

Introduction and Research Objectives

In the 1930's, the Soviet newspaper *Komsomol Truth* staged a campaign known as "Down with Domestic Trash", the purpose of which was to introduce "ideologically correct" decorative objects that would serve their "social function" and would not reify western aesthetic values (Boym 1994:37). Seventy years later, the Serbian Ministry of Culture launched a campaign known as "It's Better with Culture" (*Lepse je sa kulturom*) to encourage people to "add" more "culture" to their everyday lives by visiting theaters, attending music performances, and paying more "artistic" attention to how they decorated their homes. Evidently, both Stalin's and Miloshevic's regimes felt the need to control material objects and domestic spaces to prevent them from becoming tools and sites that could challenge official ideology.

My research in the independent republic of Macedonia explores the capacity of material objects to become "agents" or crucibles of both the official state ideology and counter-ideologies that emerge to contest it. By analyzing interior decorations in private and public spaces among Macedonians and Albanians in the town of Gostivar in western Macedonia, I seek to explain the relationship between nationalism and material culture. More precisely, I will conduct an archeology of the present, an "excavation" of the meanings of artifacts confirmed and/or contradicted by the people who choose to buy and display them. The possibility to "decode" and read material objects in their own right and to juxtapose and contrast Macedonian and Albanian ideas of the significance of these objects will allow me to understand nationalism on an everyday level in Gostivar.

By assessing people's consumption practices in interior decorations, on the one hand, and revealing the trajectories of the "social life of things" (Appadurai 1986) during the Yugoslav federation (1945-1990) and post-1991 Macedonia on the other, my research provides a mode of analysis that takes into consideration human agency, as well as the cultural/symbolic effect of material objects on people. This project therefore attains critical significance: it seeks to understand nationalistic dynamics between the two national groups at a time when anti-Albanian nationalism has acquired dramatic dimensions in the region. The recent militant events in Kosovo against Albanians have added unprecedented tension to the daily interaction between Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia, reflecting a pessimistic view of peaceful coexistence on both sides. Instead of focusing on the institutional matrix that led to the recent nationalistic environment in Macedonia, my project aims to trace the genealogy of nationalism reified in material objects. Moreover, it foregrounds the complexity of the recent nationalistic antagonism between Macedonians and Albanians-- a complexity which rests on the intersection of discursive practices of nationalism with more global political and economic trends.

Theoretical and Historical Background

The dismemberment of Yugoslavia, which resulted with the civil war in Croatia and Bosnia/Herzegovina, has been a focus of different academic analyses mainly from political scientists and historians (Bruebaker 1996; Dyker and Vejvoda 1996; Denich 1994; Lampe 1997; Woodward 1995). Most of this literature makes clear that political and institutional/structural aspects carry immense significance and provides important insights that explain nationalism in its "top-down" motion. While building on these accounts, my project moves in a rather different direction: by assessing interior decorations, I examine discursive practices of nationalism that are embodied/enacted in the consumption habits and material culture of everyday life.

I start from the premise that a nation is materialized in a set of social practices and transmitted through national myths that structure these practices (Anderson 1983; Zizek 1993). Could one argue then that the "national myth" of the Yugoslav socialist society was the dominant "working-class" ideology? While everyone officially belonged to the working-class, class

stratifications nevertheless existed throughout the Yugoslav federal period (1945-1990). Some people were significantly richer than others. Despite its actual non-existence, I hypothesize that this ideology had ontological manifestations in everyday life. I propose therefore to examine the effects of this working-class ideology on how people decorated their living rooms. Specifically, I will ask, were there explicit differences between Macedonian and Albanian interior decorations and how were they rendered manifest? Further, I argue that the national myth in post-1991 Macedonia is that of nationalism. While, officially, independent Macedonia represents a multinational state, Albanians argue that they have been treated as second-rate citizens who encounter Macedonian nationalism on a political, cultural and economic level. How is the nationalistic ideology in contemporary Macedonia objectified in interior decorations in Macedonian, Albanian homes and in public spaces?

