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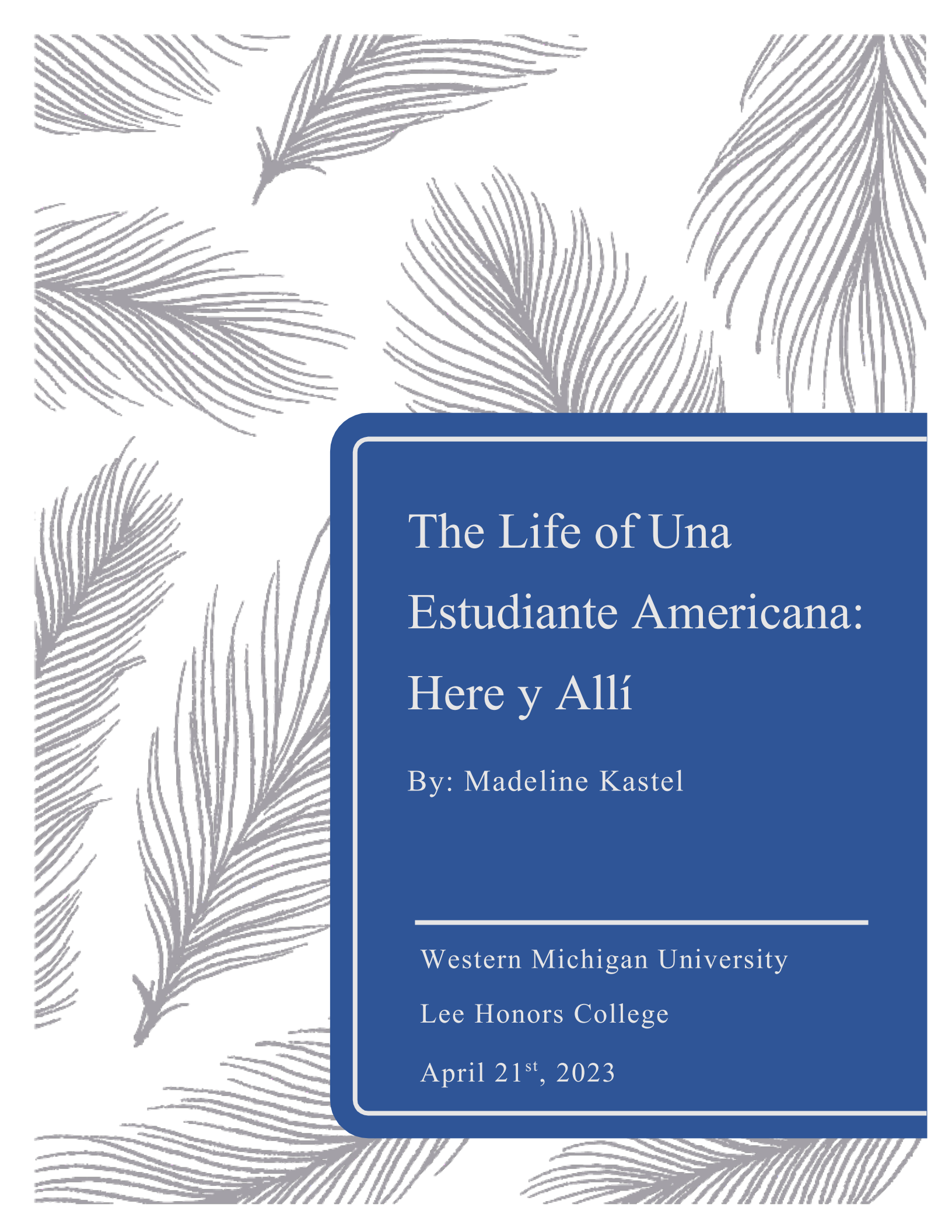
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The Life of Una Estudiante Americana: Here y Allí

By: Madeline Kastel

Western Michigan University

Lee Honors College

April 21st, 2023

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I. Introduction

I.1 Purpose of thesis Study

To analyze differences between studying Spanish at an American university, Western Michigan University, in Kalamazoo, Michigan to that of a study abroad program at La Universidad de Burgos, in Burgos, Spain in three main areas:

- A. Teaching Styles in Classes
- B. Extracurricular Activities
- C. Student Experiences

I.2 Introduction of Thesis

The topic of this thesis is to compare the experiences of completing Spanish studies between Western Michigan University, an American campus versus a campus outside of the comfort zone of students via an immersive language program, at La Universidad de Burgos. While studying Spanish at Western Michigan University, students are presented with the opportunity to take Spanish courses abroad. After taking classes at Western Michigan University with part of that time being during the COVID-19 pandemic, studying abroad is an option to take an immersive language program. The Spanish department at Western Michigan University offers multiple faculty-led study abroad programs of varying lengths and at varying times of the academic year. One of these programs is the Fall study abroad program in Burgos, Spain and in particular, the Fall 2022 Burgos program. In order to be accepted into this program, students must have fulfilled the requirements of taking SPAN 3160 and SPAN 3170 prior to submitting an application (Broncos Abroad). Once students have fulfilled the course requirements, they must complete a virtual application and then students must be interviewed. Students accepted into the program

have mandatory virtual modules provided by Western Michigan University and meetings with the program director to prepare to go abroad. Students then re-new or apply for a passport and apply for a student visa since the program was over ninety days long. This particular year, Fall 2022, students participated in the Burgos, Spain program, from September 3rd, 2022 – December 14th, 2022.

Although all of the students that participate in this program have completed the requirements of SPAN 3160 and SPAN 3170, their linguistic levels vary depending on the number of 3000 or 4000 level courses that they have taken prior to traveling to Spain. In this study, students will have taken SPAN 3160-3170 and one other course at the 3000 level. With this in mind, this thesis will explore a number of topics that highlight the similarities and differences of studying Spanish in both locations.

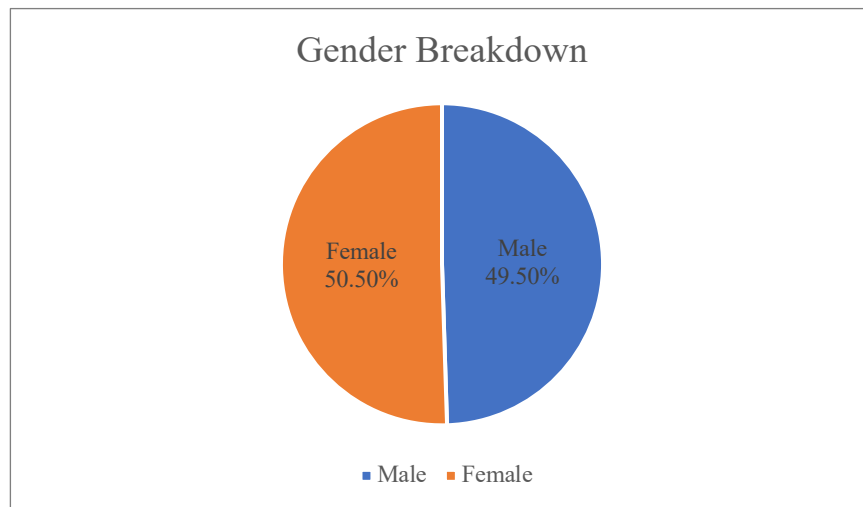
II. Locations of Study

Although it is obvious that Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA and Burgos, Spain are very different, including the language spoken, it is important to study the demographic and local infrastructure differences to complete a scientific study.

II.1 Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo

Western Michigan University is located in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The city of Kalamazoo has a population of 73, 257, has its own downtown city center, and outside of that area is dominated by suburban living (U.S. Census Bureau). The city of Kalamazoo is about 25 square miles which includes the city center and suburban living.

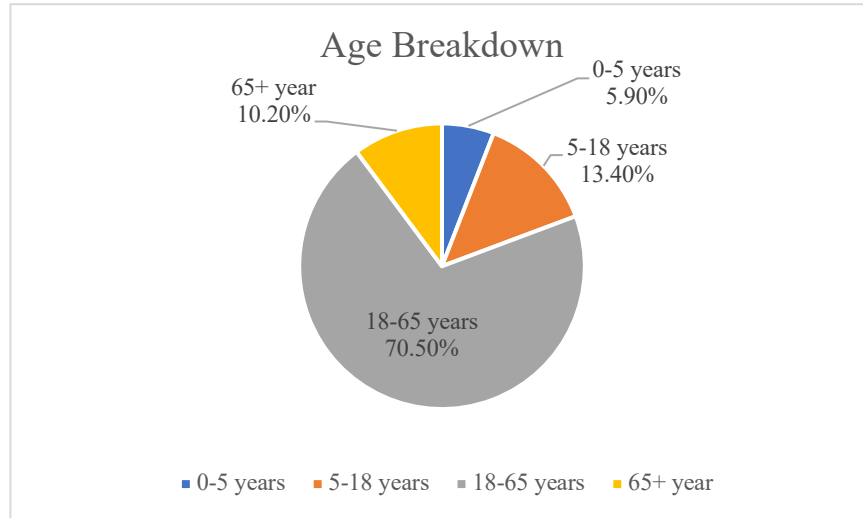
Chart II.1.1: Kalamazoo Gender Breakdown



"U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Kalamazoo City, Michigan." *United States Census Bureau*, United States Census Bureau, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/kalamazoo-city-michigan/PST045221#PST045221>.

In Kalamazoo, there is a relatively equal distribution of males and females in the city. It is important to note that Kalamazoo follows the global statistic of 50% male and 50% female.

