

# How Would It Be to Live in Chile, Argentina, and South Korea as a Teenage Girl?

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on my experiences living in three different countries – South Korea, Argentina, and Chile. In doing so, I demonstrate how, through the perspective of a teenage girl, my perspective of cultures and the world broadly were shaped by living in these different countries. Many think neighboring countries are very similar but, countries even sharing a border can be very different. When thinking of moving to a new country, the first thing you can know about the country is the geographical location in the world. A question I asked myself and was always curious about before moving to a new country was “How does being located in a specific region of the world affect the country's environment where a teenage girl is going to live?” I decided to answer this question by focusing on these countries. Some of the other questions that I explore in this article: What are special words unique to a language or different pronunciations and dialects? What are the differences and similarities of a student's life in Chile, Argentina, and South Korea? Adding on to this, what are the things a teenage student does outside of school and in their everyday lives? How does living in a certain country change your experience of a pandemic? In order to answer this question I will be focusing on the five aspects of life: Environment, Food, School, Language, Lifestyle, and Covid-19.

## **Introduction**

Moving away from your home country can be seen mostly negatively because of the following major struggles. It was the same case for me. Every time I moved I was scared and felt like a lot of time was wasted because nothing ever connected. However, looking back at it now, I can connect my experiences to put them together to reflect and see the world in a different perspective.

As a 16 year old who lived in five different countries, I have always felt different from others. I would think that I was just a human being on earth, not someone who was truly associated with a specific country. There were many times I saw this from the very negative side and always just thought I would not be able to do anything because I had nothing I had been doing for a consistent amount of time throughout the years. However, when I started to look at my life with a positive view, there was so much I had gained from my experience. I had been building my own kind of experience that made me who I am now. I became an independent open minded teenage girl who is curious about the world. As I slowly started to realize this, I was eager to share this with others that did not get the chance to be able to experience my life and the life of a teenage girl who lived in five different countries.

In this paper, I will be focusing on three countries that I have lived in. My home country, South Korea, as well as my experiences in Latin America with Argentina, and Chile. I want to show people how a teenage girl sees differences and similarities when living in opposite parts of the world and countries who share a border.

The teenage girl described in this paper is based on my experiences. I got the opportunity to move to many countries because of my father's job and always had my parents' support to be able to develop into the young adult I am today. I was fortunate to be able to receive the opportunities for higher education in countries

where lots of other girls were not able to. I want to point out that my experience does not cover everybody living in that country and everyone has unique experiences to become the person they are today.

When thinking of moving to a new country, the first thing you can know about the country is the geographical location in the world. A question I asked myself and was always curious about before moving to a new country was “How does being located in a specific region of the world affect the country’s geographical characteristics where a teenage girl is going to live?” I decided to answer this question here by focusing on the countries I mentioned earlier: Chile, Argentina, and South Korea. In order to answer this question, I will be focusing on six aspects of life: environment, food, school, language, lifestyle, and Covid-19. In regards to food, what kind of natural resources make the country have the best type of food? Communication is also key and this becomes a struggle when moving to a new country. What are special words unique to a language or different pronunciations and dialects? These things all make the country unique. The next thing is very specific to a student: what are the differences and similarities of a student’s life in Chile, Argentina, and South Korea? Adding on to this, how does the lifestyle of a teenage girl differ in Chile, Argentina, South Korea? What are the things a teenage student does outside of school and in their everyday life? Lastly, I wanted to describe how the Covid-19 pandemic hit each country. How does living in a certain country change your experience of a pandemic?

Moving away from your home country can include many struggles such as not being able to speak the country’s language, not adapting to the cultures of that country, or just missing your home. Every time I moved, I was always scared and felt like time was wasted because nothing connected. I was always starting over again. However, looking back at it now, I realize my experiences are valuable to me as they reflect how I see the world in a unique way.