To answer these questions, I deploy the concept of national myth as fantasy which is largely informed by Anderson's concept of "imagined community" (Anderson 1983). (For other works written on social imagination and the imaginary see Anagnost 1997; Appadurai 1996; Brown 1994). While I rely on Anderson's conception of the "imagined community" with real *consequences*, I add to it a Lacanian twist--I treat fantasy as *constitutive* of reality itself, as a kernel that structures social life. In other words, Macedonian nationalism becomes a fantasy constitutive of everyday social reality, including consumption practices and interior decorations. National identity as one aspect of modern subjectivity thus stands in a dialectical relationship with national fantasy and material culture: it emanates from the former, materializes in the latter and it is retroactively modified and transformed by material objects.

Drawing primarily from Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) thesis that "society does not exist" and from Žižek's (1989) ideas on the failure of all attempts to achieve social coherence, Fitzpatrick (1995) argues for the "impossibility of nation" and paves the way for an analysis of social and political events that is cognizant of the fantasmic surmise in political discourses. Specifically, national identity becomes a fantasmic projection that conceals the "impossibility of nation" (Fitzpatrick 1995:67). Moreover, as long as the social field is structured around some central impossibility, "these lacks, these voids in the social structure will always be filled by fantasies" (Salecl: 1994: 41). I hypothesize that the Yugoslav "working-class" ideology during the federal period and the Macedonian nationalistic ideology after 1991 are both national fantasies that mask the impossibility of the Yugoslav and the Macedonian nations respectively. As suggested earlier, the "working-class" ideology was never successful since there was always class stratification; the Macedonian nationalistic policy also fails to achieve a predominantly Macedonian state--Macedonia has always been multi-national. Could one argue, then, that the governmental attempt to fix the non-Macedonian populations as "minorities" and to grant them a secondary-status category, would inevitably fail? Would not these failures however, always entail national fantasies to mask the impossibility of a "coherent" nation (even if it is imagined, as Anderson argues)?

I also draw from a vast literature on ethnicity and nationalism in Eastern Europe that explains national/ethnic dynamics during socialism (Banac and Verdery 1995; Feher 1983; Gal 1979; Halpern 1967; Hammel 1993; Verdery 1983,1991), but most notably after the collapse of communism in 1989 (Borneman 1992; Bringa 1996; Brown 1997; Danforth 1995; Hann 1993, 1994; Hayden 1992, 1992 (a), 1994; Humphrey 1991; Gal 1991; Kligman 1988, Verdery 1996; Verdery and Kligman 1992). By bringing conceptual tools such as fantasy and desire to a research field dominated by political-economic approaches, my project will foreground the important question of how relationships between Macedonians and Albanians are mediated by discursive practices of nationalism. I look at the ways members of the two groups see each other as someone who has insinuated him/herself in "our" society and constantly threatens "us" with habits, discourse and rituals which are not of "our" kind. Following Salecl (1994) and Žižek (1991, 1997), who argue that all images of the other (enemy) are based on specific fantasies, I

hypothesize that Macedonian nationalism is predicated on stereotypes of Albanians based on their language, religion and ethno-genesis (Slavic vs. non-Slavic population); furthermore, it is their very existence as a significant part of the population in the republic (Albanians comprise almost 30% of the entire population) that produces the stereotype of the "dirty" Albanians. How are the nationalistic identifications of Macedonians and Albanians objectified in their living room decorations after 1991? How are national fantasies reflected in public spaces (governmental offices, banks, lawyers' and doctors' offices)? Have they undergone drastic redecoration after 1991? If so, can we account for these changes?

In my research, I prefer to use the concept of national identity and national fantasy rather than "ethnic" because in former Yugoslavia the category "ethnic" had a derogatory meaning, suggesting that those who were ethnic were not national enough. The genealogy of this connotation may be traced in the Yugoslav Constitution from 1974, according to which all peoples living in Yugoslavia were divided in *narod i narodnost-- nacija i nacionalnost* (nation and nationality) with each one having an ethno-genesis pertaining to the constitutional status. "Ethnic", signifying an authentic culture (as it is used in the USA), entered the vocabulary of post-1991 Macedonia at the beginning of the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, when western politicians, journalists, and theorists started using terms such as ethnic tension, violence, ethnic conflict and ethnic cleansing. In sum, although I use the concepts of nationality and ethnicity interchangeably, I deploy them as signifying socially-constructed differences between the two groups in the context of the post-1991 Macedonian state, which was increasingly concerned with regulating "national fitness" and making "proper" subjects (Foucault 1980).

