

# A volunteer culture?



**Britt Strihd Christensen**

Cand.ling.merc. – Tolk og Translatør, Engelsk

Adviser: James Menzies

January 2011

Copenhagen Business School

**Tegn med mellemrum inkl. 31 grafer: 143.175**

**Antal sider: 79**

## Table of content

Resume – En frivilligkultur? .....	4
Introduction .....	6
Methodology .....	8
Research approach .....	8
Empirical approach .....	10
The respondents .....	11
Empirical measures .....	11
Questionnaire for the volunteers .....	13
Questionnaire for the locals .....	16
Theory .....	19
Power distance .....	20
Individualism and collectivism .....	21
Masculinity and femininity .....	23
Uncertainty avoidance .....	24
The projects .....	26
Ecuador .....	26
Costa Rica .....	27
Analysis .....	29
Communication .....	33
Cultural differences .....	40
Cultural similarities .....	46
Intercultural communication .....	48
Discussion .....	51
Individualism .....	51
Power Distance .....	52
Uncertainty Avoidance .....	53
Masculinity .....	54
External factors .....	55
Conclusion .....	58
List of references .....	61
Literature: .....	61
Websites: .....	62
Appendix I - i-to-i .....	63
Appendix II -Ecuador .....	65
Appendix III - Costa Rica .....	68

Appendix IV - Information from i-to-i .....	71
Appendix V – Questionnaire volunteers .....	72
Appendix VI – Questionnaire locals Ecuador.....	73
Appendix VII – Questionnaire locals Costa Rica .....	74

### Resume – En frivilligkultur?

Dette speciale er inspireret af en oplevelse, jeg havde, da jeg arbejdede som frivillig gennem den britiske organisation i-to-i på to naturbevaringsprojekter i Costa Rica i 2007. På begge projekter arbejdede jeg sammen med frivillige fra hele verden samt de lokale, som var involveret i projekterne, og til min store overraskelse var kommunikationen imellem os alle rigtig god, og jeg observerede ekstremt få kultursammenstød mellem diverse nationaliteter. Jeg besluttede mig for at finde ud af, om de oplevelser, jeg havde haft i 2007, var en undtagelse eller normen, mere specifikt:

*Når frivillige fra forskellige lande arbejder sammen på et projekt, skaber de så en fælles kultur, der overgår deres nationale kulturer? Og hvilke eksterne faktorer spiller en rolle?*

For at finde svaret på disse to spørgsmål tog jeg af sted igen med i-to-i og arbejdede på to naturbevaringsprojekter, et i Costa Rica og et i Ecuador i efteråret 2009. Men denne gang tog jeg spørgeskemaer med til de frivillige og de lokale, som var involveret i projekterne for at høre deres mening. Spørgeskemaet til de frivillige var på engelsk, og spørgeskemaet til de lokale var på spansk for at mindske risikoen for misforståelser. Spørgsmålene i begge spørgeskemaer fokuserer på kommunikationen mellem de frivillige og lokale og imellem de frivillige, samt hvilke kulturforskelle de frivillige og lokale havde observeret samt oplevet. Derudover valgte jeg at bruge Geert Hofstedes teori om interkulturel kommunikation som et sammenligningsgrundlag for at se, hvor der i teorien burde have opstået kultursammenstød eller kommunikationsproblemer blandt de mange forskellige nationaliteter.

I alt svarede 20 frivillige fra ni forskellige lande inkl. mig selv på spørgeskemaet, og 13 lokale fra Costa Rica og Ecuador svarede på spørgeskemaet til de lokale, hvilket alt i alt gav mig et godt udgangspunkt. Størstedelen af de frivillige svarede, at de ville betegne deres kommunikation med de andre frivillige som fantastisk, og størstedelen af dem svarede også, at de ville betegne deres kommunikation med de lokale som god, men med nogle enkelte misforståelser, og den største udfordring var sprogbarrieren. Derudover svarede størstedelen af de lokale, at de ville betegne deres kommunikation med de frivillige som fantastisk, hvilket betyder, at generelt set følte alle, at kommunikationen havde været rigtig god. Mange af de kultursammenstød, der kunne eller burde have fundet sted ifølge Hofstedes teori, fandt ofte ikke sted eller blev ikke observeret af hverken de frivillige eller de lokale. Der var nogle enkelte tilfælde, men de var få og ikke så udbredt eller alvorlige, som de kunne have været ifølge teorien.