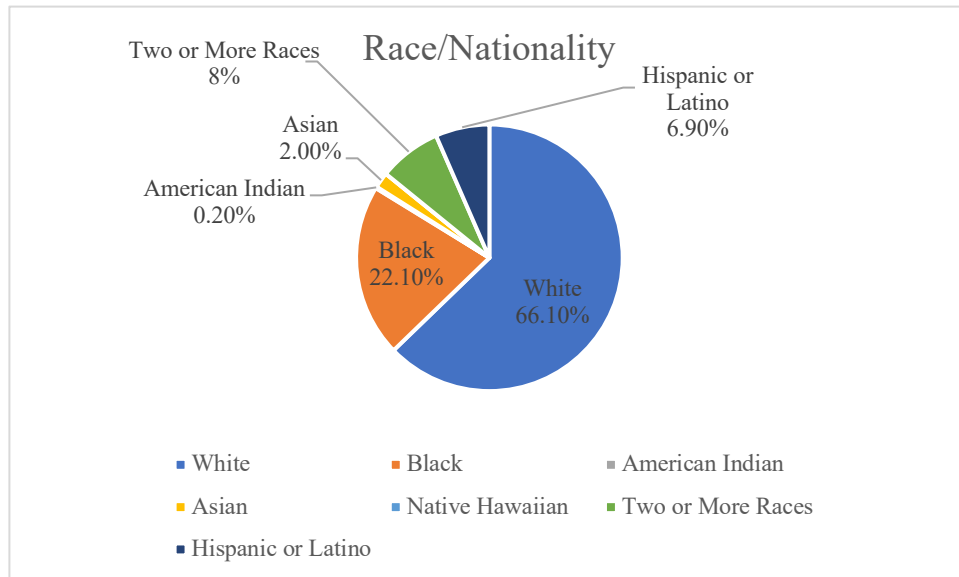
Chart II.1.2: Kalamazoo Age Breakdown



"U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Kalamazoo City, Michigan." *United States Census Bureau*, United States Census Bureau, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/kalamazoo-city-michigan/PST045221#PST045221>.

With the population being divided by age, one can see that much of this graph shows that 70.50% of the population in Kalamazoo are between 18-65 years old. Although this is a wide age range and students are usually between 18-24 years old, there is no direct statistic on this age group in the Census. Most college students are not accounted for in these numbers because they are included in their hometown census, but Western Michigan University has over 23,000 students enrolled in the college, showing that the census may not give a proper depiction of the age demographic during most of the year.

Chart II.1.3: Kalamazoo Race/Nationality



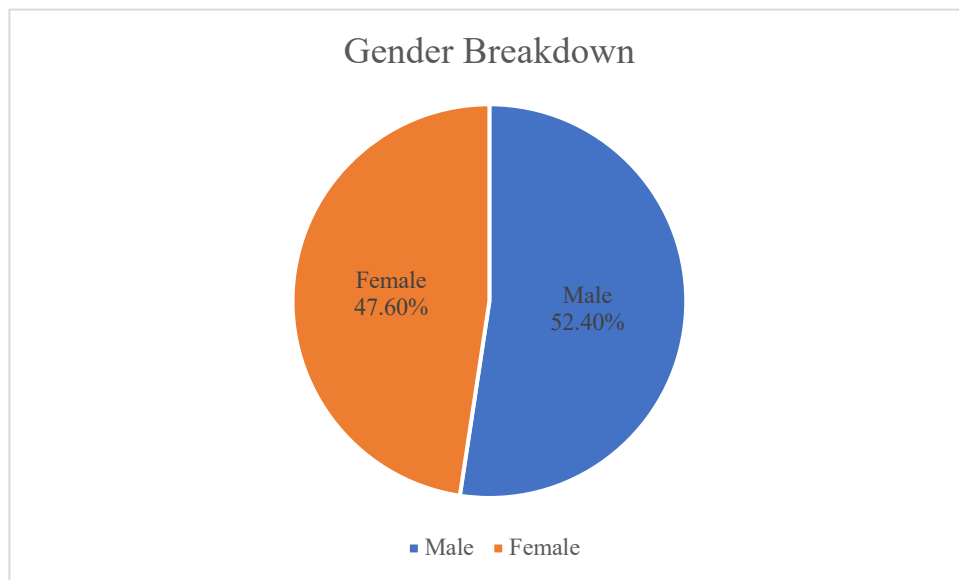
"U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Kalamazoo City, Michigan." *United States Census Bureau*, United States Census Bureau, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/kalamazoo-city-michigan/PST045221#PST045221>.

On the topic of demographic diversity, one can see that 66.10% of the Kalamazoo population is White and that there is a relatively small Hispanic or Latino population that accounts for only 6.90% of the population, meaning that there is a smaller number of people to interact with who could speak Spanish.

II.2 Universidad de Burgos, Burgos

La Universidad de Burgos is located in Burgos, Spain. The municipality of Burgos has a population of 174,154 and has a city center that is surrounded primarily by apartments (Burgos in Burgos, 1). The city itself is about 7 miles long from one side to the other and outside of the city center are many small villages that are mostly surrounded by farmland.

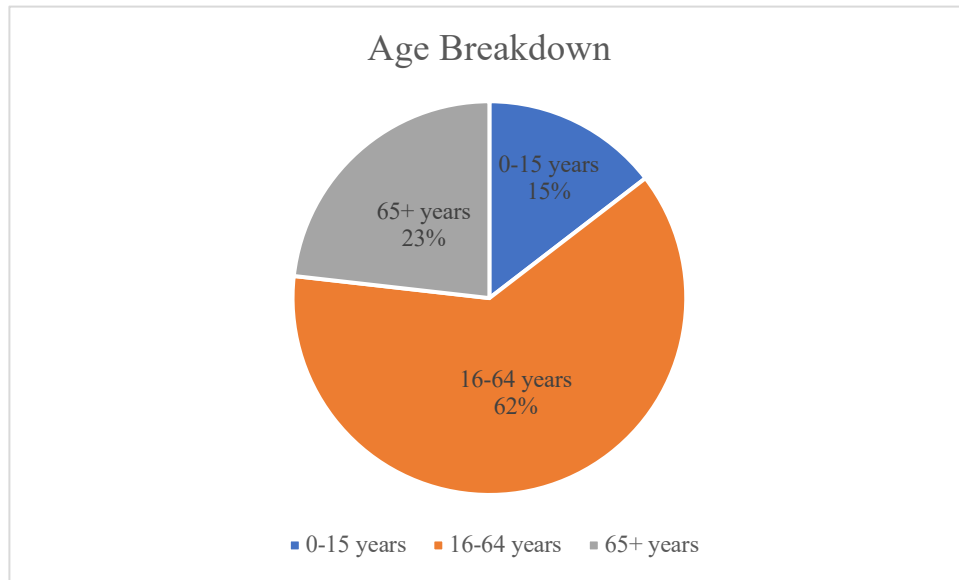
Chart II.2.1: Burgos Gender Breakdown



"Burgos in Burgos (Castilla y León)." *City Population*, Thomas Brinkhoff, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/spain/castillayleon/burgos/09059__burgos/.

In Burgos the gender breakdown slightly skews towards males, which make up 52.4% of the population where in Kalamazoo, males make up 49.5% of the population, a 2.9% difference between the two. It is key to note that Burgos does not fall in line with the global average of 50% male and 50% female while Kalamazoo resembles it clearly.

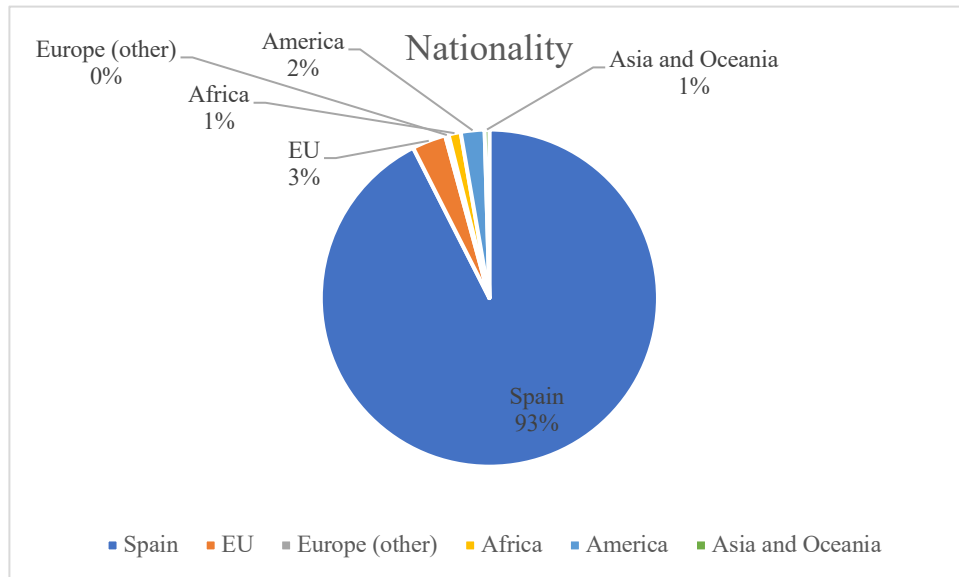
Chart II.2.1: Burgos Age Breakdown



"Burgos in Burgos (Castilla y León)," *City Population*, Thomas Brinkhoff, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/spain/castillayleon/burgos/09059__burgos/.

The majority of people in Burgos are between 16-64 years old, at 62% of the total population. When comparing Burgos and Kalamazoo, the 64+ year old population in Burgos, 23%, more than doubles that of Kalamazoo, 10.2%. This means that in Burgos, there are an increased number of activities directed toward the 64+ year old population where in Kalamazoo, only a small number of events would target this age group.