During my preliminary fieldwork in Skopje (June-September 1997) and in Gostivar (June-July 1998), I noted that both Macedonians and Albanians used the term "ethnic" in their everyday conversation. The concept of "ethnic" however, is still being used in a pejorative sense. The manner in which Macedonians and Albanians used both nationality and ethnicity to account for each others national and cultural differences, indicated that nationalism in Macedonia is founded on the intersection of local, national differences and more global discourses of "ethnicity", nation-state and human/minority rights (Berman 1994).

In the summer of 1989, during my first fieldwork experience in Macedonia, the living room of the Albanian family whose female members were my chief informants, was very simply decorated: an oriental rug with geometrical patterns in burgundy and navy tones, an L-shaped *minaret* (very low sofa that almost reaches the floor) and a large wooden cupboard. When I visited the same family in the summer of 1993, I was amazed by the changes in the room: it was full of very conspicuous arabesque wooden furniture (regal, coffee table and two sofas), a Persian carpet, and, in an alter-like position, a TV, VCR and hi-fi set. When asked what made them redecorate the room, my friend explained that some changes are inevitable: "the country changed, the world is changing, we also have to catch up. We had to borrow money from our relatives in Germany, since it is such a crisis here. But, it is not good to remain backward, to be on the bottom when everyone else is getting modernized". This commentary made me pay closer attention to the way my Macedonian friends and wider family have redecorated their living rooms. Indeed, after 1991 many of them bought new, mainly Italian imported, glass-metal furniture. Interestingly, despite the severe economic difficulties in Macedonia after its independence, redecorating living rooms and spending significant amounts of money, became a common practice among many Macedonian and Albanian families.

The numerous shopping malls that I visited, persuaded me not only that Gostivar is the place to look for old and new consumption practices that reflect nationality, but also that national and class differences between Macedonians and Albanians can be best assessed through examining material culture and consumption practices.

Fieldsite Description

Gostivar, the western-Macedonian town that I have chosen as my field-site, draws the etymology of its name from the Macedonian word *gostin* (guest). Considered to be nationally (ethnically) mixed town from ancient times, Gostivar has been subjected to many different scientific inquiries: archeological, demographic, historical, folklore and sociological. While the official archeological discourse traces human life back to the Neolithic era (5000-2100 b.c.), the way Gostivar's history has been narrated indicates strong elements of contemporary nationalistic ideology. Namely, the continuity of the Macedonian population has never been really questioned (the archeological artifacts are considered to represent remnants of Macedonian culture--ancient and Slavic). The demographic dynamics of the Albanian (Muslim) population however, has been subjected to a considerable scrutiny: Albanians have been considered non-native who settled down in the region after the 18th century, during the Ottoman occupation. Similarly, in the numerous studies on Gostivar during WW2, the authors celebrated the activity of Macedonian partisans and the Communist party. The Albanians however, have mainly been portrayed as collaborators with the fascists and as traitors of the socialist aims. (Ivanovski 1986, Trifunovski 1978).

As a nationally mixed town with 30% Macedonians, 60% Albanians and 10% Turks, Roma and other ethnic groups, Gostivar is an exemplary site to focus on consumption practices in a nationally mixed environment. The proximity of the border with Albania (40 km.) and Kosovo, Serbia (80 km.) engendered several powerful militia stations and presence of Macedonian military forces. Gostivar is also the home-town of the most powerful and numerous Albanian political party, which has 22 members in the 126-member Parliament of Macedonia. As such it acquired a specific set of political, nationalistic and economic dynamics that makes this town a compelling site for my research on nationalism and consumption practices.