De eksterne faktorer, som jeg følte spillede en rolle, var isolation og i-to-i. To af de projekter, jeg arbejdede på, lå isoleret fra resten af omverdenen, hvilket gav os rigeligt med tid og mulighed for at

lære hinanden at kende, og samtidig gav det os fornemmelsen af at leve i vores egen lille verden. Derudover hjalp i-to-i også, i og med de gav os en masse information om det pågældende lands kultur og gav os værktøj til at håndtere de første kulturchok, vi kom ud for. Desuden gav de os detaljerede oplysninger om de projekter, vi skulle arbejde på, og lokalsamfundet, hvor projekterne lå. Alle disse oplysninger hjalp os med at komme over de første og værste kulturchok samt gav os modet til at være mere åbne over for nye oplevelser.

Alt dette tilsammen skabte muligheden for at vi kunne skabe vores egen lille verden og dermed en fælles kultur, en frivilligkultur.

## Introduction

Intercultural business communication is a subject that I have always found highly interesting. During my many travels and stays abroad, I have often found myself in similar situations as those described by two of the leading theorists within this field, namely Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars. However, I have also experienced one time where nothing happened as I had expected based on my own experiences abroad and those described by Hofstede and Trompenaars. This particular situation took place when I was working as a volunteer on two different projects in Costa Rica in 2007. We were several volunteers from all over the world working side by side with local Costa Ricans and for some reason the communication ran smoothly apart from the occasional language barrier despite the many different cultures that were giving and receiving the same information. So all the culture clashes I had expected to see at some point during my placement as a volunteer never took place.

As a translator and interpreter it is not only a necessity to master completely a foreign language, but also to be able to communicate across different cultures as well as interpret and reconcile cultural differences. It is, furthermore, important to have a good knowledge of the different theories within the field of intercultural business communication as you are constantly communicating between two different cultures, namely your own culture and that of those speaking your foreign language.

When the time came for choosing a subject area for my thesis, I knew I wanted to write about something within the field of intercultural communication but what exactly I was not sure of. I had many different ideas in my head; however, I then suddenly remembered what I had experienced in Costa Rica in 2007 and started thinking about that as an inspiration for my thesis. I was particularly curious to find out whether it was just pure luck that there had not been any culture clashes at those two projects and that the communication had run so smoothly or if it was something that took place at all the i-to-i projects in Latin America? In order to investigate this further, I decided to go abroad once again to work as a volunteer through i-to-i and to explore whether this phenomenon only took place at those two projects I worked on in 2007 or if it is the norm rather than the exception on i-to-i projects. I also decided to widen my scope and include South America as well and worked on a project in Ecuador for three weeks before going up to Central America, more particularly Costa Rica, where I worked on two different projects again spending two weeks on each project. I also wanted to find out if I was the only one who did not see or experience any culture clashes and if the other volunteers also felt that the communication between them as well as between them and the locals ran smoothly and whether the locals felt the same way. In order to

explore this angle, I brought with me two sets of questionnaires, one for the volunteers and one for the locals.

During my time working on the three projects, I started speculating that perhaps the reason for the absence of culture clashes and the smooth communication was a result of the fact that the volunteers working on the projects along with the locals created their own culture, a 'volunteer culture' that surpassed their national cultures thereby cancelling out the 'old' cultural differences. As such, the two main questions I will seek to answer in this thesis are:

*"When volunteers from different countries work together on a project, do they create a mutual culture that surpasses their national cultures? And what external factors play a role?"*

In order to answer these questions, I will apply the theories of intercultural communication as set out by Geert Hofstede and Jan Hofstede in "Cultures and Organizations – software of the mind". My reasoning for choosing Geert Hofstede over for instance Fons Trompenaars will be explained and discussed in the methodology section. I will use the theories of Hofstede to analyse the various cultures of both the volunteers and the locals to see where complications should arise according to the theories and to form a better understanding of the various cultural backgrounds. I will also analyse and discuss the results of the questionnaires of the volunteers and the locals respectively as well as try to see if there is a pattern in their answers due to nationality. I will furthermore look at what external factors play a role.

### Methodology

When working on a research project in the social sciences, it is important to bear in mind that unlike in the natural sciences, the results and findings of the research project often cannot be tested according to some mathematical model, but rather reveal some new trend or general tendencies in society. Nevertheless, the social and natural sciences do interrelate as many of the procedures and principles that take place in the natural sciences can also be applied in the social sciences, such as observation. Although the natural sciences are highly recognised as scientific method, the social sciences, in my opinion, have something much more valuable, namely communication. "The human world is that part of reality which talks. Human beings express themselves constantly in words, gestures, facial changes, and actions of all sorts; they communicate like mad." (Rickman:1990, p. 303). This enables the researcher to go beyond the surface of what can be observed and thereby take the research to another level.