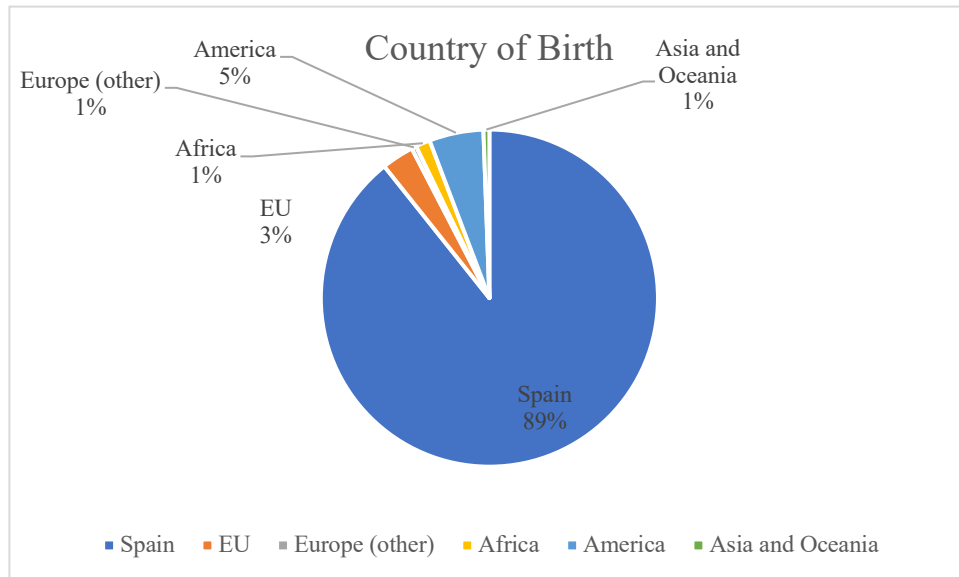
Chart II.2.3: Burgos Nationality Breakdown



"Burgos in Burgos (Castilla y León)," *City Population*, Thomas Brinkhoff, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/spain/castillayleon/burgos/09059__burgos/.

While there are statistics on race and ethnicity in Kalamazoo, a comparable set of statistics could not be found in Burgos because the country chooses to focus on nationality, not race or ethnicity. In Spain, it is evident that they do not consider the color of a person's skin as a dividing factor, but have a larger focus on nationality. With that being said, 93% of the population in Burgos is Spanish, meaning that they identify as Spaniards.

Chart II.2.4: Burgos Country of Birth Breakdown



"Burgos in Burgos (Castilla y León)," *City Population*, Thomas Brinkhoff, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/spain/castillayleon/burgos/09059__burgos/.

Another statistic that the Burgos census examines is a person's country of birth. It is obvious that in Spain, most people will likely be born there, but a staggering 89% of the population in Burgos were born in Spain. Only 5% of the Burgos population was born in the America's which include both North and South American countries and not just the United States of America, meaning, that the America's make up a small number of the population in Burgos.

II.3 Transportation to WMU's Campus

The campus at Western Michigan University is just a short distance away from the heart of downtown and can choose to live as part of the city community. Without a doubt, students frequently participate in the American university culture of living on or close to campus.

Freshman at Western Michigan University are required to live on the university's campus for one year in the dormitories, with some exceptions, and during their other three years at the university, students opt to live in apartments. The experience during the Burgos study abroad program is very different in the fact that the campus is a part of the city and students live with families who reside in the city. Out of the six students that participated in this program, sophomore year of college and beyond, 66.66% of them live off campus and 33.33% live on campus either in a dormitory or on-campus apartment. During this time, the students that live off campus have driven to campus every school-day and have never used public transportation to get to school. Although some of the apartment complexes have a private bus that goes to and from campus, they have never personally used it prior to going to Spain. The apartment complex buses leave every thirty minutes to campus and arrives to the apartment complexes every thirty minutes, meaning that they are not always convenient timings. Another way students can get around in Kalamazoo is through the city bus system, which is usually \$1.50 per adult, but WMU students are able to ride free with their student IDs (Metro Fixed Route Bus Fare). There are three bus routes that go onto WMU's campus, and they run from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm (Metro Service Days and Hours). The city bus system has an app that people can use to track the busses, myStop Mobile, but this app does not properly function, so people use the direct bus website instead.

This shows that although there is a form of public transportation to get to Western Michigan University's campus and the surrounding Kalamazoo area for zero cost, students

would rather opt to use their private cars. A reason they have not considered taking public transportation to school is because they want to have flexibility of when they leave for school and come home from school or when running errands. Driving to and parking at the university for the school year includes money for gas, and a \$300.00 parking pass to legally park in student commuter parking lots, but this is a price students are willing to pay to park in a convenient location and control the schedule they arrive to and leave from campus. For the students that live on campus, the 33.33% of them walk to and from their classes. For students on campus, there are three busses that students can take free of charge to get from: main campus to the aviation campus in, circles main campus and east campus, and another route that goes from the main campus to the Parkview campus where engineering students take their classes (Western Michigan University Busing).

II.4 Transportation to UBU

A large difference students immediately noticed once arriving to Spain is that it is very common to use public transportation. During the first month of the Fall 2022 semester, each student walked between one to two miles each way to get to and from school. At the time, the weather was sunny, and it took students between twenty to forty minutes to get to or from school on foot. After the first month of the Fall 2022 semester, the weather started to change and included cold mornings and rainy conditions. Because of this, students decided to get a Burgos bus pass that would allow them to ride the city busses.

Over the course of three and a half months, students spent on average \$25.00 to use the city busses: \$5.00 to buy a bus card, a flat fee that everyone pays, and \$20.00 to put money on the card so that it could be used it each time a student boarded a city bus. With a Burgos bus card, each bus trip only cost 24 cents (Ayuntamiento De Burgos). If you are a student, you can apply for a student bus card, and if approved each bus trip would cost 15 cents (Ayuntamiento De Burgos).

There are four bus routes that stopped at La Universidad de Burgos with varying times, so students never had to wait more than fifteen minutes to board a bus. In general, it took approximately five to ten minutes to walk to a bus stop, and the bus ride itself took between ten to fifteen minutes and arrived directly at the back of the building where the courses took place in (Moovit). As a personal experience, I got into the routine of taking Route 5 to La Universidad de Burgos, but if anything changed that morning, it was possible to use an app called Moovit to see when and where bus routes were taking off of. Moovit is a very convenient app that anyone can use for educational and private use to track the city busses.

II.5 Analysis

When considering the demographics and local infrastructure of the two locations, they prove to be very different. Demographically speaking, each city was relatively similar in gender makeup and age, but very different when considering the dominant groups and units of comparison. In Kalamazoo, the statistics shared by the census considered race and ethnicity, while in Burgos, statistics focused on nationality and place of birth. This is a key difference to consider because it gives insights into how people group individuals. Race and ethnicity are key dividers in the USA and since these are not mentioned in population statistics of Burgos, one can assume that race and ethnicity are not important factors about individuals. An individual is a Spaniard, and the color of their skin does not matter.

While in Spain, students walked very frequently and could walk everywhere they needed to because restaurants, cafes, bars, and stores are close by. In Kalamazoo and in many places in the United States of America, people don't walk very much because anywhere you need to go is not conveniently located, could be far away, there is not proper lighting, sidewalks are scarce, meaning a person would have to walk on the side of the road, and culturally it is looked at weirdly. Culturally the stigma around public transportation is positive in Spain and all types of people use it, where in Kalamazoo, having to use public transportation is looked at negatively because it is often associated with a poorer demographic. On top of that, because walking and public transportation are not utilized as much in Kalamazoo, those means of transportation can be unsafe and less developed. For example, Burgos has Moovit, an application to track public transportation and Kalamazoo has myStop Mobile, but it is not a functioning application to do so, but routes can be tracked online. The local governments have a great impact on public transportation and Burgos is an example of having invested greatly into the accessibility and

safety of public transportation. Public transportation via the city bus system or apartment complex busses are free for WMU students, but they choose to pay \$300 a year for a WMU parking pass and drive their own vehicles to school instead. So, although it can be less expensive to get to and from school in Kalamazoo, than in Burgos, students choose to go the more expensive route in Kalamazoo because they are willing to pay a significant amount of money to feel safe getting to and from campus. Safety and peace of mind are driving factors in these decisions, so it can be assumed that students feel more safe taking public transportation in Burgos, than in Kalamazoo.

III. Academic Curriculum

This section will look at the Spanish curriculum at Western Michigan University and La Universidad de Burgos. The topics of discussion are:

- A. Western Michigan University's Spanish Program Major and Minor Structure
- B. Western Michigan University
- C. Universidad de Burgos
- D. Similarities
- E. Differences

III.1 Western Michigan University's Spanish Program Major and Minor Structure

The main objective of the Burgos, Spain program is to provide students with the opportunity to participate in a language immersion program that allows students to interact with a new culture and build their Spanish language competencies. For the Fall 2022 Burgos program, 100% of the students that participated are Spanish majors, but the Department of Spanish does offer a minor and these students are able to participate in the Burgos program as well.

Image III.1: Spanish Minor Requirements

Spanish Minor (SPLN)

← Return to: [Departments and Programs](#)

Program Requirements

- Up to 8 retroactive credits for SPAN 2000 and SPAN 2010 may be awarded.
See wmich.edu/spanish/retroactive
- SPAN 5570 and SPAN 5580 cannot be included in this minor.
- All courses must be completed with a grade of "C" or better.

Twenty-three hours beyond the 1000-level to include:

- [SPAN 2000 - Intermediate Spanish I](#) **Credits:** 4 hours
- [SPAN 2010 - Intermediate Spanish II](#) **Credits:** 4 hours
- [SPAN 3160 - Spanish Composition](#) **Credits:** 3 hours
- [SPAN 3170 - Spanish Conversation](#) **Credits:** 3 hours

Two of the following courses:

- [SPAN 3210 - Life and Culture of Hispanics in U.S.](#) **Credits:** 3 hours
- [SPAN 3220 - Life and Culture of Spain](#) **Credits:** 3 hours
- [SPAN 3230 - Life and Culture of Spanish America](#) **Credits:** 3 hours
- [SPAN 3240 - Introduction to the Study of Spanish Linguistics](#) **Credits:** 3 hours
- [SPAN 3250 - Introduction to the Study of Spanish Literature](#) **Credits:** 3 hours

One additional Spanish course at the 3000 level or above.