Research Design

A) Research Questions

The principal question that underlines my project is what induced the changes in interior decorations after 1991? To answer it, I divide my research along two analytical axes: one historical, addressing the Yugoslav federal period (1945-1991); the other contemporary, focusing on the post-1991 Macedonia. In the historical part of my research, I will delineate the living room decorations during Yugoslavia. I will pay close attention to several key catalogues that were distributed freely or for very low prices to those who worked in the state owned corporations (most of the Yugoslav firms were state-owned) and which were intended to instruct young couples (women, in particular) how to decorate their apartments. The instructions these catalogues offered were part of the official working-class ideology that aimed at abolishing class differences. How did this ideology operate in terms of national differences? Did Albanians decorate their living rooms differently than Macedonians?¹

By using oral history interviews, I will trace the correspondence between the way Macedonians and Albanians decorated their living rooms in accordance with the official ideology (the aforementioned catalogues), and I will identify specific objects that were placed to signify an acceptance or resistance to the official homogenizing ideology. For instance, many people displayed president Tito's portrait in their homes. Some however, hung religious icons, of St.

¹ I will focus primarily on living rooms because they will probably will be most accessible to analyze. Also, I believe that living rooms will allow me to surmount the public/private distinction as a simple dichotomy. As the most public within the private, living rooms are deliberately arranged for a display and thus exemplify a model of economic means, function, need and taste/style. Nonetheless, I will also pay close attention to the wider geography of the apartment such as kitchens and bedrooms.

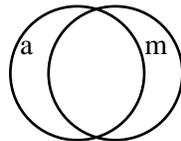
George, Nicholas or Jovan (the most important saints in the Macedonian orthodox religion). Given that religion was officially forbidden, was not the display of icons an attempt to contest the official ideology? How did Albanians, who are Muslim, contest the socialist dominant ideology?

A safe point of departure for the historical section of my research would be to assess what was available in the furniture stores at that time. Since there was no foreign importation of furniture, I assume that the selection offered was very restricted. Small, decorative objects, therefore, should be the locus of analyzing the acceptance or resistance of the official ideology. I will evaluate the symbolic meaning of particular objects (a Chinese ashtray or an English tea-pot, for instance): were they deliberately displayed to make a certain statement? How do people, themselves, account for their choices and decisions? The contemporary research will pay close attention to the furniture and the decorative objects in post-1991 Macedonia. Given the choice that exists today in the furniture stores and the flood of imported goods, an important feature would be to ask what made people choose that particular style. How important is it to have Arabic or Italian furniture?

To evaluate what really counts as an acceptance or resistance of the official ideologies in the two time periods compared, I will identify the correspondence in interior decorations in Macedonian and Albanian private spaces as well as interior decorations in public spaces. In doing so, I hypothesize that:

1) During the Yugoslav federation, interior decorations between working-class Macedonians and Albanians were not markedly different. Thus, one might argue that the dominant working class ideology was successfully objectified in people's homes. In brief, different nationalities did not induce too pronounced differences in interior decorations. The main difference was epitomized in small decorative objects but not in more general furniture style (figure 1). The co-relation between private (Macedonian and Albanian) and public spaces was also that of pronounced resemblance rather than difference, since the Yugoslav working-class ideology was reflected and symbolically fueled by simple, working-class furniture.

Figure 1



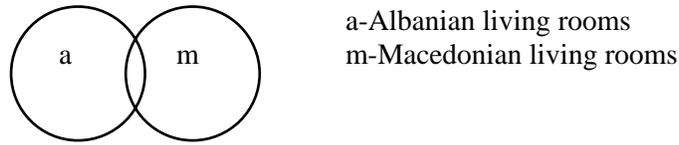
a-Albanian living rooms
m-Macedonian living rooms