## Environment

Chile is known to be vertically the longest country in the world extending 2,700 miles (4,300 km) across the continent (Johnson, Carmagnani, Caviedes, Drake 2023). The country is located along the western seaboard of South America neighboring Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina. Because of its amazing length the country has a very diverse climate. The north part of Chile is mostly deserts like the Atacama, where the southern tip almost reaches Antarctica. It is also a very mountainous country. The capital city Santiago, is surrounded by mountains which also leads to high air pollution, as the air is caught in the city. Most days living in Santiago as a teenage girl was seeing mountains and dusty air. One of Chile’s top places tourists visit is the Easter Islands. They are volcanic islands with the native name “Rapa Nui.” The Easter Islands are famous for the archaeological sites with nearly 900 statues created between the 13th and 16th centuries called Moai. The first people to live in the Easter Islands came from eastern Polynesia, and it is still kept as a mystery as to when or why these people left the islands. When I lived in Chile, I didn’t get the chance to visit the islands but many families I knew had plans to visit the Easter Islands before leaving Chile as the islands are only accessible through Chilean airlines.

Argentina is the eighth largest country in the world and the second in South America. Because of the incredible amount of land in Argentina the country has many beautiful natural landscapes. The country’s name comes from a word in Latin, *argentum*, meaning silver, which is named because of the amazing source of minerals (Calvert, Eidt, Donghi 2023). The capital is Buenos Aires, which in Spanish means “fair winds” or “good air.” According to O’Higgins (2017), the city was named after “Santa Maria del Buen Ayre” by the Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century. “Santa Maria del Buen Ayre” was Pedro de Mendoza, a Spanish sailor who established the first port of Buenos Aires, now known as San Telmo. He had named the city because of how far South it was from an old city in Sardinia where there were swamps full of mosquitoes with malaria, derived from “mal aire” or “bad air.”

Most of Argentina is grass and greenlands. But when I moved there I had heard before that “Buenos Aires is the Europe of Latin America.” I didn’t quite understand what this meant until I arrived in the city. The

first day I landed in Argentina was a hot summer day in January. The city instantly caught my eye as it was full of very old and unique architecture. The lively nightlife and culture explain why people made up the phrase “Buenos Aires is the Europe of Latin America.”

One of the biggest common factors about the two countries, Chile and Argentina, is that they share the region of Patagonia. You may have heard of Patagonia, the clothing and beer brand, but Patagonia is actually one of the most incredible landscapes on Earth. According to Davis (2022), Patagonia is one of the last untouched places on Earth. It is located in the southern region of South America and is known to be the end of the world because of its location in the southernmost part. The endless wild landscapes in Patagonia make the place one of the top places to visit for tourists. I personally have been to Patagonia and the landscape in front of my eyes was unbelievably beautiful. As beautiful as it is, Patagonia is also a home to a diverse wildlife.

Even though Argentina and Chile share the Patagonia region, Argentina has a larger range of landscapes, as it is also closer to Antarctica. While living in Argentina, I could not miss the opportunity to visit Patagonia. So my family and I visited El Calafate, which is a town in the southern Patagonian Ice Field in Argentina, mainly known for Los Glaciares National Park, home to the massive Perito Moreno Glacier. As someone who has seen the Glaciers, I can say it is one of those experiences everyone should have in their life. It was very cool to see an icy landscape on one side of the park and the rest of the park was just trees and grass. I also visited Ushuaia, Argentina, a little town located in the Tierra del Fuego archipelago which is one of the closest cities to Antarctica. The town was also a gateway to an Island nearby, Yécapasela, the island known as the Penguin Island, where I was able to see probably the most penguins I will ever see at once.

Los Andes is also a big common factor between Chile and Argentina. It is the borderline of Argentina and Chile and is known to be the longest mountain range in the world. It starts all the way up from Venezuela going through Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and all the way down to Chile and Argentina. The highest peak of the Andes is the highest of the Western hemisphere in Mount Aconcagua, 6,959 meters high on the border of Chile and Argentina. It is the highest altitude where humans have been able to live 5,212 meters. The principal occupation in the Andes is mining, which is one of the most important mining industries in the world. Some minerals found in the Andes are copper in Chile and Peru; iron in Chile, Peru, and Colombia (Velasquez, Denevan, and Stewart, 2021).

On the other side of the world, there is a small country called South Korea, with the peninsula located under North Korea. The country’s population is very highly concentrated as 70% of the country’s territory consists of high and low mountainous territories. One of the most famous mountains in the capital Seoul is Namsan. Namsan in Chinese characters means “front mountain,” and it was named because it is located in front of the biggest Korean castle, “Gyeongbokgung.” Many words in Korean are made using Chinese characters, as Koreans used Chinese characters during the 3rd and 4th centuries; before the Korean alphabet, “Hangul,” was invented.

