



Public Health Perspectives: Finland and Estonia

Experience Description:

From May 18th to June 1st, 2018, along with 14 of my peers, I explored the health initiatives, histories, education systems, and cultures of Finland and Estonia through extensive travel of both countries (Helsinki, Keuruu, Jyväskylä, Petajavesi in Finland and Tallinn, Tartu, and Parnu in Estonia). This was my first time abroad, and this educational experience, which included visits to museums, three universities, a high school, and a health research center, allowed me to gain knowledge about both urban and rural societies of Finland and Estonia and their public health systems. It was extremely informative and insightful. I earned 3 credits through PUBHLTH 3189.04: Field Experience in Global Public Health: Finland and Estonia, which consisted of 25 hours of classroom instruction prior to traveling and then while abroad, I completed several analytical assignments that involved me comparing and contrasting tobacco sales and regulations among the U.S., Finland, and Estonia; comparing and contrasting U.S. and Finnish high school lunches; and evaluating the walkability of a city. I connected my experiences to different facets of public health!



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STEP Faculty Mentor:
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Public Health Major

Finland

National Institute for Health & Welfare

- 3 presentations:
 - History of health challenges and outcomes
 - Physical activity and sleep
 - Vitamin D status
- Finland #1 happiest nation in world (2018)
- 2nd best country to be a mom (2017)
- 3rd least corrupted country (2017)
- Major COD: cardiovascular diseases
- Other concerns: obesity, depression, blood pressure

Keuruu High School

- 18 to drive cars,, 16 to drive motorized scooters
- Grades 7-12 = ~200 students
- Tour of school and mini presentations on Finnish cuisine, holidays, values, recreation, and music

University of Jyväskylä

- Collaborative research and international exchange

Petajavesi Kumpunen Organic Farm

- Sauna and boat-rowing in a lake

Breakfast: berries, oatmeal, yogurt, eggs, ham, cucumber, bread, apples, bananas

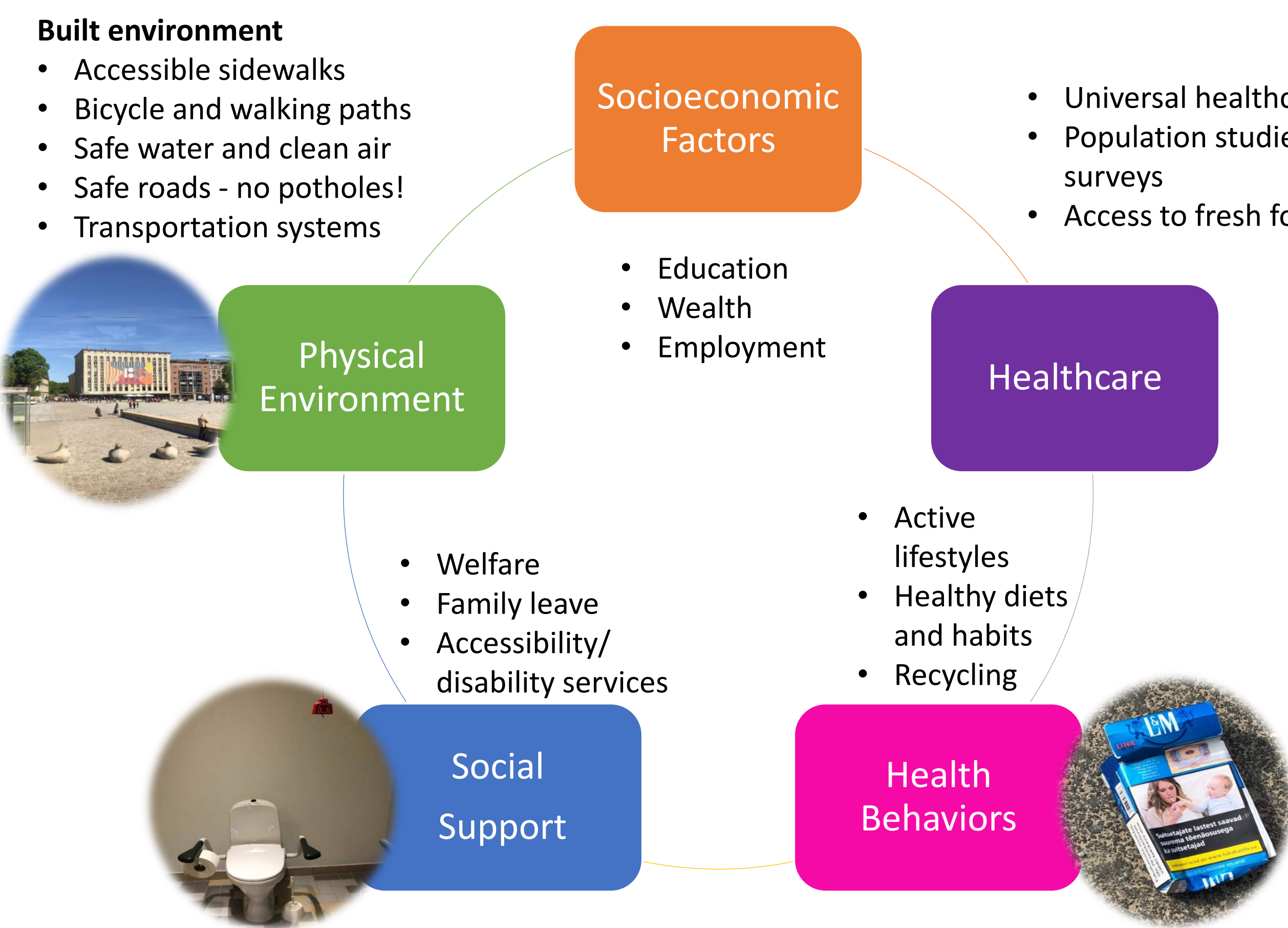
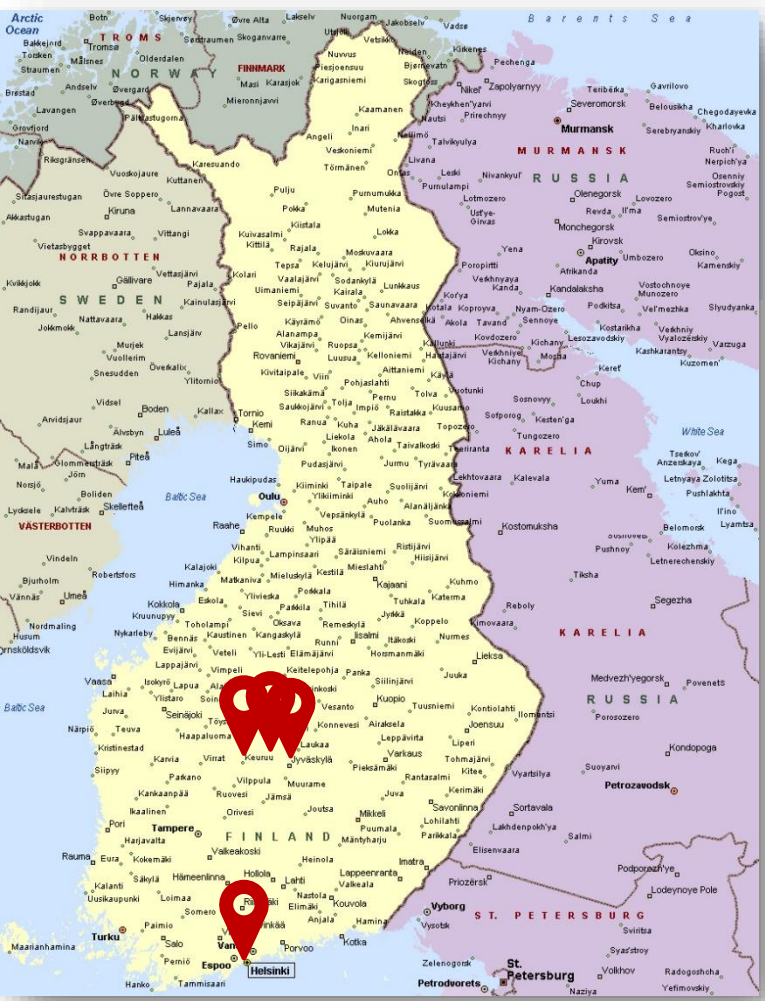
Dinner: salad, pickles, onions, mashed potatoes, reindeer and elk meat, fish, rye breads and spread, dessert