Macedonian and Albanian interior decorations during the Yugoslav Federation

2) Interior decorations in post-1991 Macedonia, I expect, will reveal a rather different picture. Macedonian living rooms aspire to achieve a westernized outlook: the most popular Italian furniture illustrates this assertion. The presence of a Macedonian traditional rug, traditional pottery, lace curtains and embroidered table clothes, on the other hand, would testify for the necessity to assert their distinct national identity. Albanians, on the other hand, face the fate of being the “backward other”, the minority. Due to their Muslim religion, their national identity is always already non-Western and therefore “not modern and progressive”. Hence, I suspect that while Albanians generally decorate their living rooms with Islamic items (Albanian, Turkish or Arabic furniture), they will also have a few items (electronic, in particular), that testify to their “modernity”. Thus, the differences between Macedonian and Albanian living rooms are more conspicuous than in the previous Yugoslav period and the overlap is primarily in objects that signify link with the west (figure 2). The correspondence between the public and the private spheres also shifts radically: public spaces do not contain many national (Macedonian) markers other than the flag which is considered a state symbol that transcends nationality. Public interiors

stripped from any national or ethnic signifiers also aspire to signify modernity, links with the west and a multi-national country.

Figure 2



Macedonian and Albanian interior decorations in post-1991 Macedonia

In effect, the underlying question of my research will be to identify how the changes between private (Macedonian/Albanian) and public spaces have been actualized through the two periods, the Yugoslav and the post-1991 Macedonian. Rather than comparing the Yugoslav period and the post-1991 Macedonian as distinct temporal units, I will focus on the process and analyze the political, economic and social factors that have underlined the changes in interior decorations. Thus I will be able to identify the public/private co-relation on a single temporal axis.

To prove these hypotheses, I will select 10 Macedonian and 10 Albanian working class families. More precisely, I will select families that considered themselves working-class during the Yugoslav federation and I will follow their social mobility in independent Macedonia. Half of the families will be stem (two generations living together) and half will be conjugal (table 1).

Table 1
Subject-households

	Macedonian	Albanian
Conjugal	5	5
Stem	5	5

I chose to have two types of families because I assume that the furniture in stem families will most likely have been bought back in the Yugoslav period, whereas conjugal families will have bought their furniture more recently. The households will be selected according to per capita income, education and profession to provide a basis for a roughly comparable units. Each cluster of 5 households will encompass differences in terms of class variables (e.g. different levels of education or income). I will closely follow divergences within each cluster over time and I will identify how Macedonian and Albanian stem and conjugal households have decorated their homes through time. Given that there are many other sources of income that are not reported and cannot be evidenced officially (for instance, many of the families have relatives in the countryside who provide food or relatives working abroad in Germany, Switzerland, Canada or the USA who regularly send money), I will pay close attention to class fragmentation. Specifically, by collecting family histories of the working-class families during Yugoslavia, I will be able to reconstruct their social mobility; I will study how families came to their present working-class (or middle-class) position and where they see themselves headed.

B) Data Collection Strategies

1) Surveys

1.1) Larger Survey: Upon my arrival in Gostivar, I will hire research assistants, prepare survey questionnaires and conduct a survey in two neighborhoods in Gostivar--one Macedonian and one Albanian. (During my preliminary fieldwork in the summer of 1998, I selected the two neighborhoods (*maala*) which are relatively homogeneous in terms of nationality²). I will conduct the survey by randomly selecting every third or fourth household. I will start my research by first doing this larger survey of 30 households from each group. I will record a variety of demographic information: household size, nationality, languages spoken, sex, age, occupation, religion, educational level of family members and income per capita of family members. The survey results will serve as a baseline for subsequent data analysis.

1.2) Nationality Survey: I will conduct this survey among 10 households selected from the previously chosen 30 households from each group. Its aim will be to collect data on how Macedonians and Albanians perceive themselves in terms of nationality. The questionnaire will solicit information concerning different "markers" of national identity: language, religion, kinship, profession. The members of the households in the two neighborhoods will be asked to rank those markers on a scale of 1 to 5 and thus I will be able to see what people consider as the most important component that defines their nationality. The survey will involve direct questions, open-ended questions and other than the ranking section will be designed to solicit information about family and national backgrounds, employment and education, during Yugoslavia and the contemporary period. While fully aware that questionnaire design is itself a form of "data construction and manipulation" (Gillespie 1995: 51), combining surveys that address the Yugoslav and the independent Macedonian periods will allow me to follow the dispersion and fragmentation of the Yugoslav "working-class" into different class segments in independent Macedonia. Specifically, the survey will elucidate the process of transition from the Yugoslav working-class that officially encompassed everyone, to the new, post-1991 "democratic" society when being working class means to be on the bottom of the social hierarchy.

