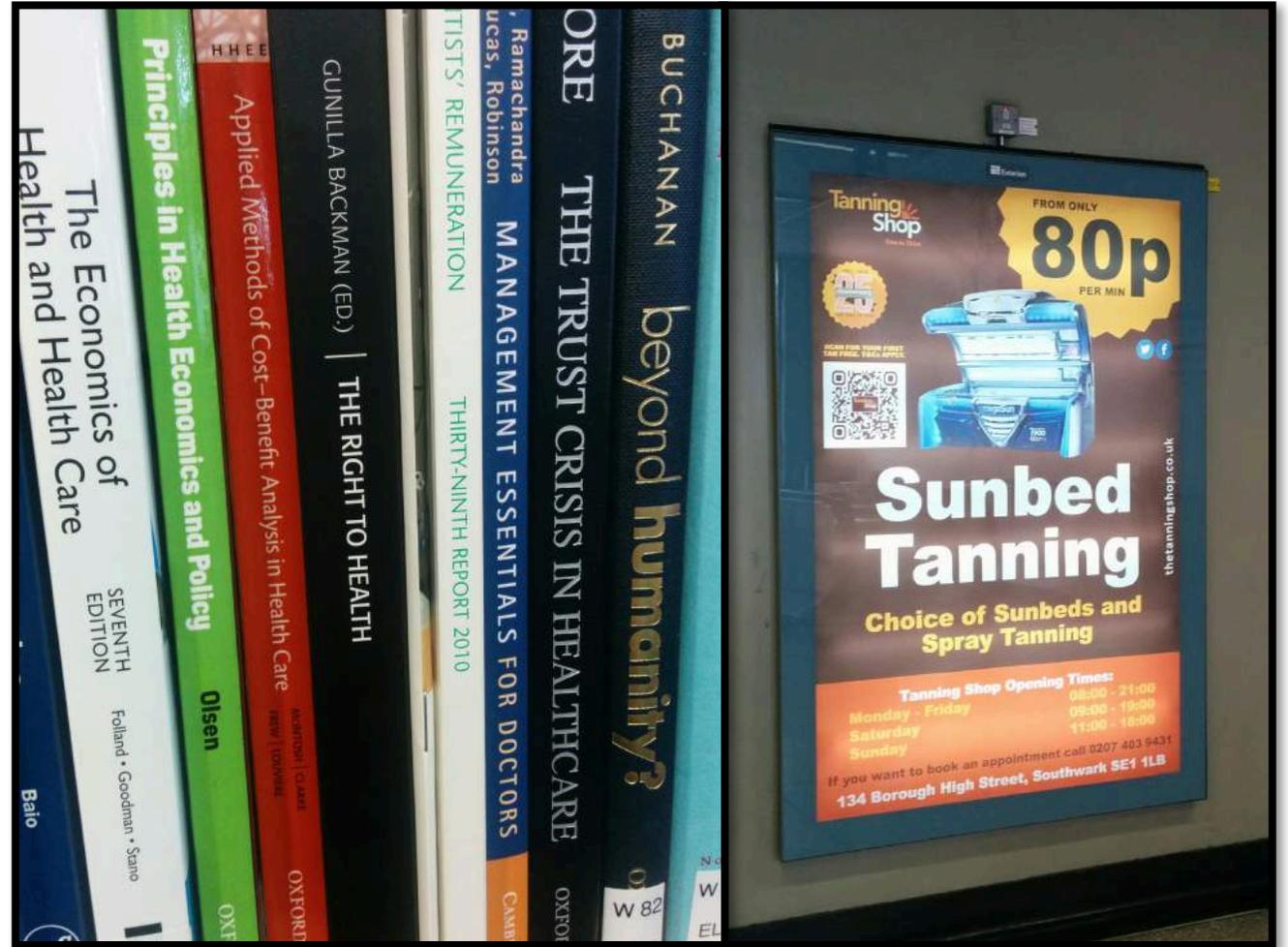


# SOCIAL DETERMINANTS

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Healthcare in the United States has many differences compared to other countries' systems. The U.S. provides medical treatment but at extreme costs that few people can afford, leaving citizens in debt. Other countries like Japan have different policies that show how they treat every individual with affordable treatment so everyone has access to what they need. We learned about Medicare and Medicaid which receive money from several different sources such as tanning salons. Comparing these things to the NHS and other systems, the United States does not completely place their priorities with people's health to allow access for everyone. This can be a problem for people of lower socioeconomic status as they cannot receive certain benefits while others can.