As for the theory of science, I find that the hermeneutic approaches are the most suitable ones for research projects of this kind that deal with intercultural communication. In regards to this thesis, the hermeneutic approaches are by far the most suitable theory of science due to the subjectivity. "That is to say, in the hermeneutic sense of knowing, the researcher is immersed in, is an acknowledged part of, the scene of study whereas in positivistic-pragmatic knowing, the researcher is outside the situation, maintaining a constant objective stance" (McAuley: 1985, p. 294). When I was in the field observing the other volunteers' interaction with each other and the locals, I was being subjective, because I was one of the volunteers and thereby part of what I was studying.

It is a bit more complicated when it comes to my choice of method, because it is neither purely inductive nor purely deductive, but rather a combination of both. "In a scientific context, the inductive process creates new knowledge through the gathering of data and experience, and the deductive process allows the application of such systemised knowledge in the new areas." (Rasmussen et al: 2006, p. 50). As I am basing the majority part of this thesis on my empirical findings it resembles the inductive process, however, before even going to South and Central America, I had some assumptions on the area of volunteer work and intercultural communication that laid the foundation of my hypothesis, which resembles the deductive process. Thus, it more or less resembles a virtues circle as I am constantly going from one to the other, which is a relatively common practice within the hermeneutic approaches.

### Research approach

There are many well-known theorists within the field of intercultural communication, such as Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars, Edward T. Hall and Richard Gesteland to name a few, all of whom

are respected and regarded as experts within this field. This made it quite difficult to choose a main theorist, however, I chose Geert Hofstede as my main theorist for several reasons. Firstly, because he is the only one who had included all the cultures I encountered in his body of work. Secondly, because I was already familiar with his cultural dimensions before I went to Ecuador and Costa Rica, which meant that when I was observing the volunteers and locals interacting, I had the theoretical framework in the back of my mind and could always pull it out when needed, which often helped. Thirdly, I chose Hofstede because the research he did in order to identify his five cultural dimensions is one of the most extensive research projects to have been conducted within this field. His book from 2005 "Cultures and Organizations – Software of the Mind", which he co-wrote with his son Gert Jan Hofstede contains not only the results of his own research including in-depth description of the five dimensions he found as well as a table with the ranking of the seventy-four countries and/or regions represented, but it also includes a brief description of the findings of other cross-national studies that correlates to his findings within each of the five dimensions. I have used this book as my primary source in regard to the theoretical framework.

Although Hofstede is highly recognised within the field of intercultural communication, there has also been some critique of his work. One of the things he has been criticised on is that his research is outdated as it was conducted in the late 1960's and the early 1970's, however, as Hofstede himself points out: "The dimensions found are assumed to have centuries-old roots; only data which remained stable across two subsequent surveys were maintained; and they have since been validated against all kinds of external measurements; recent replications show no loss of validity." (Hofstede: 2002, p. 1356). Another point his research has been criticised on, is that his research was conducted within one company, namely IBM and its subsidiaries in 66 countries, and how can the employees of one company provide information on behalf of entire national cultures?

Hofstede's reply to this is:

What was measured were *differences between* national cultures. Any set of functionally equivalent samples from national populations can supply information about such differences. The IBM set consisted of unusually well matched samples for an unusually large number of countries. The extensive validation in the following chapters will show that the country scores obtained correlated highly with all kinds of other data, including results obtained from representative samples of entire national populations" (ibid.).

Although Hofstede's work is approx. 40 years-old, I find that it still holds true and as it is one, if not the most, extensive research projects that has been carried out in this field and it has also laid the foundations for other researchers' work.

To help me with conducting my own research, I turned to David De Vaus and the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of his book "Surveys in Social Research". I particularly used his approaches on analysing survey data as I found them to be very helpful and useful.

#### Empirical approach

"Observations require explanation but equally explanations need to be tested against the facts". (De Vaus, 2002: p 9, col. 1) In order to test whether my theory, I needed some facts to test my observations against and one way of doing this was to collect my own research data. As De Vaus correctly says, observations alone do not make sufficient research data and therefore I decided to make questionnaires for both the volunteers and the locals in order to collect 'facts' to test against my observations.