1.3) Interior-Decoration Survey: Additionally, I will use Bourdieu's survey technique developed in *Distinction* (1984) and prepare survey questionnaires focusing on living room decorations. While I will draw from Bourdieu's sample, I will ask people themselves to generate categories of interior decorations and styles (e.g. classical, oriental, modern etc.). This survey will provide a basis for generating a typology (a system of classification) of different styles. In addition to the survey questionnaire, I will keep an observation schedule filled in by myself and my research assistants where I will record the following observations: type of home: (whether apartment or house); number of rooms; decoration and furniture in the living room (whether wooden/rustic or modern: glass or metal); predominant style (western European or "oriental"); floor and other observations.

2) **Participant/Observation**: A crucial part of my research design will be carried out while I live first in the Albanian neighborhood with an Albanian family and then, in the Macedonian family. Living as a tenant (or rather as a "part" of the family) will enable me to pay close attention to people's "attachments" to their living rooms, and their consumption practices. I will do so in several ways: I will accompany families in their furniture shopping; I will closely observe the ways in which the choice was made (e.g. who makes the decision in terms of gender and generational status); the impact of advertisements on their choices of interior decorations; discussions between older and younger generations with regard to taste and function in the stem families; the interaction with shopkeepers--the advice they get from them, as well as from interior designers. Participant-observation will also be crucial during my visits of shopping malls, furniture factories and interior decoration studios, where I will observe the production of taste by

² I do not provide statistical data since the 1991 census was boycotted by most of the Albanian population in Macedonia. The results from the additional census conducted in 1993 and sponsored by the European Union, were not available during my summer fieldwork.

"authorized" figures such as artists and designers. I will do so by closely analyzing and recording the furniture available in stores, following the production lines in furniture factories, and designs launched by designer studios. Additionally, I will visit the annual furniture fair held every spring in Skopje, Macedonia, where major furniture producers and traders from the Balkans and Central Europe display furniture.

3) **Interviews:** Based on my participant-observation, I will select a sample of research subjects for in-depth, semi-structured interviews, stratified as to gender and household position (generational status). I will conduct family history/oral history interviews with older generation members of the selected stem families. In these interviews, I will specifically enquire if there are any changes in the house decorations after the son/daughter joined the family with his/her spouse? how was it decorated before; was there a portrait of president Tito (During the Yugoslav Federation it was a law to have president Tito's portrait on the wall in every public space. Many people in Yugoslavia however, had his picture in their homes too). Additionally, I will ask members of the households about other aspects of their lives, such as what are the future prospects for peaceful coexistence of the two nationalities in Gostivar in the face of the on-going events in Kosovo. In the face of war and dislocation, what would they take from their homes-- which objects are most meaningful and why?

I expect that interviews with the younger members of the stem family and the younger members of nuclear families will reveal how younger people conceptualize the relationship between material objects, nationality, function and taste/style. By assuming that the limited resources of the selected working class families would make their consumption choices and decorative preferences more demonstrative of very calculated considerations, more in-depth focus on the question "what would you buy if you would have a possibility to redecorate your living room" will disclose what is considered "desirable" and will provide a framework to analyze consumption within the subjects' realm of fantasy.

In addition to interviewing consumers about how they decorate their homes, I will also interview lawyers, doctors, bank employees, shop keepers, shop managers, factory owners and designers about their reflections on the furniture in their own workplace and in the public in general. I expect to find that while in private spaces there are explicit differences in interior decorations between Macedonians and Albanians, public spaces will probably reveal a different story. I suspect that it is in the public domain that one could find negotiation of the seemingly irreducible national differences which have been asserted in private spaces. The degree of correspondence between interior decorations in the public and the private spaces will allow me to see whether the particularistic, often violently expressed national differences between Macedonians and Albanians, are mutually constitutive with the homogenizing process of the global capitalist system which is best manifested in the public spaces. I will evaluate whether in the public domain professionals (lawyers, doctors, shop managers, factory owners, designers) or state officials try to live up to the western standard and catch up with the rest of the European Union countries.