Going back about 70 years in history, the two Koreas used to be one country. During WWI and WWII, Korea was under the occupation of Japan. Japan had been one of the strongest countries in East Asia at that time and Korea had become its colony in 1910. After 35 years of colonization at the end of WWII, Korea finally received its independence from Japan in 1945. However, as the Japanese left, the country was left with nothing. It was also when the Cold War started to occur and the Soviet Union was looking for more countries to expand communism, while the United States tried to block this and expand democracy. So there were intense tensions, as both countries were conflicted on whether to turn the country into a communist or democratic country. Then the Korean War happened in 1950, when the Northern Koreans invaded the Southern Koreans over the 38th parallel line. The fight ended after three years when an armistice was signed, agreeing that Korea would remain a divided country with the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Since then, the two countries have been separated for 70 years while the war continued.

Today, South Korea has developed to be one of the most advanced countries in the world. While maintaining traditions, South Korea has also developed advanced technology systems. The capital city, Seoul,

is very urban and developed, as approximately 10 million citizens live there (United Nations, 2023). The city is a huge metropolis with pop culture, Buddhist temples, palaces, street markets, and high-tech subways. According to Falzon (2017), Seoul has the second-best metro system in the world, carrying over 7 million passengers every day.

After living in all three countries as a teenager, I learned how important geographical features are to a country. Depending on what kind of landscapes and environments the country is located in, the lifestyle and the experiences a teenage girl has are completely different. If I think about myself only living in one country, I realize how I would not have the mindset and knowledge I have today. If I were a typical Korean teenager living in South Korea my whole teenage life, the most I would have known about Chile and Argentina is where these countries are located in South America. I obviously would not have been able to visit Calafate, Tierra del Fuego, Los Andes, and all the other amazing geographical regions located in Chile and Argentina. Even the little things like going to my favorite restaurant in Argentina, *Marcelo*, and visiting my favorite chocolate shop, *Bozzo Chocolate*, would most likely never have been a part of me if I was just a normal Korean teenager. I would have just been talking about the new K-pop idol group that came out and spent hours in front of a computer trying to get tickets to their concert in a *PC-Bang* (a Korean Cybercafe where most Korean teenagers spend their free time).

## Food

Food is one of the basic necessities of life. As humans evolved in different regions of the world, the types of food reflect much of a country's culture and environment. I am a person who loves to try new food and enjoys almost any kind. So moving to new places and eating their traditional food was one of the best parts of living in different places. I loved experiencing new combinations of ingredients into recipes that I would have never thought of before.

On the hot summer mid-January day I landed in Argentina, my family headed straight to the street market, where the street was full of stations of small businesses that sold little handmade souvenirs and food stands that sold *Choripans* (Argentinian sandwiches made with the sausage *Chorizo*). There also was a man selling fresh orange juice on a rolling cart. Normally we would have just walked away, as it wasn't the most sanitary area and probably not even refreshing, as it looked like the juice had been sitting under the sun for hours. But as we had just landed from a winter in South Korea, the sun shining above us felt ten times stronger. So we each ended up getting a cup and later found out that it was the most refreshing and citrus orange juice we ever tasted. As I lived in Argentina, I learned how amazing the climate is and that is why the country produces the most delicious fruits. Most people know that Argentina is famous for its Asado, Argentinian barbeque. I do not know how I did not know this before moving to Argentina because I am a *huge* barbeque fan. Being Korean, I have always loved Korean barbeque (which I will be talking more about later). But Asado just hits differently. The first time I tried it was at my family friend's house. My mom's high school friend had actually been living there and they invited us to their house to try Asado. I did not think meat could taste differently from what I had been eating. But when that first piece of *Ojo de bife* (Rib eye steak) went into my mouth, my tastebuds were full of joy. My brain was experiencing a whole different level of barbeque. To someone who truly enjoys eating meat, this was a life-changing moment.

One cultural shock I had in Argentina was something I saw at the school cafeteria in the dessert section. One of the desserts was a white liquid with grains in it that said "Arroz con leche." When I translated the words in my head it meant "rice with milk." I was so shocked trying to picture what it would be like to eat rice with milk. In Asian culture, rice was always the base food you eat as a meal with other dishes. Having it as a dessert and with milk was a completely different combination of food that I would never have imagined.