Although I worked on three projects in total, one in Ecuador and two in Costa Rica, I wanted to widen my scope a bit to include other projects in those two countries and i-to-i help me with this. During the in-country orientation, I arranged with the other volunteers who were going on other projects than me, that I would email the questionnaire to them after a couple of weeks to gather their thoughts and observations, so that I was not confined to just make do with the volunteers working on the same projects as me. Ideally I would have liked to extend my scope even further to include more projects and other Latin American countries; however, as I do not have the means or the resources to conduct such an extended research, I will use the qualitative methods rather than the quantitative. As De Vaus writes: "Qualitative methods are often regarded as providing rich data about real life people and situations and being more able to make sense of behaviour and to understand behaviour within its wider context." (ibid: P. 5, col. 2)

As such, my research data along with my conclusions are not representative of all i-to-i volunteers worldwide or in Latin America. However, I would dare to say that my findings are fairly representative of the i-to-i volunteers in Ecuador and Costa Rica as I am not only analysing research data from the three projects I worked on, but also research data from several other projects in those two countries. In total I would say that there is research data from approximately twelve projects, four in Ecuador and eight in Costa Rica. Nevertheless, it is not completely representative as I do not have enough respondents to establish any specific conclusions for all i-to-i projects in Ecuador and Costa Rica. Furthermore, it goes without saying that because I am conducting this research project within the social sciences, my findings are going to be something that reflects the tendencies within the volunteer community on some of i-to-i's projects in Latin

America. Therefore, I would say that my research is representative of the majority of i-to-i's projects in Ecuador and Costa Rica and it reflects the general tendencies within the volunteer community.

#### The respondents

The volunteers who completed the questionnaire were all somebody I met at either the in-country orientation or at the projects. The volunteers I worked with at the projects filled out the questionnaire there whereas the volunteers I met at the in-country orientation filled it out electronically and sent it to me per email. Overall the respondents are between the ages of 19 and 37 years and represent nine different nationalities, which are, US, Swiss (the German-speaking part), Swedish, German, Costa Rican, British, Japanese/Australian, Canadian, Danish and Australian. Some of the volunteers from Great Britain specified their nationality as being either English, Scottish or Welsh and it was particularly those from either Scotland or Wales who did so and yet again others did write British. However, as Hofstede has not distinguished between English, Welsh or Scottish, but simply work with British, so have I, as this is the easiest in regards to the analysis.

In total 20 volunteers including myself completed the questionnaire whereof 8 were male and the remaining 12 female. Out of the 19 respondents excluding myself, 14 worked on different projects in Costa Rica and 5 worked on projects in Ecuador. I came into contact with more volunteers in Costa Rica than Ecuador for several reasons. The main reasons are that not only did I work on two different projects in Costa Rica, but the conservation project I worked on near the town of Montezuma provided me with many opportunities to meet volunteers from other projects taking place in the local area, among others a teaching project in Montezuma. Another reason is that one of the conservation projects I worked on in Costa Rica was also a sea turtle conservation project, which attracts more volunteers and also needs more volunteers than regular projects, which I will explain in the section 'the projects'. This means that we were five times more volunteers on the sea turtle conservation project than on the two other conservation project I worked on in Costa Rica and Ecuador.

#### Empirical measures

All the questions in the two questionnaires are partly based on Hofstede's theory and partly on my thoughts on what would be interesting and relevant to find out. There are three variables in the beginning of both questionnaires, namely nationality, age and sex meaning that the questionnaires are anonymous. As for the questions in the questionnaire to the volunteers, I decided to use a

mixture of open and closed questions, because I find that both types have their advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of using closed questions are that it gives me the opportunity to retrieve data that can be used statistically and it limits the amount of misunderstandings of the questions, which could be a problem as not all of the volunteers have English as their first language. However, the disadvantages of using closed questions are that the volunteers only have four choices to choose from and have to choose one even if they do not agree with it fully and they are furthermore not able to express their own opinion and feelings on the matter. On the contrary, using open questions gives the volunteers the opportunity of expressing their precise thoughts on the subject which in turn gives a greater variety in the answers. However, it is quite difficult to retrieve data that can be used statistically from open questions. By using a mixture of open and closed questions, there are five closed and eight open questions in the questionnaire to the volunteers, I can retrieve data that can be used statistically as well as the volunteers' own opinion and feelings on the matter. Luckily, none of the volunteers misunderstood any of the open questions thereby leaving me with 20 filled out questionnaires that are of a satisfactory standard.