4) **Secondary Sources**

4.1) Archival research: I will review the historical records of the state intervention (such as the one mentioned earlier "It is Better With Culture"), through various media campaigns during the Yugoslav federation. I will also rely on some of the many surveys that have been conducted in Macedonia after 1991 by the General Statistical Office in Skopje, Macedonia, The Agency for Privatization and the Institute for Ethnic and Sociological Research to compile data on income, household living conditions, cultural practices of both Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia.

4.2) Image (Visual) Analysis: A crucial part of my research will be image capturing by photographing and video-taping living rooms and public spaces. I will particularly capture specific objects that would be pinpointed as specifically signifying Macedonian, Albanian or western values. This method will provide material to illustrate my dissertation, to be used in presentations and to combine two idioms of "doing" ethnography--writing and visual images. Second, I will analyze photographs of homes in family albums which could reveal graphic details about the interior decoration from a specific time. When I will ask members of households "what would you buy if you could redecorate your living-room", I will show different types of interior decoration from catalogs, newspaper and TV advertisements and photographs taken by myself.

An important source for the historical part of my research (interior decorations before 1991) will be to closely follow Yugoslav cinematography. Although it was celebratory of the Yugoslav regime, its fifty years intensive production of feature movies provides an invaluable source of how interiors of homes and public spaces were represented during specific historical contexts and how images were circulated. I will particularly focus on important historical moments (e.g. 1948-the Tito/Stalin split; 1974-the beginning of the decentralization of the federation with the new Constitution; 1981-the first Albanian demonstrations that aimed at achieving Kosovo's autonomy--an event that followed Tito's death in 1980.).

C) Data Analysis

To examine the historical trajectory of interior decorations in public and private spaces during the Yugoslav Federation, I will use data from my oral-history interviews, participant observation and the archival, film and catalogue analyses. The data that I will solicit from the Yugoslav period will permit me to see whether the official Yugoslav ideology successfully blurred national differences between Macedonians and Albanians. It will provide a ground to test my hypothesis that different nationalities in Yugoslavia did not leave very explicit traces in interior decorations. It will also allow me to identify the relationship between public and private spaces, which, I suspect, would prove to be that of similarities rather than differences.

To answer the question concerning the contemporary period in post-1991 Macedonia, I will rely on survey results, the in-depth, semi-structured interviews, participant-observation and the TV and newspapers ads. The data I will collect will allow me to test my hypothesis # 2 that differences in interior decorations between Macedonians and Albanians after 1991 have been growing larger and more explicit. The statistical data collected from the two surveys will allow me to infer the processes involved in the shifts of the Macedonian and Albanian national identities. The correspondence between dependent variables such as one's definition of national identity (based on language, religion, class or kinship) and independent variables such as age, sex, educational level or economic status, will be measured with the two surveys. The data from the survey regarding interior decorations will reveal when and how Macedonians and Albanians decide to redecorate their living rooms. Close assessment of the TV and newspaper ads will disclose the market supply; interviews with shop-keepers, shop-managers and importers of furniture, on the other hand, will reveal the consumerists' demand. Interviews with art-designers and interior decorators will indicate the avenue of the "official" production of taste. How compliant is this avenue with the official nationalistic ideology? How do Macedonians and Albanians follow this avenue?

Given that my project is a historically-rooted ethnography, I will be able to reconstruct the correlation between the two periods, the Yugoslav and the Macedonian and to surmise that the Yugoslav period and contemporary Macedonia should be compared in a processual framework within which one should look for ruptures and fissures that induce certain historical moments (Benjamin 1994).