"Program: Spanish Minor (SPLN) - Western Michigan University." *Western Michigan University*, Western Michigan University, 2021, https://catalog.wmich.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=38&poid=12053&returnto=1698.

The Department of Spanish offers a minor in Spanish where students must complete 23 credit hours that include SPAN 2000 and SPAN 2010. In total, students looking to complete a Spanish minor will take seven Spanish courses, the four required: SPAN 2000, SPAN 2010, SPAN 3160, SPAN 3170, two SPAN 3000 level courses, and one additional course at a 3000 level or above.

Image III.2: Spanish Major Requirements

Spanish Major (SPLJ)

[Return to: Departments and Programs](#)

Program Requirements

- Up to 8 retroactive credits for SPAN 2000 and SPAN 2010 may be awarded, but these credits do not count toward the major.
- All courses must be completed with a grade of "C" or better.

Thirty hours beyond 2000-level to include:

- [SPAN 3160 - Spanish Composition](#) Credits: 3 hours
- [SPAN 3170 - Spanish Conversation](#) Credits: 3 hours
- [SPAN 3240 - Introduction to the Study of Spanish Linguistics](#) Credits: 3 hours
- [SPAN 3250 - Introduction to the Study of Spanish Literature](#) Credits: 3 hours

At least one course from:

- [SPAN 3210 - Life and Culture of Hispanics in U.S.](#) Credits: 3 hours
- [SPAN 3220 - Life and Culture of Spain](#) Credits: 3 hours
- [SPAN 3230 - Life and Culture of Spanish America](#) Credits: 3 hours

At least one course from:

- [SPAN 5260 - Survey of Spanish Literature to the 18th Century](#) Credits: 3 hours
- [SPAN 5270 - Survey of Spanish Literature from the 18th Century to the Present](#) Credits: 3 hours
- [SPAN 5280 - Survey of Spanish American Literature to Modernismo](#) Credits: 3 hours
- [SPAN 5290 - Survey of Spanish American Literature from Modernismo to the Present](#) Credits: 3 hours
- [SPAN 5400 - Studies in Spanish Linguistics](#) Credits: 3 hours
- [SPAN 5600 - Studies in Spanish Literatures](#) Credits: 3 hours

Additional Spanish courses:

Plus four additional Spanish courses at the 3000 level or above, at least three of which must be at the 4000 or 5000 level.

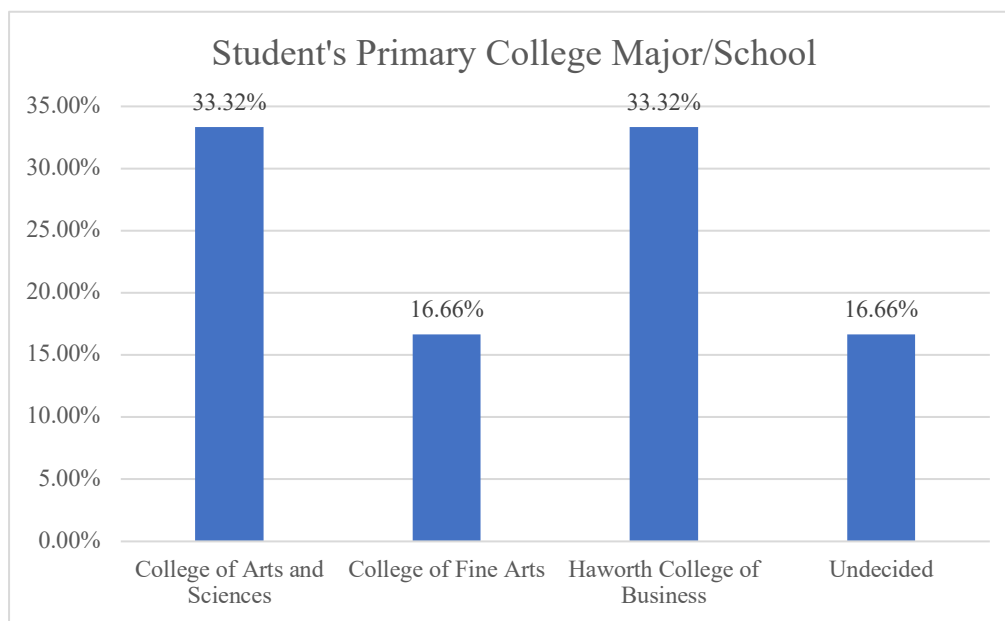
"Program: Spanish Major (SPLJ) - Western Michigan University." *Western Michigan University*, Western Michigan University, 2021, https://catalog.wmich.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=38&poid=12052&returnto=1698.

For a Spanish major, students are required to complete 30 credits of Spanish at a 3000 level or higher and a baccalaureate writing course. Since many students who major in Spanish have an additional major, the baccalaureate writing course is required for their degree and then those credits are then transferred over to satisfy this Spanish major requirement. Every student that participated in the Fall 2022 Burgos study abroad program is a Spanish major and had completed SPAN 3160 and SPAN 3170. In particular, 100% of students had taken other various courses within the major pre-departure. So, although the study abroad program had two required courses, students came into the Burgos program with different levels of fluency and amounts of the major completed.

III.2 Western Michigan University

While studying Spanish at Western Michigan University, students can take classes that range from a 1000-5000 level. Each Spanish course is one semester, 16 weeks long and cover one main content area in depth. On average, students take 12-15 credit hours per semester. If a student is a Spanish major or minor, they commonly take 3-6 credits of Spanish courses per semester, which is equivalent to one or two classes. Out of the students in the Burgos 2022 program, 100% of them were doble majors, with Spanish being their second major. So, these students would take 1-2 Spanish classes and 2-3 classes for their primary major each semester.

Chart III.2.1: Student's Primary College Major/School for Burgos 2022 Students



As shown in the chart above, out of the 6 students in the Burgos 2022 program, 33% have their primary major in the College of Arts and Sciences, 33% in the Haworth College of Business, 16.66% in the College of Fine Arts, and 16.66% are undecided on their second major at this time. This shows that although these students are all Spanish majors, they have varying primary majors between the different colleges at WMU.

Three courses that Spanish majors have to take on campus during their time at Western Michigan University are, SPAN 3240: Introduction to Linguistics, SPAN 3250: Introduction to Literature and one 5000 level course.

The SPAN 3240 course focuses on the history behind the Spanish language, its evolution over time, how it sounds and patterns a person can find in the language. This course gives great insights into the linguistic differences that one can see in different Spanish speaking countries and allows students to see that those regions pronounce words and sounds differently as well. After taking that course, students are able to identify patterns in sounds and how certain words are supposed to be written.

SPAN 3250 gives an introduction into Spanish literature and looks at texts that examine the political, economic, and social structures that can be seen in Spain. Although students may not have known it at the time, this course proved to be a great foundation for students to build off of when they went to study abroad in Burgos, Spain. Many things that students learned in this course provided insights into daily life and the societal attitudes in Burgos.

Students additionally are required to complete one 5000 level course. Each of these courses has the prerequisite of successful completion of SPAN 3160, SPAN 3170 and SPAN 3250 or SPAN 3240 depending on whether the student is opting to take a literature or linguistics course. There are six course options that students can take, five of them are literature courses and one is an advanced linguistics course (Western Michigan University). The course that a student takes is their decision, but not every 5000-level course is run each semester, so students must keep that in mind while making their schedules.

III.3 Universidad de Burgos

During the Fall 2022 Burgos, Spain program, students participated in a language immersion program to develop their Spanish skills and competencies. During this time, students were enrolled in 13 credits worth of courses that covered:

- A. SPAN 4520 - SPAN 4530: Lengua Española
- B. SPAN 4200: Historia y Cultura
- C. SPAN 4100: Arte

Although the students were only taking three classes, the Spanish history and culture classes were broken up into units. Each unit had a professor that specialized in that subject. This is something unique that students experienced because they initially thought they would have 3 professors for three classes but had over 10 professors. In Spain, their classes are built so that professors work together to teach courses. Professors have mastery in different course areas and instead of teaching an entire course, they teach their specific content and then pass the class to another professor. This is a system that allows for students to be taught subjects by masters of their craft.

One of the main reasons to study abroad is to allows students to “experience different styles of education” (International Student), and in Burgos, students learned basic and introductory knowledge to many subjects rather than leaning in depth about one subject like they would do for their courses in Kalamazoo.

The Spanish language course that students took at La Universidad de Burgos focused on building four core language competencies including: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Although the course focused on all four competencies, the ones that were the most impactful for

their experiences were listening and speaking. While living in Spain, students were constantly hearing Spanish being spoken by themselves, peers, host families and by locals, which allowed them to pick on key vocabulary and better hear through the pace and dialect of the person speaking.

A second course that students took while in Burgos focused on the history and culture of Spain. To learn about these topics, students took dance classes, cooking classes, visited a winery to understand the wine making process and visited many historical sites like, cathedrals, monasteries, palaces, and castles. This is a fun history and culture class students get to take because each unit consists of a lecture, supplemented by a field trip to the historical site that had been learned about and discussed in class. These field trips made a big difference because students were able to interact with the history and see it first-hand rather than being limited to a lecture and some photos.