The LGBT community has gained a larger voice in the US recently, allowing them to become more widely accepted. London has an incredibly diverse population of people from all over the world based on their nationality, but also their sexuality. At the Pride Festival, we were given cards and informational pamphlets that discuss resources and helplines for people who are struggling with their identity. Because the LGBT community has become more accepted into society, this can lead to further progress in society's acceptance of their identity. The Pride Festival demonstrated the progress they've made and the positivity among the people taking part in the parade.



An issue among every individual is stress and coping with it. On my way home from one of our day trips, I witnessed a biker get hit by a car, which caused even more traffic during rush hour. The biker appeared to only have minor injuries, but I can imagine him biking home from work, and having to deal with a stressful event would cause him immense anxiety. Along with daily hassles or chronic stress, how one copes with these dilemmas is something that isn't always addressed. It can be different for everyone depending on one's circumstances, but finding little things like enjoying a sunset or taking time to read before bed can help people decrease their stress levels and maintain a healthy lifestyle.



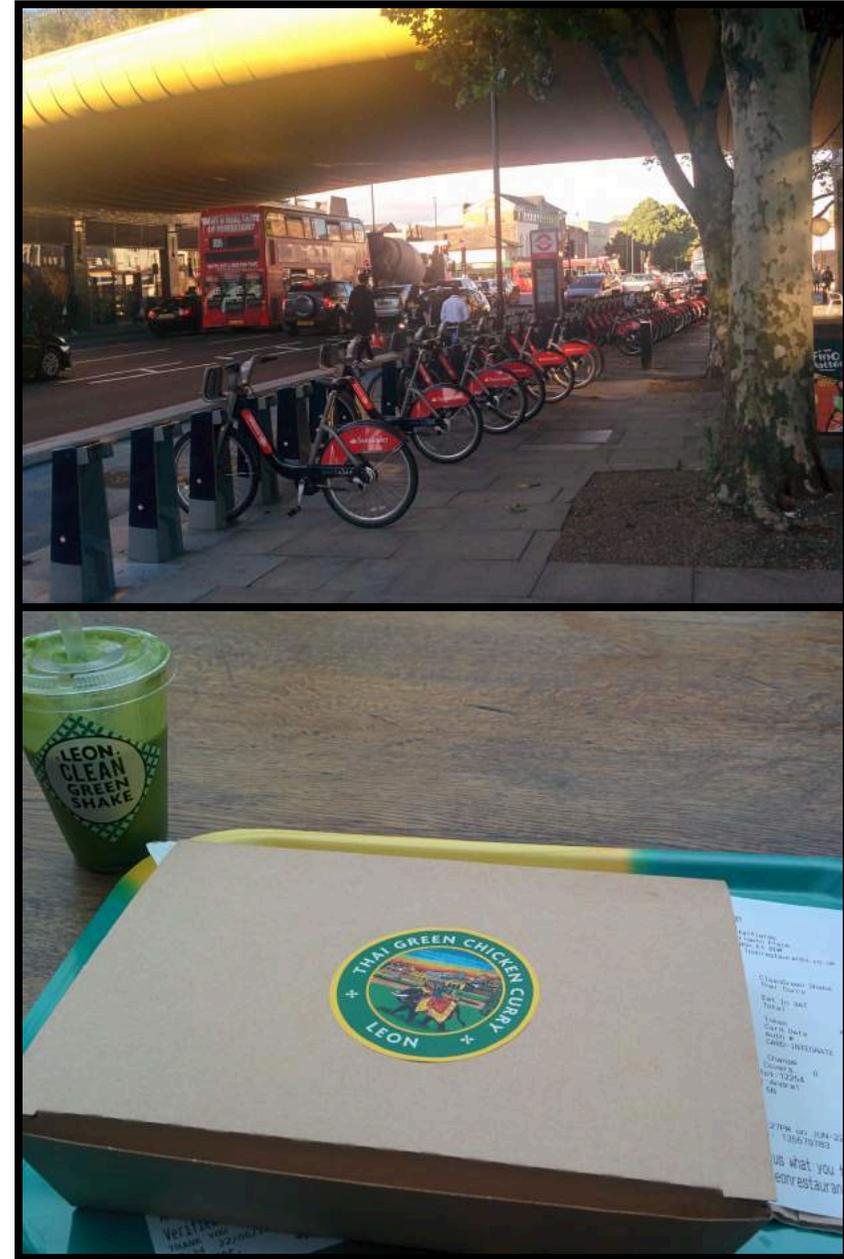
Along with stress, one's housing situation greatly impacts the quality of life. The building we lived in was clean and welcoming, and living in these conditions made me feel safe. If we had lived in a neighborhood with higher crime rates or an intimidating community, our experience studying abroad would have been very different and uncomfortable. Because housing situations impact one's comfort level, we can see how people and families experience higher levels of stress and anxiety which impacts their health and wellbeing. During our stay in London, we walked through business areas, public parks, and the streets of different towns. For the most part, I felt comfortable walking through these areas, as they were designated for people to enjoy.