Asado is also a big part of Chilean culture, as a weekend means Asado to many families in Chile and Argentina. The two countries share a lot of the food they enjoy as they are neighboring countries meaning they

have historically been influenced by each other. Chile, however, is an important producer of salmon, producing 615 thousand metric tons of salmon worth \$4.8 billion (USDA Foreign Agricultural Service 2022). One story I have related to salmon is when my family and I were visiting South Korea from Chile; the food served in the plane was a salmon dish. It was an appetizer, so I decided to only try a little. But after the flight attendants took all our dishes away, one of them asked if our family was allergic to salmon because we all had not eaten much of it. We were traveling on Korean Air and to a Korean flight attendant this was a very unusual situation, as salmon is an expensive and fancy dish in Korea. My family just laughed and told them that we lived in Chile and had been eating too much salmon there.

Living in Latin America, my lifestyle started to change based on the food culture of the country. Lots of Latin American countries in general have a very late dinner time compared to Asian culture. Instead, there is tea time in between lunch and dinner around 4-6pm.

As more and more cultures have been influencing each other, many people know each country's traditional food. An example in Korea is Kimchi. I was so surprised to find Kimchi at local grocery stores in the U.S., such as Whole Foods and Trader Joe's. Kimchi is known to be one of the main foods that represents Korea. It functions like a pickle and is usually eaten with rice. Koreans eat Kimchi with rice and vegetables like Americans eat pickles with sandwiches, and Asado is eaten with *Chimichurri* sauce (green olive oil sauce eaten with Asado in Argentina) or *Pebre* sauce (a mix of tomatoes, onions, and aji peppers that is eaten with Asado in Chile). Kimchi is a spicy red pepper fermented vegetable usually made from napa cabbage or Korean radish. Kimchi is used in every kind of dish as it can be eaten raw or made into a soup or even Korean pancakes. My favorite is *kimchi jjigae*, the stew version of Kimchi. There are also about 200 types of Kimchi as it can be made by mixing a special spicy sauce and any kind of vegetable. Another ingredient that goes along with Kimchi that is used a lot is *Doenjang*. This is also fermented and is a mixture of soybean and brine. Doenjang is mostly used in soups and stews and is something Koreans will eat with rice at least once a week. The foods that represent Korea, Kimchi and Doenjang, both have a completely different taste to the kinds of foods eaten in Chile and Argentina. The two countries being geographically so far away from Korea made each country develop its own unique types of food that reflect its own culture.

Food is not just an essential part of living to a human. It is a representation of certain regions of the world because it represents the people from there. Recipes are passed down through generations in those regions and it truly becomes a treasure worth value. The specific taste, smell, and sight of the food associates with lots of personal memories of every individual that are special to them. For me personally, I each have a very meaningful memory associated with the cultural food I ate in each country I lived in. Whenever I think of Korean food, I think of my maternal grandmother. Because I never lived near her, she always welcomed us with the most delightful food whenever we visited her. She has a huge garden in her backyard where she grows all kinds of vegetables and fruits. When she cooks with those ingredients, nothing on earth can taste better than that. On the other hand, when I think of Argentinian food, I always remember the first Asado I had at a family friend's house. I was first very shocked at the size of the *Ojo de bife* and then was shocked at the taste of heaven after I had my first bite. Soon, I was cooking Asado myself as my dad could not keep up with our speed when we ate. Finally, in Chile, I always think of weekend Asado nights. Because we were in lockdown the majority of the time in Chile, my family and our neighbor family friends got together every weekend to enjoy a barbeque party. It was always a mix of Chilean and Korean food with *malaya* (Chilean Rose beef) and different kinds of Korean *Banchan* (little Korean side dishes). Each of these memories associated with the different kinds of food is so special to me and is something I look back to throughout my life. Through experiencing the different cultural foods, I learned about the stories behind these foods and what makes them so valuable, besides the incredible taste.