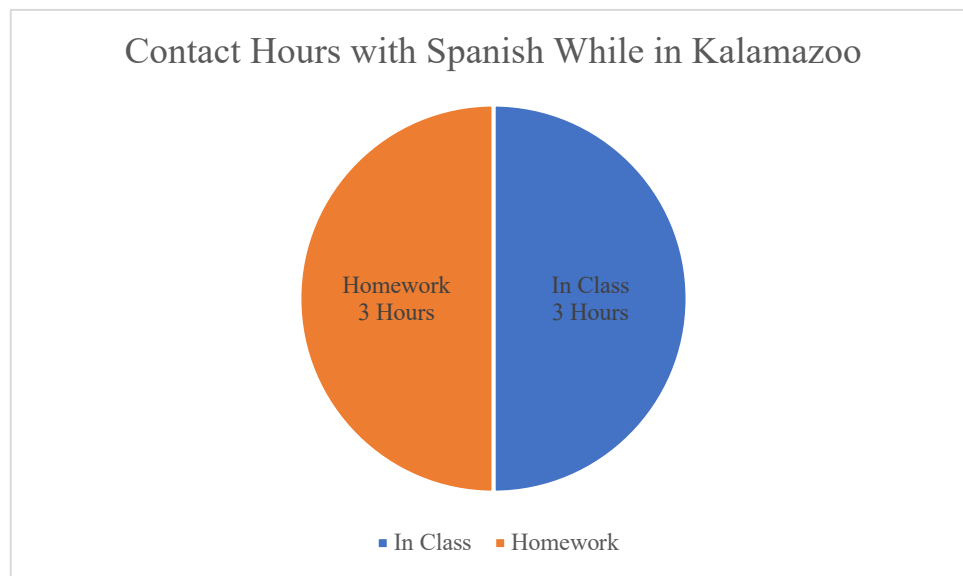
The third course students took while in Burgos focused on art. This course focused on the symbolism of marking and color on top of deep diving into the works of famous Spanish artists like Picasso, Goya, Velázquez, El Greco, and many more. In this course, students have to make their own family crest with pictures, symbols, and colors that they felt were representative of them.

The classes in Burgos were very upbeat, interactive, and based in experiential learning, which is a setting students were able to thrive in.

III.4 Similarities

One key similarity between the education students receive is that their daily course load was similar. The course load that each student carried at WMU is similar to that of Burgos. Students commonly take between 12-15 credits each semester at WMU and while in Burgos, took 13 credits, giving them a similar daily course load (Learn.org).

Chart III.4.1: Spanish Contact Hours in Kalamazoo Per Week



Both in Kalamazoo and Burgos, students were attending 2-3 classes per day, which totaled about 4 hours of class time. While in Burgos, student's class schedules were similar to what they were used to in Kalamazoo, by taking classes from the morning to the early afternoon. For the most part students have homework after every class, but in small amounts that do not feel overwhelming. Meaning, that the workload outside of class usually consisted of about 30-60 minutes of homework each night at both Western Michigan University and La Universidad de Burgos.

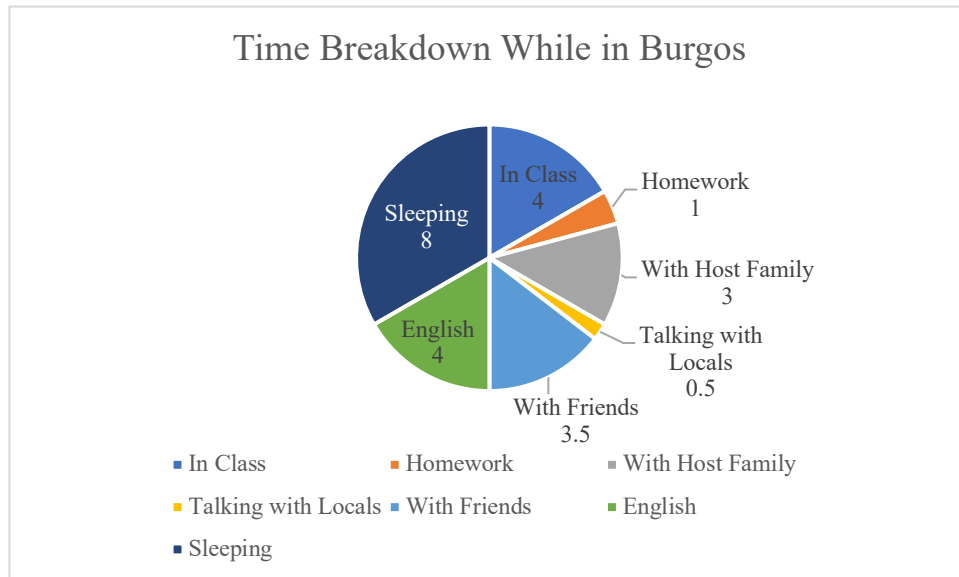
III.5 Differences

Something to note is that studying Spanish looks very different at Western Michigan University in comparison to Spain. A large difference is the fact that students were being taught 100% of the time by native Spanish speakers while at La Universidad de Burgos, where students only have a 42.3% chance of taking class with a native Spanish speaker at WMU. Having native Spanish speaking professors allows students to better understand the linguistic differences that appear according to region, which is something students benefitted from in Burgos because they were able to understand people from different regions of Spain.

At WMU, most Spanish classes take place two days a week, for about an hour and a half, which totals to 3 hours per week of class time. Students spent about 2-3 hours a week on Spanish homework which in total is 6 hours of touchpoints with Spanish each week.

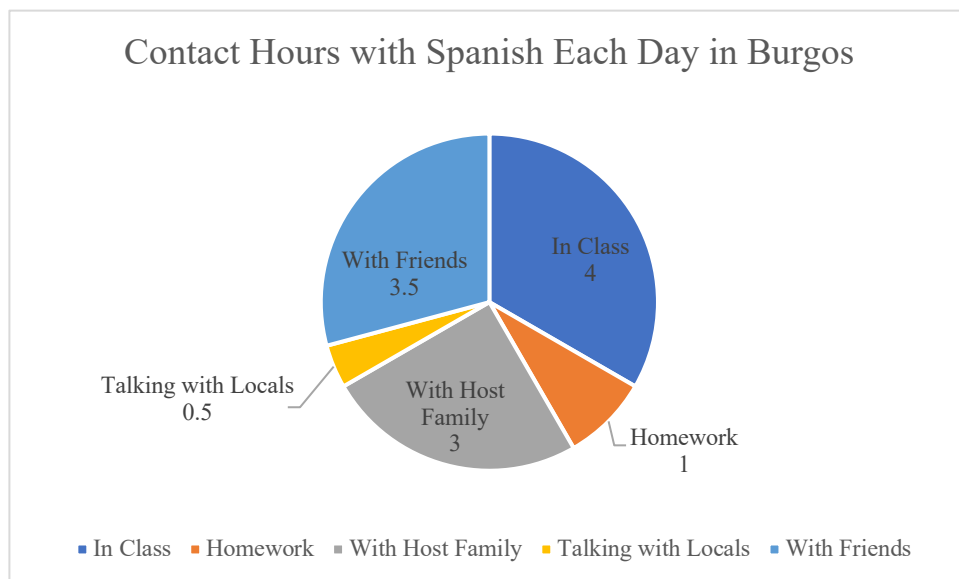
While students were abroad in Burgos, their daily life consisted of different activities than that of their time in Kalamazoo. Students spoke English approximately 16 hours a day while in Kalamazoo, but in Burgos, this was limited to four hours each day because the additional 12 hours were used to speak Spanish.

Chart III.5.1: Student Daily Time Breakdown in Burgos



Studying through a language immersion program means that students will be interacting with the language more than that of their home university. This study looks to break down different aspects of students' days to determine where and how long they were speaking Spanish each day.

Chart III.5.2: Spanish Contact Hours Per Day in Burgos



The difference is that while time in Spain, students they were in a full language immersion program. Each day, students took Spanish courses for 4 hours with native Spanish speaking professors. Due to living in Spain, who's primary language is Spanish, they always had touchpoints with Spanish, meaning that the amount of exposure they had to the language was significantly increased while studying Spanish in Spain. As seen in the charts above, students were interacting with Spanish a total of 12 hours a day, and only speaking English with their friends and family in the USA for 4 hours a day. This means that students were interacting with the language 2 times more in one day while in Spain than they were in one week while in the USA.

Another key difference between student's Spanish learning in the USA and in Spain is that in Spain they were focused on experiential learning. While Spanish learning was condensed to in class learning in the USA, their learning in Spain consisted of full language immersion where they were learning in class 4 hours each day and then practicing the language at home with their host families and with locals in the city 3.5 hours a day. Students were also able to go on over 50 hours of field trips and apply principles that they had seen and learned during class. Students feel that because of this experiential and hands on experience they have retained a lot more information.

In comparison, their Spanish classes in the USA are very lecture based, include a lot of homework, a lot of tests and quizzes and often have group projects to complete over the course of the semester. Students are not able to go on any field trip during these classes and had to "experience" topics through photos. They discovered very quickly that 6 hours of contact with Spanish per week is not nearly as beneficial as "being fully immersed in a culture that primarily speaks their native language," because language immersion is, "one of the most effective ways to

develop and improve your foreign language skills” (CIEE 1). Although those are words they had heard many times prior to studying abroad, students started to see first-hand just how much they were learning and retaining in a short period of time because not only were they learning, but they were living their daily lives using a foreign language.

On top of that, the structure of the courses are different. At the beginning of each semester in the USA, students receive a syllabus with a course schedule of what their schedule will consist of each week, the content, and the homework for the week, exemplifying a more structured and scheduled approach to learning. While in Spain, classes are more free flowing, there was no schedule students had to follow, and progress was determined by how well the class was making progress on concepts. Students were able to spend more time on concepts that they struggled with and less time on concepts they understood. In the USA, each concept has the same amount of time dedicated to it, where in Spain the students and professors would change and amend what they were doing to best suit the class. Each location would benefit from moving more towards the middle and having course structure with the ability to be flexible in time dedicated to certain topics.

Overall, students found that there were far more differences than similarities between the Spanish education that they received in Kalamazoo and Burgos. Studying in Burgos proved to be very beneficial for their language competencies and the field trips and experience based classes better aligned with how they like to learn.