Preliminary Schedule

<u>Month (15)</u>	<u>Primary Activities</u>
Month 1	Conduct a census in two neighborhoods in Gostivar
Month 2	Analyze the census results, select the 20 families; prepare and conduct surveys
Month 3-8	Work in an Albanian neighborhood, work on interior decorations in public spaces; follow TV and newspaper ads, interior design catalogs, Yugoslav films
Month 9-14	Work in a Macedonian neighborhood, continue work on public interior decorations and media
Month 15	Work on public spaces, visit furniture factories and designer studios outside Gostivar; conclude

Feasibility

As a native of Macedonia I am uniquely prepared to draw from my local networks from the University St. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje and the numerous research institutions in Macedonia. By eliminating a language barrier (Macedonian is my mother tongue and I am in a process of improving my knowledge in Albanian with a private tutor at Stanford; I will also undergo an intensive one-on-one Albanian language immersion program, with a native speaker in Macedonia this summer), I will be able to conduct this research in the outlined time schedule.

Significance

The project will compare the consumption practices of Macedonians and Albanians in Gostivar in a period when the nationalistic antagonism between the two groups appears to be very pronounced. My research therefore attains critical significance: operating between anthropology, cultural studies, history and semiotic theory, my research reclaims the importance of everyday material practices in explaining Balkan nationalism. I avoid the "top-down" or "bottom-up" models of theorizing nationalism, and insist upon emphasizing the intersection between the globalized capitalist system, the neo-liberal model of the state, and localized nationalistic processes (Appadurai 1996; Comaroff 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

By looking at material culture I shift the locus of analyzing national groups in Macedonia and the Balkans as embodiments of primordial-nationalistic forces contending for political supremacy. I emphasize the relationship between nationalism and consumption practices and thus I contribute to the anthropological theory on the Balkans that decenters the discourse on Balkanism (Bakic-Hayden and Hayden 1992; Todorova 1994, 1997; Zivkovic 1990) which reveals the inextricable link between the west and the Balkans (the Balkans being a western construction and an embodiment of the west's negative Other). The negative representation of the Balkans which emerged with the opposition between western Christendom and Ottoman Islam (Todorova 1994), was reinforced in the cold war period by an ideological and political geography of the democratic, capitalist west versus the totalitarian, communist east (Bakic-Hayden and Hayden 1992:3-4). It remains to be pervasive in representations of the "the Balkans" in Western news and media, academic and political discourses. By insisting upon the global capitalist system being conducive to local nationalistic discourses, the proposed study provides a model for understanding the complexities of Macedonian and Albanian nationalisms on different levels: private and public spaces, consumption practices and official national ideologies,.

Substantively, my project will contribute to theories on consumption produced by anthropologists and social theorists (Appadurai 1986/96; Baudrillard 1981; Douglas 1992; Douglas and Isherwood 1978; Friedman 1995; Jameson 1998; Miller 1998, 1995a, 1995, 1993) . Following Bourdieu (1984), I examine taste as a key dimension of the significance of ordinary goods. By focusing on nationality and ethnicity, however, my project poses questions that cannot be answered by merely examining strategic choices a la Bourdieu that account for reproduction

of social classes. Through my examination of the practice of consumption I hope to demonstrate that nationalism is an ideological fantasy actualized and reinforced through material objects and spaces.

By insisting upon the symbolic (fetishistic) effect of material objects in creating national identities and fantasies, I will also contribute to reframing the concept of commodity fetishism (Marx 1976; Taussig 1980) which treats the "mysterious" power of commodities as deceptive and concealing broader social relations inherent to capitalism. While I incorporate the importance of socio-economic conditions, I also expand the "fetishistic" capacity of material objects to everyday symbolic domains. An object becomes a fetish not only when it is impregnated with a set of contradictions that an individual cannot resolve on a personal level (McClintock 1995: 185); in addition, every day objects such as furniture, curtains, rags and pictures have a fetishistic capacity that symbolize and reify national identity. The principal task of my fieldwork in Gostivar--identifying, explaining and historically contextualizing the different symbolic meanings attached to Macedonian and Albanian living rooms--will thus provide a new way to look at the fetishistic potential of material objects.

My ethnographic framework speaks to the necessity of analyzing the mutual constitutiveness of material practices and national ideologies and fantasies. While theorists such as Žižek and Salecl have supported the significance of fantasy primarily by applying it to film and literary genres, my project operationalizes this concept by grounding it in a solid ethnographic fieldwork and by analyzing concrete consumption practices of individuals in Macedonia.