point of departure to the other universities I visited: Rutgers, Colgate, Binghamton, and CalState (LA). As a result I entered and went out of the city several times and got a pretty clear idea about the NY metropolitan area.

When I saw for the first time the skyscrapers of NY, I was excited as if I had seen the Himalayas from afar. Hence, my natural desire (if we keep the mountain metaphor) to come up to the most famous top – the Empire State Building. It was midnight when I got up there. New York in the night, seen from the highest building, this is not quite an architectural view of the City. The biggest heaping of skyscrapers in the world turns into the largest monument of the fierce competition between all those

who claim to possess relevant portions of the world's money and power. Each skyscraper outlines in lights and colors the spirit of its constructors and its owners and, together with it, embodies the work, money, hopes, and love of thousands or millions of anonymous people all over the world. The single individual is extremely small – literally and allegorically – to be visible from the top of ESB. This is the most natural environment where a skyscraper could rise. To build a couple of skyscrapers or a single sky tower in a space, which is devoid of such a global sense of competition, this is mere imitation or a sign of an uncontested domination over the others.

My next top was of another kind - the hypnotic Planetarium Show at the American Museum of Natural History – an elevated and striking three-dimensional story of the creation of the Universe. It combined a popular description of the recent achievements of astrophysics, impressive pictures, shaking sounds, hypnotic voice of the narrator and comfortable seats allowing you to "observe" the history of the Universe. You understand that billions of years old mighty cosmic collisions were necessary for the happy coincidence resulting in the origin of life and man on Earth.

The impression is unutterable. It gives a deep excitement of sharing the triumph of human knowledge and spirit. Without any sense of profit, mankind strives to know the innermost recesses of space and time, to explain the creation of our world and its own life. These are undeniable proofs for the universality and the fullness of the human being. God is in Man but not everyone knows it, especially those who have not seen the Planetarium Show.

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## БЪЛГАРО-АМЕРИКАНСКА КОМИСИЯ ЗА ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЕН ОБМЕН "ФУЛБРАЙТ"

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## Out of America

### Ron Harvey

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Host institutions in Bulgaria: National Center for Addictions, Sofia;  
Sofia Municipal Center for Addictions  
AY 2009-2010

It is my great pleasure to be in Bulgaria and to write this article for 'Out of America' and the Bulgarian Fulbright newsletter. I would like to introduce myself, describe the field of Community Psychology and to tell you about the Fulbright research I am doing in Bulgaria regarding communal homes for people recovering from substance abuse, drug addiction, and alcoholism.

I want to say first that I love Bulgaria. This is my third and longest stay in Bulgaria; my first visit was in the summer of 2007 for a month-long solo holiday and exploration. On that visit I stayed in Sofia, Plovdiv, Bourgas, Sozopol, Varna, Balchik, Velinko Turnovo, and Rousse en route to Bucharest. I liked Bulgaria as soon as I walked down Vitosha Blvd and saw the majestic mountains rising in the background. I grew up near Chicago and have lived there all my life; Chicago is as flat as a pancake, so seeing a capital city surrounded by such natural beauty was refreshing for me. I also liked the people I met and especially enjoyed the amazing and fresh Bulgaria cuisine. I became quickly hooked on Bulgaria during that first visit. My second visit was in 2008 (en route to the former Yugoslavia) to talk to potential research contacts in preparation for my applying for a Fulbright.

The story of how I got to Bulgaria on a Fulbright is somewhat convoluted. In 2001, after ten years working at the investment bank, I decided to leave my job and to travel to Eastern Europe, a place I have always wanted to visit since I was a child. In my first visits to Russia and spending almost two years in Ukraine, I was hooked; I enjoyed exploring the cultures of Eastern Europe, meeting the amazing people, eating the (mostly) wonderful foods. Since that time, I have tried to spend my summers traveling to different countries formerly behind the Iron Curtain: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania,



Researching

Poland, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Albania, and all of the former Yugoslavia.

When I decided to return to university to finish my BA and pursue an advanced degree in community psychology, I knew I wanted to do something internationally and cross-cultural, but I did not know what or where that would be. During my first year of graduate studies, a casual comment about how the subject of my U.S.-based research, substance abuse recovery homes, would be "a natural subject for study in Eastern Europe."