IV. Extracurricular Activities

On top of the number of contact hours with Spanish through courses, homework and going through daily life in Spain, students had the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities through field trips while at La Universidad de Burgos.

IV.1 Field Trips Taken Through La Universidad de Burgos

To supplement the Spanish language program, field trips were taken frequently to visit historical sites and interact with the Spanish culture. During the program, field trips took place in the city of, or outside the city of: Burgos, Lerma, Segovia, and Madrid. Time dedicated to fieldtrips include travel time spent to get to and from locations. As previously stated, 100% of students for the Fall 2022 Burgos program are Spanish majors at Western Michigan University and while they had a 42.3% chance to take courses with a native Spanish speaking professors at WMU, this number jumps to 100% native speakers for the Burgos program. The native professors and excursions for class are without a doubt a key difference in the education between Western Michigan University and La Universidad de Burgos.

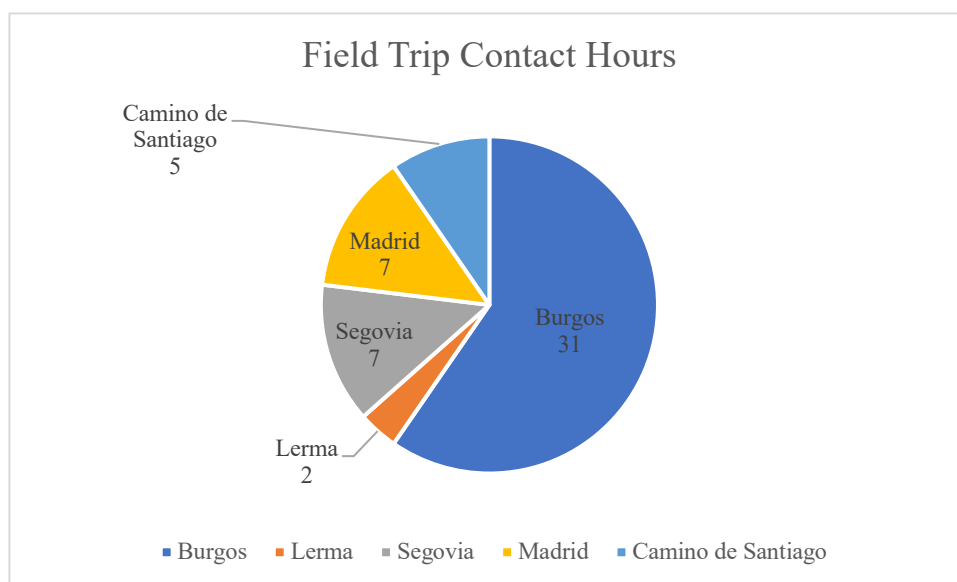
Table IV.1.1 Excursions in the city of Burgos: 31 Total Hours

Museo del Libro: 1 Hour	Etapas del Camino de Santiago: 1 Hour
Catedral de Burgos: 2 Hours	Real Monasterio de Las Huelgas: 2 Hours
Real Cartuja de Miraflores: 1 Hour	Palacio de Castilfale - Archivo Municipal de Burgos: 1 Hour
Museo de Burgos: 1 Hour	Castillo de Burgos: 2 Hours
Visita a Atapuerca: 3 Hours	Arco de Santa María: 1 Hour
Gastronomía Española: 6 Hours	Baile: 6 Hours
Visita a bodegas de Ribera del Duero: 4 Hours	

Table IV.1.2 Excursions Outside the City of Burgos: 21 Total Hours

Camino de Santiago: 5 Hours	Lerma: 2 Hours in Total
Segovia: 7 Hours in Total	Madrid: 7 Hours in Total

Chart IV.1.3: Field Trip Contact Hours for Burgos 2022 Program



Total Hours of Field Trips including in the city and outside the city of Burgos: 52

Through these field trips, students were able to get an extra 52 hours to interact with Spanish and their course content. 52 contact hours is more than the equivalent to a three-credit course at WMU, showing that through these experiences alone, students got the equivalent of one extra class while in Burgos. These field trips allowed students to learn through multiple mediums and better understand the significance and cultural ties that each field trip has to Spanish language and culture.

V. Differences in a Student's Weekly Activities

When looking at the typical weekly schedule that students experienced while in Kalamazoo and Burgos, students noted multiple differences. While in Kalamazoo, students' schedules are full enough to the point that they do not spend much time with friends or family because they are either working or at school. No students worked during their time abroad due to possible legal issues, so they automatically had more free time while in Spain. While in Spain, students spent a lot of time with their friends and went out almost every day. Something else to note is that although they had school in both locations, they were dedicating more time to homework and other extracurricular activities during their time in Kalamazoo.

At Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, outside of studying Spanish, the students have a second major. Because of this, they are involved in different student organizations on campus, participate in events for their major, volunteer, go to sporting events on campus and attend other events on campus. On average, they spent about 10 extra hours per week participating in these activities. With these things in mind, they spend a lot of their time outside of school doing extracurricular activities or working, meaning they have a smaller amount of time to spend with friends, family and traveling.

During their time in Spain, they did not have an extensive number of commitments, so they had a lot more time to spend with their host family, friends, and the biggest difference, they had time to travel. Even the time spent for school and schoolwork was significantly less meaning that they had more time on my hands to do other things. On top of that, no students worked while in Spain due to legal reasons because they did not have a work visa, and this freed up between 10-20 hours of their time each week and made it easy for them to go out each night to socialize with their friends because they were able to go out on more than just the weekend.

A last important difference is that mealtimes were very consistent while students were in Spain because those are important times to reconnect with a student's host family. At 2:00 P.M. each day, students were home to each lunch with members of their host family, but in the USA, students' do not have the flexibility to have a consistent time to eat lunch every day and usually just eat whenever they have time. Overall, their time in Kalamazoo was almost always filled with school, work, and other extracurricular activities so they had little time to do things that they liked to do which was the opposite of their time in Spain, where they got to spend most of their time as they wished.

VI. Influences of Culture

Students studied Spanish in Kalamazoo, Michigan and Burgos, Spain, and observed that not only was the demographic different, but the culture is different as well. Between the USA and Spain, their cultures impact their outlook on work and life balance and social norms.

In Kalamazoo and in the USA in general, there is a mentality that “people live to work,” meaning that people should be spending our time working and making money instead of taking time for ourselves. In the USA, the average work week for full-time employees is 34.6 hours (Indeed.com), and employees are given 10-14 vacation days in their first 10 years of work and accrue 15-19 days of vacation per year once they have hit 10 years of service (Indeed.com). There are 10 public national holidays observed in the USA (U.S. Department of Commerce), which is lower than the 14 public holidays observed in Spain. In comparison, the Spanish work week 36.34 hours a week (Statista), higher than the average of the USA, but employees are entitled to 30 vacation days per year (Business Culture), a large increase from the typical seen in the USA. So, although the Spanish have a slightly longer work week, they have 3 times as many vacation days to promote a work and life balance and work 216 days of the year, where in the USA people work 240 days of the year. With this information, one can say that the Spanish “work to live,” meaning that they work to make money so that they can go and do fun things like travel and spend time with friends at cafes and bars during their vacation times. This mentality is something that students really appreciated while abroad because host families encouraged students to travel and take advantage of the experience. Students took this mentality to heart and spent time with friends and travelled frequently.

A second important cultural difference between Kalamazoo and Burgos surrounded social norms. Key differences in social norms included the days in which people socialize and

where people socialize. In Kalamazoo, students go out and socialize Thursday-Saturday and tend to stay at home Sunday-Wednesday to get enough sleep for work and school. During the weekdays, students do not usually have enough time to spend time with friends because they need to do homework or work. About 40% of full-time students work while in school and over 70% of part time students work while taking college courses (U.S. Department of Education). The minimum number of hours these students work is 10 hours per week, and their main focuses are school and work, so there is little time to even go outside or spend time with friends or family. This is different from Spain because students spend time with their friends every day. During this study abroad program, students had between 30-60 minutes of homework each day, a 50% decrease from 2 hours a day as their USA average. During the weekends, students commonly went out on Thursdays and Saturdays to the bar and would be past midnight each time and would take Friday to rest and recover.

In the USA, it is very common to host people at your home. Students have friends over to their dormitories or apartments and often spend time watching movies or television shows, while over the weekends, students who are 21+ go out to the bar 2-3 times a month. While in Spain, people rarely have others at their homes because in general, people socialize at bars or cafes instead.

Overall, on average students have less free time in the USA than while participating in a study abroad program. Students did not work while in Spain because they did not have a working visa and did not have additional responsibilities and requirements to participate in outside of class. This led to more socializing and spending time with friends to make meaningful experiences.

VII. Impact

While studying Spanish at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, students were impacted psychologically because life is stressful as there are several daily responsibilities that students must attend to. With small amounts of free time, around 80% of students report feeling overwhelmed, with higher-than-average amounts of stress (Malvern Behavioral Health).

While studying abroad in Burgos, Spain students were impacted both psychologically and physically. Studying abroad in a foreign country, that does not speak their native language and is different culturally at first can take a strain on someone's mental health. In the article "*10 Benefits to Studying Abroad: Study Abroad Guide*," by International Student, they state that, "being in a new place by yourself can be overwhelming at times, and it tests your ability to adapt to diverse situations while being able to problem solve" (International Student), which students found to be true. During this time, students went through 7 phases to adapt to their study abroad program (Pancheva).

1. Culture Shock: Adjusting to living in a new place was very difficult and at the beginning, students felt alone and missed their home and family, so at first, they were just trying to get through each day while experiencing a completely different life, culture, and language.
2. Overwhelming Enthusiasm: After a couple of weeks, students started to feel more comfortable and allowed themselves to mentally take everything in about the Spanish language and culture. They felt excited to be in Burgos and knew that they had many opportunities to experience Spain and Europe.