## School

Being a teenage girl, my job is to be a student. The teenage period of life is one of the most important times of a human's life as it is when you learn to become an adult. Growing up in different countries has become a significant part of my teenage life. After attending different types of schools worldwide, I learned how every place has its own educational system and style. I would also like to clarify that the schools I attended and the education I was able to receive may be different from that of other students in South Korea, Argentina, and Chile. I am writing this from the perspective of a teenage girl who has the support to be able to be in a stable learning environment. All the schools I have been to have been so different that I was starting fresh every time I moved. The first time I attended Pre-K was when I was three years old in Korea. My parents had sent me to a private Pre-K so that I would be going to the same school for elementary. After a year, my family had to move to Poland because of my father's job. When we came back from Poland, I was nine years old and a third grader in South Korea.

South Korean schools are known to be one of the stricter schools and the reason behind it is known to be that after the long-term invasion of Japan and then the Korean War, the country was really busy trying to develop. Education was one of the key factors that people thought would be essential to advance the country, and this is where the competitive education system stems from. The education culture in Korea is shaped by pressure on students that everyone goes to separate after-school classes. Most kids start off with piano or taekwondo as it is just traditionally what most parents want their children to start with. Then they move on to the core subject after school classes. First, the grade system consists of six years in elementary school, three years in middle school, and three years in high school. If students attend public schools, most of them walk to school from second grade as South Korea is a crowded country. There are public single-gender schools starting from middle school, and it is more common to attend a single-gender school. There is a formal relationship between teachers, and most of the time you do not refer to your teachers by their names, but by the term "teacher" (선생님 *seonsaengnim*).

The education system is basically the same across the country and is based on a textbook ("교과서" *gyoghwaseo*) that is provided every year. Students are not expected but most students come to the classroom already knowing what they are learning. Many students study ahead to be prepared as early as possible for the basically the most important part of their academic career in South Korea, the big test *suneung* "수능." You are able to take it once a year during the fall after your last year of high school and depending on the score you get, it will determine what college you will be accepted into. This is a competitive test, and you are not expected to get a perfect score on it, as less than ten students every year get a perfect score. But many students study another year until they get the score they want, which makes lots of students spend more and more years getting into college.

When I went to school in Argentina I was in 4th and 5th grade. As a foreigner, I would not have been able to attend an Argentinian public school as I did not speak Spanish. I attended an American International School where all the classes were in English and we had a period of Spanish every day. I quickly learned Spanish while living in the country and also brought back the English I had learned in the International School I went to in Poland. The American International School in Buenos Aires followed the same grading systems as any American Public School. Most teachers were native English speakers, and the school buildings were modern compared to an Argentinian public school. Similarly to American culture, the relationship between teachers and students was a lot more intimate, including with the Argentinian teachers. There would be informal side talks during classes while still getting the content done. One significant difference between the Argentinian International School and the Korean Public School is that swimming was required. During the summer (which was most of the year), all students had a period of swimming which required everyone to bring their bathing

suits and change. To some students, this was not an important issue as they grew up acquainted with this practice, but to most students, this was challenging as there was not much time to change, and just the feeling of being wet was very unpleasant. Many felt insecure to have to wear swimsuits in front of their classmates, as the swim skill level also differed adding insecurity to many students, including me.

When I found out I was moving to Chile and had told people at school, everyone had already known about the International school there. As swimming was the main sport practiced in both schools the swim teams had always been competing together and the two schools had been working together for a while. The International School in Santiago had a lot of similarities with the International School in Buenos Aires. The two schools were based on the same education system with the same curriculum. I was able to continue learning Spanish at school too.

## Language

As the world becomes more connected, communication has become a more important skill than ever. With the advancement of technology, it may seem like learning languages is not as useful as before. However, face-to-face human interactions are still necessary for our society. Many people have attempted to learn a new language and gave up after realizing they thought they hit their limit, which is normal as learning a new language is not easy. I was lucky to be exposed to a new environment where they speak a different language from a very young age. It definitely helped me catch on to new languages quicker including pronunciations.

My first language was Korean. Both my parents being Korean I learned Korean as my mother tongue language. My parents told me I was a slow learner and only started speaking fluently when I was three. That was also around the time my family moved to Poland and when I had to start learning English and Polish. I still have clear memories of the first few days of my pre-k when I could not understand a single word and had to stay silent the entire day. The nightmares of going to school every day did slowly go away and I quickly learned English and Polish at school. I never became completely fluent in Polish as it is one of the hardest languages to learn but was able to communicate in my daily life living there. I became fluent in English after going to a British International School in Warsaw for five years. Then we moved back to Korea where I had to go to school and learn Korean which was almost as hard as learning a new language. I read and wrote in Korean but had never received formal education in the language. I had already been a third grader at that time too. After another quick two years, I moved to Argentina where I was introduced to Spanish.