I am currently a PhD student in my 3rd year of studies in Community Psychology (CP) at DePaul University in Chicago. However, I am not a typical PhD student; this is my third or fourth career (and hopefully my last!). Community Psychol-

ogy is all about context: CP places great emphasis on understanding the context in which groups of people (the community) live, and how that context helps or hinders psychological health and wellness. What is context? Context is many things: it is the economic, historical, political, cultural, environmental, gender, sexual orientation, etc. that any group finds itself in or defines itself to be. Community psychologists can (and do) study a wide range of communities and health issues: the problems and strengths of the various immigrant populations settling in the U.S.; the adjustment of African American women working in professional organizations; the psychological health of disabled communities seeking greater work opportunities; and the effects of social support and mutual help groups in substance abuse recovery homes.

This leads me to describe Oxford Houses, the focus of my own research here in Bulgaria. Oxford Houses provides a safe, sober place for people to live after successful treatment



*Enjoying Bulgaria*

and detoxification, but where returning home or back to the community would present a dangerous environment for relapsing back into substance abuse. Currently, there are over 1,500 Oxford Houses in the U.S., Canada, and Australia, and over 13,000 residents.

Structurally, Oxford Houses are all-male or all-female group recovery homes in which 7 to 12 people who are in recovery and are living without using drugs or alcohol. While there are such recovery homes that provide the similar services and facilities, Oxford Houses have several unique characteristics: they are entirely self-run by its residents, and all decision affecting the house are made democratically; there is no professional staff providing any kind of treatment or therapy, though residents are encouraged to seek the help they need; all expenses for the home are shared equally by the residents;

as such, a resident is required to have some source of income. Having met these conditions, any resident can stay at an Oxford House as long as he or she wishes. However, total abstinence is required: any resident found using drugs or alcohol is immediately expelled from the house. Each resident agrees to perform specific duties to maintain the house and to behave in a non-disruptive manner.

Self-run recovery homes can create communities that promotes interdependence; it teaches residents to support and monitor each other, becomes involved, to solve problems democratically, and to learn responsibility to gain self-efficacy. Each house elects a house president, a treasurer, a secretary. These people help run the house, collect monies and pays the bills, and records the activities in the house. Issues relating to any problems and finances within the house are discussed at weekly meetings. In addition, each individual house can have its own democratically made rules.

Studies show that usual treatment can produce sobriety rates up to 45%, while living in an Oxford House can produce sobriety rates of 87% when combined with treatment and 12-step meetings (Groh, Jason, Ferrari, & David, in press). The self-run nature of Oxford Houses means they are far less costly to initiate and run compared to the operational costs of a professionally-staffed hospital or treatment community (NIDA, 1999).

To my knowledge, the Oxford House model has not been tried in Bulgaria or anywhere else in Europe. Why? In part, I think it because significant financial, cultural, structural, bureaucratic, and infrastructure elements must be in place to create and sustain an Oxford House. These "essential ingredients" may not be available everywhere: the availability of communal housing and start-up funds to secure housing; residents who are willing to live together and adhere to the Oxford House rules or similar guidelines; employment opportunities for residents to become self-supporting; and acceptance and support from government, treatment professionals, and the community where the house resides. The question remains whether these essential ingredients can be secured to create and sustain Oxford House-like settings here in Bulgaria.

Another possible explanation why no Oxford Houses exist in Europe is more simple: no one has yet tried! This leads me to Bulgaria: my Fulbright project is to perform independent field research to determine the feasibility for creating and sustaining Oxford Houses in Bulgaria. This field research will consist of a detailed summary of information gathered in interviews with Bulgarian to assess the steps needed to open the first Oxford House in Bulgaria. As I write this at the end of March, I am confident saying that the majority of these "essential ingredients" do exist to create Oxford Houses in Bulgaria.

There are several significant obstacles to overcome. I am seeking, but do not yet have, funding to implement Oxford Houses here in Bulgaria. Unfortunately, I do not speak or understand Bulgarian very well (yet), though I can read Cyrillic. However, there are also great strengths going for this project: I have a wonderful sponsor in Dr. Sveta Raycheva of the National Center for Addictions; and am grateful for the staff at the Sofia Municipal Centre for Addictions for their wonderful help and hospitality. I have met with and have warm support from the directors and residents of a Bulgarian therapeutic community just outside of Sofia.

But most surprising, I have received substantial support and help from the wonderful Bulgarian students I met last August at the Fulbright International Summer Institute. These young people have helped me with everything from interpreting numerous conversations with my research contacts to simply providing general help and support in making my stay here in Bulgaria fun, interesting, and fulfilling. I am very

grateful to these amazing, energetic Bulgarian young people. Indeed, my ultimate career goal upon obtaining my PhD is to secure a position in a U.S. university and establish a student exchange program in community psychology.

In other words, my Fulbright experience in Bulgaria is just the beginning. I hope for a long collaboration with Bulgaria colleagues for a long time to come!

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