3. Non-stop Student Parties: Students felt comfortable in their homes and their new schedules and went to the bars together every night. Students would drink until the morning with other WMU students and other ERASMUS international students.
4. Motivation and Inspiration: Students started to see a different way of life, started to build connections, and felt motivated to make the most out of their time abroad. Students started to travel throughout Europe, speak to locals and make the most of their time abroad.
5. Fear and Panic: Students overestimated their travel abilities and got into a couple sticky travel situations, including having no place to stay and no way to get home while in foreign countries. Students felt scared, overwhelmed, and just wanted to get back to a place they knew, Burgos.
6. Homesickness: Students started to feel the strain of being away from their friends and family in the USA. They started to be in contact with people in the USA more frequently and for longer hours with the hopes that it would cure their homesickness.
7. Adaptation: Students felt comfortable in their homes, knew the city of Burgos, were acclimated to using Spanish daily and had built connections with locals. Students did not feel out of place and instead felt like Burgos was their home.

Students go through the seven stages of adaption while in Burgos, but then have to face reverse culture shock when coming back to the USA. They missed Burgos a lot at first because being abroad changed students' lives. They started to build this new mentality toward life that they should experience life and not just go through the motions, so they took full advantage of their time in Burgos and explored all it had to offer. They have been exposed to different cultures

and have challenged their worldviews, which is a valuable skill they gained while being abroad (CIEE 1).

VIII. Struggles

Completing higher education studies is a task that can provoke struggles in students. Whether a student is taking classes on their home campus, or abroad, learning to balance different aspects of life can prove to be challenging, and learning to navigate these challenges is something that students must do throughout the entirety of their studies. To better examine this point, I will be discussing struggles and how to overcome them while studying in both Kalamazoo and Burgos.

VIII.1 Struggles in Kalamazoo, Michigan

While studying in Kalamazoo before going to Burgos, I struggled with a heavy course load, worked part-time, and struggled to find a balance between school, work and my times with friends and family. I experienced a lot of burnout due to constantly working on school and could not relax because of looming responsibility of students' organizations as well. During this time, I did not take the time to develop or nurture hobbies that are fun, something that could have provided me with an outlet to decompress.

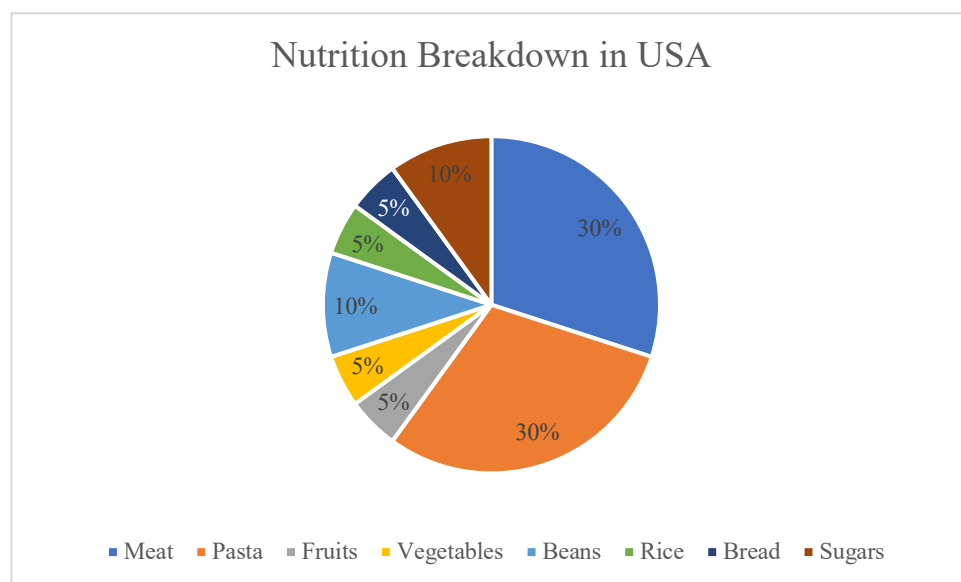
VIII.2 Struggles in Burgos, Spain

The struggles I faced in Spain were very different, but more plentiful and felt more intense than those in Kalamazoo. Struggling with a language barrier was difficult and at times, I felt dumb because I could not articulate myself and at times did not know the proper vocabulary or grammar for a certain sentence which led me to feel like I lost a part of my personality while speaking Spanish. When first meeting my host family, it took a longer time for my host family to get to know me and see my personality because I didn't know how to talk to them, make jokes or understand jokes or idioms.

At the same time, the differences in cultures were something to get used to as well. When it came to socializing, how the Spanish approach spending time with others is something we had to adjust to because the Spanish do not often have people in their homes because they meet people at a café or bar to spend time together. So, in Spain, to socialize with friends, we went somewhere to sit down and chat, which was very different from hanging out in our own homes and ordering takeout.

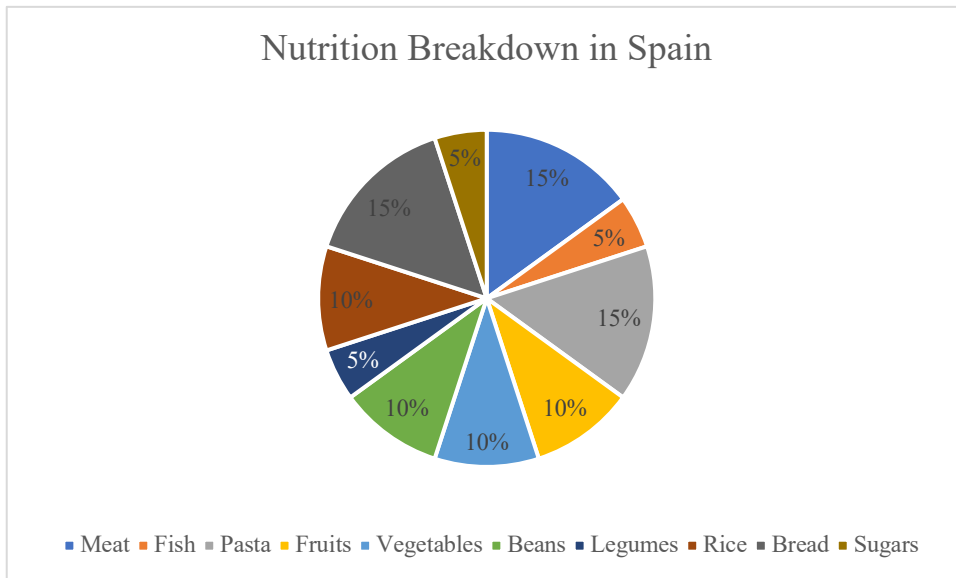
In the USA, students are able to eat food as they please, but this can also lead to students having less variety in the types of foods that they eat. Pasta and meat account for 60% of the USA diet, showing that there are not as balanced of meals than in Spain.

Chart VIII.2.1: Nutrition Breakdown in USA



One of my biggest struggles when in Spain was the differences in food. Spanish cuisine contains seafood, legumes, and cured meats, something that I had not experienced a lot prior to my time studying abroad due to being a picky eater.

Chart VIII.2.2: Nutrition Breakdown in Spain



In Spain, people eat a larger variety of foods, resulting in more balanced meals. It is astonishing to see how much more balanced the Spanish diet is than a typical USA diet. These differences in types of foods were a shock to me, but to avoid mentally blocking myself from eating a food, I did not ask what was in the food. One of the first meals in Spain was Spanish empanadas, after enjoying the dish, I asked what was in them and was surprised that tuna was one of the main ingredients because in the past, I had never had it. Other examples of new foods I ate while in Spain include morcilla, a blood sausage, tortilla de patatas, a mix of potato and egg, and fish like cod. I came to realize that trying foods without knowing what they were allowed me to eat foods I would have never eaten prior to studying in Burgos.

VIII.3 Overcoming Struggles in Kalamazoo and Burgos

To overcome struggles while in Kalamazoo, using my support system of friends, family and pets allowed me to decompress and take time away from school.

In Spain, overcoming struggles proved to be much harder because I was unable to slip back into an environment with people I had known my whole life. Language, culture, and cuisine differences are not simple challenges to overcome, so there was no single automatic way out of a struggle relating to those three categories because they were grounded in how different people grow up. While in Burgos, a large part of overcoming those struggles was allowing time to pass. As time passed, I started to know who I was living with and know the city of Burgos much more to the point that leaving Burgos and my host family was so sad. Over time I was confident enough to ask my host family questions and use the language more because of their support. During these times, students leaned on one another because we understood each other's struggles. We did get homesick at times, but via Whatsapp, were able to facetime and friends and family and I specifically did this about 2 hours a day to speak with my friends and family in English.

During these times I should have taken advantage of the resources available to me because they could have provided me support during my times of struggle. While abroad in Spain, I could have let my professors or program director know about my struggles, but chose not to, even though they would have been great people to make up a support system.

Although I faced struggles in both Kalamazoo and Burgos, overcoming them is the most important thing I did. I felt courageous and proud each time I learned something new about the Spanish culture, tried a new food and spoke to someone in Spanish and that is a feeling that got me through hard times because there is nothing better than knowing you can operate in a new

city with a different language. I learned from my struggles and have become a more self-aware and well-rounded person because of them.

IX. Advice to Future Study Abroad Students

In life, there are always struggles, and learning Spanish is no exception. From those struggles, I learned and there are multiple things that I would change if I were to complete my collegiate Spanish studies again. Although my time at WMU and Burgos were well spent, there are ways that I could have better taken advantage of this time.

IX.I Three Changes I would Make:

1. Participate in Spanish classes taken at WMU.
2. Write in a journal.
3. Talk with locals in Burgos from the first day of being there.

Knowing what I do now, I would have tried to participate in my WMU Spanish classes more often. I had doubts that if I answered a question in class, it would be wrong, but it would have been better to be wrong and have tried than to have not tried at all.