I never thought I would be learning Spanish this early in my life. I was not really trying to learn a new language as I was pretty busy studying Korean and trying to maintain my English. But I liked to be challenged and was open to the Spanish language. Before moving to Argentina, my mom and I took Spanish classes from a teacher who had lived in Argentina for half of her life. We heard about all her experiences as a girl living in Argentina, just like myself. I started learning about how the word “agua” (water) is “el agua” (masculine) and not “la agua” (feminine) even though the word ends with an “a.” As I learned Spanish, I realized that it was actually really similar to Korean. The pronunciations were especially easy because you just need to read what it says (which is the same in Korean). Living in Argentina never made me realize the variant of Argentinian Spanish. That was the first Spanish I had learned and it was just the Spanish I had known. When I moved to Chile, I realized the differences of the pronunciations of the two Spanish variations. Chileans add “po” to lots of words when they are speaking. An example of this is when they say “sí” (yes), they add the “po” and say “sípo.” On the other hand, Chileans used to ask me if I was from Argentina because of my pronunciation. The pronunciation of the letter “ll” is different in Argentina. “ll” should be pronounced as a “j” sound, but Argentinians make it sound like “Sh.” For example the word *pollo* (chicken meat), would normally be pronounced “pojo,” but in Argentina, they would pronounce it as “posho.”

When you become bilingual and trilingual, the struggle comes when you are trying to translate words between the languages. Sometimes it is because you forgot or do not know the word in the other language, but

in some situations, the word might not exist in that language. I personally have this struggle everyday in my daily life. Korean being my first language, I think in Korean too. Sometimes I run into a moment where I am speaking in Spanish or English and realize I know a word I really want to say but I cannot translate in my head. I realized how languages do not completely all translate to each other. There are special words that are unique to that language and express a lot of the region's culture. Lots of these unique words that are not translatable to English or Spanish exist in Korean. An example is a word called “답답하다” (dab-dab-hada). This word is an emotional expression that is used to express the frustration when you have been constantly trying a certain action and cannot end up getting it. Also when you see someone not getting something they have been trying. A specific example is when you keep explaining how to solve this math problem to your brother, and he keeps on asking about the same concept. You would feel “답답하다” (dab-dab-hada).

One of the reasons why there are different variations in Spanish is because each country has developed their own words that may mean the same thing in other Spanish variations. A major example of this is that lots of fruits and vegetables have different words in each Spanish spoken across Latin America. In Chile and Argentina, they call strawberries “frutillas,” while other Latin American countries call them “fresas.” Avocados are also called “paltas” in Chile and Argentina, while they are called “aguacates” in other Spanish variations. Most Spanish textbooks follow the rules and vocabulary of Spanish from Spain. By living in Argentina and Chile, I was able to fully experience parts of Latin American Spanish and how each Spanish variation is unique to its country.

## Lifestyle

As a full time student, most of my day is spent at school. However, my life continues outside of school too. The lifestyle I have outside of school is highly influenced by the country I am living in. No matter where I had originally been from, it is natural for your lifestyle to shape into the culture and tradition of the country you are living in. Living in different countries made my hobbies, routines, and priorities change to shape that country's culture.