Motivation for Project:

I wanted an experience that was insightful, informative, and impactful. This was an opportunity abroad to put into practice some knowledge of public health and international relations. I also wanted to personally challenge myself and learn how to travel in groups and alone; it was challenging also because I was completely unfamiliar with Finnish and Estonian cultures prior to my experience.

Personal Impact:

I gained experience traveling both internationally and independently, including becoming familiar with taking various forms of transportation: ferries, trams, trains, taxis, and buses. The interactions with Finns and Estonians, including high school students, were valuable as we engaged in cross-cultural exchange. Throughout the trip, I was curious and attentive, and I journaled each day to help me reflect on the day's activities and what I learned. I aimed to be like a sponge and absorb all the information and sights, sounds, and senses around me. Because of this experience, I have strengthened global awareness and am more conscious about how where people live, work, and play impact their health.



Estonia

Estonian Open Air Museum

- 18th-century rural fishing village with church, windmill, farms, etc.

KGB Prison Cells Museum

- Underground prison operated under Soviet rule

Town Hall Pharmacy (Raeapteek) – since at least 1422!

- Apothecary: Dried toads, stuffed hedgehogs & bats, and herbs
- Specialties for different bodily humors: blood, phlegm, and black and yellow bile
- 10 generations of sons named Johann

University of Tartu

- Tartu main campus and Parnu branch
- Parnu: Spa Wellness & Management

Botanical Gardens

Estonian National Museum

- Civilizations in Estonia over last 11,000 years

U.S Embassy

- Diplomatic relations and connecting with Buckeye alumni!

KGB Museum

- Tour of 23rd floor of Hotel Viru and stories of secrets and spies

What was transformational about your project?

This project helped me become a stronger, more competent, and more culturally sensitive public health professional. It enhanced my understanding of how social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental factors influence the health of urban and rural communities in these two countries. I realized the importance of urban planning, and I developed an interest in incorporating health communication into my career, as it allows me to utilize social media and graphic design to educate the public.

My Favorite Parts:

- Exploring Helsinki
- THL presentations and food
- Ahaa Science Center
- Upside Down House
- Nurri Cat Café
- Old Town in Tallinn

For in-depth descriptions of my experiences, please see my e-Portfolio:

<http://u.osu.edu/dang157hseportfolio/> Feel free to contact me at dang.157@osu.edu!

Resources: oia.osu.edu, odi.osu.edu, cph.osu.edu, step.osu.edu

Thank you to program director Lorraine Wallace, Ph.D., and program coordinator Amanda Jovanovich, B.S. as well as my 14 peers who helped make this unforgettable!



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

STEP

Second-year Transformational
Experience Program