If I could give any advice to other Spanish students, it would be to take your studies abroad if possible. It can seem really scary to do so, but I am so proud that I took the leap of faith to move to Spain for over three months. I would for sure recommend going to Burgos, Spain to other students because my language acquisition grew exponentially while I was there.

Initially, studying abroad can seem expensive, the Burgos Fall 2022 program cost \$7,910 (Broncos Abroad), but the Spanish Department understands how impactful an experience abroad can be, so there are many scholarship opportunities to bring down the costs of the program. On average, students got \$1,500 in scholarships to put towards their study abroad tuition, bringing the cost down to \$6,410 which included housing. In comparison, a semester at Western Michigan

University would have cost \$9,142, almost three thousand dollars more expensive upfront. When considering that that number is only for tuition and does not include living expenses, one can add about \$2,500 for housing and groceries, bringing up the total semester amount to \$11,642. When combining tuition with living expenses, going to Burgos is \$5,232 less expensive than taking a semester of courses at Western Michigan University.

Something I wish I would have done is keep a daily written journal while in Burgos, Spain. For the sake of my thesis, it would have been nice to have more concrete data to look back on, but also for me personally being able to look back and read about my time while abroad. When first arriving to Spain, I was extremely stressed, so I did write in a journal, but this only lasted for about a week and should have been something I did all along. Another piece of advice is to force yourself to speak to locals in Burgos as soon as you get there. As stated in the article, *“Learning Spanish Through Immersion? 7 Words of Wisdom from a Seasoned Traveler,”* by Tamara Pearson, “it’s better to talk and make mistakes than not talk,” which are words of advice I wish I would have told myself sooner. I was very timid to talk to people because I doubted my Spanish abilities, but once I broke out of my shell, I started to make connections with locals that I wish I would have had the courage to nurture earlier.

If studying abroad is not a feasible option, take Spanish classes that are interactive. SPAN 4400, Service Learning is a course at WMU that works with local Kalamazoo business that need Spanish speakers. This is a great way to get out of the classroom and continue to use Spanish.

If someone does decide that studying in Burgos, Spain is a good fit for their Spanish education then there are a few important things that will positively impact the experience abroad.

1. Apply for a student bus card.
2. Connect with students in the program.
3. Speak Spanish!

Immediately find out how to apply for a student bus card and do so. You can get a regular bus card in the meantime while your application gets processed, but this is another way to keep costs down while studying abroad.

Get to know the other students in the program because they are great people to lean on while everyone is adjusting to living in Burgos. Not only can other students be a great support system, but they can also become great friends! The Fall 2022 cohort traveled to many places together because it is much more fun to do with your friends than by yourself!

Most importantly, get out of your comfort zone and speak in Spanish to everyone including professors, host families, friends, and any locals. The second I started to believe in myself and began speaking more to my host family, I was able to push myself and speak to local people as well. Being able to communicate with the local barista or shop owner was a highlight of my experience and showed me that I could operate in Burgos as if I were a local. But through all the ups and downs of study abroad and studying Spanish, remember, it is okay to make mistakes because it is all about learning. It is much better to make mistakes while trying to naturally speak than to not speak at all due to the fear of making mistakes or being misunderstood.

X. Conclusions

X.1 Spanish Education

Each way of learning Spanish in the USA or in Spain through a study abroad program has its strengths and weaknesses and could learn from one another to work towards the middle and become a more well-rounded Spanish education. In particular, the Spanish education at Western Michigan University could benefit from having a more relaxed schedule that promotes discussion and time to focus on topics that prove to be more difficult for the class, where the Spanish education at La Universidad de Burgos could benefit from having a more concrete system of communication regarding class topics and assignments via e-mail.

A second important difference in the education was education's the manner of delivery. While studying in Kalamazoo, learning is done via lectures, while in Spain, introductions to topics were often done via lectures, but to supplement learning, students went on over 50 hours of field trips to visit locations and interact with the culture and history ourselves. One of the benefits of being in Spain is that students got the equivalent of one extra credit hour of class through their field trips alone because there is possibility to view and interact with history of the language and culture, which is not an option at Western Michigan University due to the differences in locations.

Although obvious, it is important to note that my Spanish education took place in two different locations, so I was able to reflect on my life and the way I live in the USA in comparison to how I was living in Spain. My life and cultural experiences in Kalamazoo are very different from those in Burgos. Due to these differences in life and culture, I was positively impacted psychologically and physically. I feel that "once you've lived abroad, you can handle anything" (Linda 1) is my new mentality towards life. I discovered just how capable I was of

doing anything I set my mind to while being abroad. I am a changed person because of this experience and feel that I have acquired “a deeper understanding of how the world works” (CIEE 1) because of my time spent in Burgos, Spain. From a different study by a Lee Honors College student that surveyed students who participated in the faculty led Spanish study abroad program in Santander, Spain students said that they, “100% would like to return to Spain in the future” (Crouch 12) and that “one hundred percent of participants marked that they were studying abroad to improve their Spanish and grow in global cultural understanding” (Crouch 19). Although I did not participate in the Santander program, I would agree with the consensus that not only will I return to Spain in the future, but I know that studying abroad brought me a better cultural understanding.

X.2 Learning Outcomes

Completing my thesis in both Kalamazoo and Burgos led to me improving my Spanish speaking abilities, being more culturally knowledgeable and build a more diverse mindset. The goal of studying Spanish in both Kalamazoo and Burgos was to improve my language competencies.

Studying in Burgos led to an exponential growth in my Spanish speaking abilities. Due to being in a country that spoke Spanish every day, I began to process what people were saying to me more easily and it even got to the point where I was no longer translating from Spanish to English and then back to Spanish, I was just hearing Spanish and knew what it meant. I was able to improve my language skills quickly because, “we absorb vocabulary, grammar, intonations and slang much better when they become part of our life experiences” (Pearson 1), meaning that I was not just learning new things, but I was living that life as well. I am proud of myself for that

because due to my increased language competencies, I was successfully living my daily life in my second language, Spanish.

On top of language competencies, I have also become more knowledgeable about different cultures, which help aid me in developing a more diverse mindset. While studying in both Kalamazoo and Burgos, I was able to see different ways that people lived, what their values were and what that looks like in their daily life. What Spaniards eat and how they go about their day is more relaxed than that in Kalamazoo and just because it is different, does not mean that it is wrong. Getting to be in Burgos, other cities in Spain and travel to other countries in Europe, I was able to see how cultures were completely different even from city to city. I was exposed to so much culture and I overall just feel so much more knowledgeable. Due to differences in culture and ways of life, “you learn to communicate across different cultures, discover creative ways to solve problems and expose yourself to new ways of thinking” (Linda 1). I was able to see these different ways of thinking firsthand and have integrated them into my life now so that I can look at a situation from a different perspective. I saw that Spaniards go with the flow more and let things happen as they come, so trying to plan out every move and every second of my day is something that I no longer do now that I am back in Kalamazoo. I now handle things as they come and know that challenges are not meant to break me, but to build me into a better person. I am no longer scared to travel, be put in new situations, and speak my second language because of my time that I spent in Burgos building a growth mindset.

Studying Spanish in any location has allowed me to learn so much about myself and my way of life, and that of other people. I love studying Spanish because it allows me to use a different part of my brain that I love to keep active and has provided me with a different perspective on how to go about my daily life and life in general.

Over time feel like I have learned so much about Spanish, Spain and most importantly, myself. I have discovered that I am passionate about travel and learning and know that in the future, I will continue to do what I am passionate about because that is what matters to me. I am a healthier and a more mentally strong individual because of the thesis I chose to complete. I know that I am an improved and more well-rounded version of myself through my experiences in both Kalamazoo and Burgos.

Since being back in the USA, I have tried integrating this mentality into my daily life, but it is harder because I have more responsibilities and less time while I am in Kalamazoo. But I have integrated more time into my schedule so that I am able to slow down and just live.

X.3 Noticing the Differences in My Capabilities

When I first arrived in Spain, I felt like everyone was speaking very quickly, but that is because I was not used to hearing Spanish that much at all times. As time passed, the pace and inflection that people spoke at seemed normal because my ears were used to hearing Spanish at that point. On top of that, since Spain consists of Spanish speakers, I was constantly having to go through my day in a second language, signage was in Spanish, menus were in Spanish and everyone spoke in Spanish, meaning that I had to articulate myself in Spanish in order for locals and everyone around me to be able to understand what I was saying.

Over the course of three months, I was able to begin operating in Spanish on a daily basis, where I was only using English to communicate with my friends and family in the USA for 2-3 hours a day. I learned vocabulary that was applicable to everyday life and lingo/slang that was used locally. I was able to read menus. This was important because I learned so much vocabulary regarding food. I can confidently say that my Spanish improved more over the course

of three and a half months in Burgos, Spain, than it did over three years in the USA, because I was completely immersed in the language, life, and culture of Spain while abroad, which is not something I had the opportunity to experience while in the USA.

In conclusion, I feel that studying abroad is the best way to learn a foreign language because it is an immersive experience that allows you to learn and participate in the daily life of a different culture and language. I have been exposed to a different way of learning that provided me with both information and experiences that appeal to how I learn best, via visuals and interaction which led to me learning and retaining more about the Spanish language and culture. Outside of the classroom, I was able to see how Spaniards put much more importance on socialization than most Americans, which greatly impacts life and culture. Being in a foreign country forces you to dive right into the daily life of another culture, which comes with its struggles, but also comes with great intrinsic reward once you start to adapt and adjust to those differences.

The connections we made while completing my Spanish studies both in Kalamazoo and Burgos are ones that we value greatly and have made the process of completing our collegiate Spanish studies fun, educational and well worth the time and effort. We came into college with a base level understanding of Spanish but are leaving college feeling like Spanish is an integral part of our life whether we are in Kalamazoo or Burgos, or anywhere in the world.

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