I started to establish a more independent life outside of school in third grade, when I was living in South Korea. Most students in South Korea use public transportation and walk to after school activities alone from a young age (around ages 9-10), which in other countries seems really early for a child to be going out alone. This is natural in South Korea as the crime levels are on the lower side and the use of public transportation is very common. Most activities are also usually located around schools where students can easily walk after school. When I went to school in third and fourth grade in South Korea, my after school routine was to go to piano classes, wait for my brother at Starbucks with friends, and then, sometimes, we would take the subway home, or our mom would come pick us up. Subways were a better option when there was a lot of traffic on the busy streets of Seoul. Piano classes were one of the after school activities all elementary kids would go through. Even though most kids do not end up pursuing their career with the piano, it is common for them to just go to piano classes as if you go to your friends house. It is more of a social event for kids to interact with other kids while also learning to play the piano. Lots of kids would also go to taekwondo classes as their sport. Any academic subject you name was also an academy or after school class that was available for kids to attend. As the kids grow and go into middle school and high school, they will start to focus on the academic classes they are struggling with. They start to quit extracurriculars such as instruments and sports, unless they want to totally focus on them and plan to enter that career in the future. During my time in Korea, most of my time was spent outside of my house busy with after school activities, as I would also go to ice hockey practice twice a week as my sport. On weekends as a third and fourth grader, I would just hang out with my friends, going to theme parks and shopping at small stores in the streets. Another common thing many people of all ages enjoy doing is “인생네컷” (In-saeng-ne-cut). These are little photo booth stores that are everywhere in South Korea.



When I moved to Argentina in fourth grade, my lifestyle completely changed. I was not going anywhere alone or on public transportation, and I was always either at school or home. As a foreigner living in Argentina, our family still did not completely know the city well enough for me to walk around alone on the streets. Buenos Aires is also known to be a more dangerous city compared to Seoul for a young girl to walk around alone on the streets. My family lived in Puerto Madero, which is a safer part of Buenos Aires. This gave me more freedom to take walks along the river sometimes, Río de la Plata. Some after school activities I did included Spanish tutoring, bandoneon classes, and swimming lessons. All of these activities were done in my apartment complex. My Spanish tutor and bandoneon teacher would come to my house for lessons and there was an apartment pool where I had my swimming lessons. I would occasionally go to malls with friends and have an adult supervising us. On weekends, I spent most of my time at my friends' houses or having my friends come over to mine. When we went out to malls, we always had an adult with us, as we were still fourth and fifth graders. It was not common for elementary students to hang out on their own without an adult in Argentina.

In the middle of 5th grade, I moved to Chile, where several of my lifestyle activities had changed again. Even though Chile was a neighboring country of Argentina, many factors were different in my after school life. There were more facilities that offered after school activities. I started learning the guitar at a music academy, I started rock climbing lessons, and I also continued with Spanish lessons. I was spending my days being active and busy until the pandemic started.

## COVID-19

The first case of COVID-19 in Chile was on March 3rd 2020, around when most of the world had been announcing their first cases. According to the Ministry of Health, Chile was the fifth country in Latin America to report its COVID-19 case. A few months prior to the first COVID-19 case in Chile, there was an “estallido social” (a social outburst). The protests started to respond to the raise of Santiago's subway fee. However, as the protest started to expand, it included problems such as cost of living, university undergraduate unemployment, and inequality prevalent in the country. Protests were getting violent as supermarkets, banks, and pharmacies were robbed. The President of Chile had declared a state of emergency, having the army bring out tanks to the streets of Santiago to enforce order and prevent destruction of public property. There were also curfews set during this period of time where at some point, people were only allowed to go to supermarkets to stock up food. Because of this, schools were shut down for a few months. Students and teachers started to learn how to work with online classes during this lockdown, which later helped handle things more easily during the online classes of the pandemic period. After being back in school for only a few months, it was announced that we would be taking two weeks off of school as the cases of Covid-19 increased. I remember keeping all my textbooks in my locker thinking that we will be back in two weeks. I never got the chance to go back to school as I had moved to the U.S. before classes were back in person. Chile was in lock down once again during the first few months of the pandemic. We needed to fill out permission forms to leave the house twice a week to go get groceries for three hours. Masks were worn everywhere and plastic gloves were also essential when going to the Supermarket, which soon became my favorite thing to do as it was my only chance to leave the house. Everyday was the same eating, doing online school, and sleeping on repeat. Like the rest of the world, I got no exercise or physical movement during this period, resulting in my body becoming weaker.

My family and I kept updates of situations in South Korea too, as most of our family lived there. We were all worried about our grandparents, as it was more dangerous for the elders. South Korea's first case was confirmed on January 20th. Being a neighboring country to China, the virus reached the country earlier than Latin America. Many South Koreans had already been used to wearing masks in public because of the bad air pollution in the air. It was not a problem for people to start wearing masks again, which resulted in the country having a lot less cases during the first few months of the pandemic. The delivery system had also already been

very developed in South Korea before the pandemic, which became dramatically more popular during the pandemic. There were no severe lockdowns or curfews in South Korea, but shops and restaurants had to close.