Something me and my peers noticed about London is the availability of fresh produce. There were an abundant amount of outdoor markets, grocery stores and random food carts with fresh food being made. This accessibility makes it extremely simple to eat a healthier and more balanced diet. Even at the train station on our way to class there was a fruit stand every morning where we'd often stop to grab some berries. Having this convenience as a constant reminder in our everyday life encouraged people to enjoy the produce. However, as many fruit and vegetable options there were, I noticed many ice cream trucks everywhere, too. People in the U.S. spend most of their day working, which makes it challenging to make time for exercise, but in London they have an active lifestyle by not working as much, and also regularly walking to and from work.



In the city, there are many modes of transportation. People walk, take the bus, drive cars, take the train, and bike. There were plenty of accommodations for bikes such as bike lanes, places to lock your bike, and places to rent bikes. Not only is this a convenient way for people to travel, but it also promotes exercise and physical activity. By providing easy access for this form of activity, more people will feel inclined to participate. In addition to promoting an active lifestyle, London had numerous places to eat well. Frequently you would see signs or posters highlighting the restaurants natural or locally grown products, or if they have vegan or vegetarian options. I was very impressed with the health-conscious community while eating in London.



On the contrary to the many healthy restaurants, it's important to address people's ability to make healthy choices and understand the components of their diet. Being in a different country, the layout of the nutrition label looked somewhat different. There was different terminology and used different units than I was used to, but even in the United States, people struggle to decipher how many calories they intake and how much is too much. Many Americans struggle with health literacy, and because of the appealing advertisements displayed at McDonalds, they overindulge and ignore the health factors that come along with eating a McFlurry.



Another aspect of American culture is overconsumption. People spend a grand amount of money on things they don't need like upgrading their phone to the latest model or buying \$3 coffee every morning when they can make it themselves for less. I've noticed in London that there are coffee shops everywhere, and at restaurants they encourage you to buy drinks when you could just have water for free. The value of going out and buying things is causing financial disasters, and that makes it difficult to say no to buying things because of the constant desire for new things shown to us by advertisements.



I posted a picture of the substantial number of people that travel the city to go to work. In class we discussed the idea of people's backgrounds. There are so many people who grew up with their own unique families and values. Especially in London, there are considerable amounts of ethnicities and nationalities that we can interact with throughout our day. The diversity in London makes every interaction an experience where we can learn something new because of the diverse backgrounds and knowledge of each individual. Some of these people could have grown up in wealthy families, and others might have grown up struggling to make ends meet. The diversity helps define London by bringing people together.