Argentina was also struggling with the pandemic at this time. Having the economy struggle too, it was harder for many citizens in Argentina to continue with their everyday lives. Many of the citizens had to live from what they earned that day, but with lockdowns many families were desperate for food and supplies. According to the International Labour Organization, the Argentinian government has been working hard to improve the struggles of the pandemic.

Argentina's newly elected government... acted swiftly and decisively when the first COVID-19 cases were imported with rapid detection, isolation and care for those infected, and contact tracing and quarantine of contacts, while working quickly to scale up the health system in anticipation of more cases. National authorities also took early, bold decisions regarding public health measures, including the closure of borders, schools, public spaces, and businesses as part of a comprehensive "lockdown" to slow the spread of COVID-19. (WHO 2020, 1)

There were many efforts made to try to keep everyone safe but also help those who were struggling because of lockdowns. This was not only economically a huge problem but was also a period of time where people went through mental struggles. Everyone around the world had to shut down their outside lives and stay at home. This time period was stressful to me as a middle schooler who wanted to hang out with friends all the time. But, I did get lots of time to think and try new things I never got to try before. I started to learn how to crochet and also started a little youtube channel. Looking back, I think it was a very important time for me to have the time to be able to reflect on myself and grow from a 5th grader to a 7th grader even though I had to move to the U.S. without being able to say goodbye to most of my friends.

## Conclusion

Teenage life is one of the most important periods of one's life. This is when children develop to become mature young adults. Everything becomes a huge influence and many factors can become important during this time. The rest of one's life depends on how you spent your years as a teenager. Living in Chile, Argentina, and South Korea during my teenage years has influenced me the most to who I am today. First, I was physically able to experience all the different kinds of geographical regions on earth, from a nature reserved Antarctic region at the very bottom tip of South America to a very busy crowded city in South Korea. I had opportunities to try new combinations and recipes of food I would have never thought of. I learned how the same ingredients could be used to make completely different dishes. Secondly, a very important factor that has become a big part of who I am today was school. The education I received from all the different teachers and how I got along with all my friends I met in the different schools is basically what makes me who I am today. All the schools I have been to and everyone I met from there brought me all the experiences they had with them to me. These experiences were key because they set the mindset I have of thinking. Hearing different opinions and perspectives is what builds up in your brain to establish the way you think about the world. The third factor that affected me was learning new languages. Communication is key to becoming a mentally and physically healthy person. To be able to communicate in a foreign country, you need to learn their language. I was given the opportunity to easily learn three languages by living in the country and learning their native language which has and will be giving me so many more opportunities to be able to communicate with everyone all over the world. Fourthly, my routines of my life outside of school have been different in each country I lived in. I experienced many different kinds of sports, instruments, and other activities that I tried because of the country I was living in. It naturally changed what I wanted to do depending on what my peers and what most people in that country did. Lastly, I went through a pandemic during my teenage life. Our generation is the only generation who went through the pandemic in such an important part of their lives. There was no socializing between teens, making them lose the ability to be connected to others, which affected a lot of teenagers including me. We lost the

chance to learn how to establish stable relationships. All of these factors influenced me to the person who I am today. However, this realization did not come to me right away.

Living in different countries was overall a very stressful experience for me. I was never attached to people and always felt like I was losing everything, having to start all over again. The first few times I moved, I was excited and wanted to meet new people to become close with them, so I would feel like I belonged somewhere. However, as I moved too often I got tired of trying and was not interested in meeting new people. I wanted to always be used to the city I was living in, knowing all the people and having a strong relationship with them. The last thing I wanted was to have to get into a situation where I had to leave my comfort zone to talk to a new person. I would avoid all kinds of changes and try to keep my routines. After being so tired and unmotivated to do anything, I spent some time really reflecting on my life. Looking back at the past years where I worked so hard to give everyone I meet a positive impression of myself, I was able to see that I had been growing tremendously every step I made. There was not a single time I had stepped back in my journey; even when I made mistakes I was making a step closer and closer to developing to become someone meaningful in this world.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor for the valuable insight provided to me on this topic.

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