I used a similar design for my questionnaire for the locals. There are three variables nationality, age and sex, however, one could easily argue that one is unnecessary, namely nationality, as it is written on top of the questionnaire for both the Ecuadorians and the Costa Ricans. Nevertheless, I decided to keep it on, in case I ran out of questionnaires for one nationality and could then replace it with another questionnaire, but still keep track of the nationalities. There are 12 questions in total whereof 4 are closed and the remaining 8 are open. I wrote the questionnaire for the locals in Danish and had a friend from CBS who studies the same profile as me i.e. cand.ling.merc – interpretation and translation, but he is taking it in Spanish, so I am confident that he took any cultural aspect in to consideration when translating the questionnaire. I decided to make the questionnaire for the locals in Spanish for several reasons. Firstly, not everybody speaks English and I wanted to keep the amount of misunderstandings to a minimum and decided that Spanish would be the way to do that, however, I was also aware that not all of the locals have Spanish as their first language, but they still have a better understanding of Spanish than English. Secondly, many Latin Americans prefer to be approached in Spanish and are often offended when approached in English, because we are in their country and there they speak Spanish. I thought it would be a bad idea to offend them with a questionnaire in English while asking for their help. When looking at the filled out questionnaires, I am glad that I decided to make them in Spanish and that I had a professional translator translate them, because none of the questions have been misunderstood, which I was a bit worried about especially concerning the amount of open

questions. In total I have 13 filled out questionnaires that I can use, 3 from the locals in Ecuador and 10 from the locals in Costa Rica.

#### Questionnaire for the volunteers

In the first question in the questionnaire for the volunteers, I wanted to find out how the respondents would define culture, but I also wanted a response that I could use statistically and therefore made it a multiple-choice question, i.e. a closed question. The four different response alternatives are all possible definitions of culture meaning that there is no right or wrong answer.

##### 1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values
- Culture refers to the ways of life of a given nation/region
- Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

The second and third questions are quite similar in their wording and their response alternatives as the both refer to the communication process with the other volunteers (2.) and the locals (3.). Again I wanted responses that I could use statistically, so I chose to use closed questions with four response alternatives, which in both cases range from very positive to very negative and two in-between.

##### 2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- It has been good although there have been some misunderstandings
- Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

##### 3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do.

Question 4, however, is an open question and a very one indeed, because I wanted the volunteers' own opinion on this matter and as I know how they perceive the concept of culture, I could allow this question to be this open without making any reference to whether they should have noticed differences at all, between whom and what differences.

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

Question 5 is a follow-up question to question 4 in order to specify between whom the respondents have noticed cultural differences whether it be between other volunteers or volunteers and locals.

5. And between who have you noticed cultural differences?

As for question 6, it revolves around the concept 'stereotypes' without actually using that word, because it has mainly negative connotation attached to it. We all use stereotypes when we encounter somebody from another country, region or even city both good and bad. A typical example of this in Denmark is the stereotypes people from Copenhagen have about the people from Jutland and vice versa. However, sometimes it can be a good thing to have stereotypes in mind, when meeting new people, because true or false, they give you a starting point. I wanted to see if the volunteers had any particular stereotypes in mind, hence question 6, and what they think gives people's nationality away, hence follow-up question 7.

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

Often when we encounter a new culture there are aspects of it that frustrates us and the aspects that frustrate us are often those we do not understand, which leads me to question 8. I wanted to see what parts of the Latin American culture that frustrated the respondents, if any, and if there was a connection with their cultural background.

8. What aspect of the Latin American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

Question 9, on the other hand, revolves around finding common ground. I wanted to see on what points and aspects the volunteers would find common ground with each other and again if there was a connection with their cultural background.

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

Many of the volunteers who did not take a Spanish language course before starting on the projects or had not taken Spanish lessons at home in school or elsewhere often found it quite difficult to communicate with the locals, because they were limited in their verbal communication, which meant that they often had to find another way of communicating. Nevertheless, I still wanted to find out what they thought was the most challenging aspect of trying to communicate with locals and especially those who did speak some Spanish, hence question 10.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

I did make a follow-up question to question 10, because I wanted to know if anything else besides the language barrier had created difficulties in communicating with the locals, hence question 11.

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

The last two questions, number 12 and 13, are based on something I thought would be interesting to find out and that is whether the respondents have heard of intercultural communication before and what they think it refers to. Both questions are closed questions with three choice alternatives each, which give me the option of using the responses statistically. Again there are no right or wrong answers, it is only a matter of personal experience regarding question 12 and the choice alternatives in question 13 are all possible definitions of intercultural communication, although many would not agree with the last response alternative.

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- Communication across cultural boundaries
- How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- A specific way of communicating between different cultures.

#### Questionnaire for the locals

The questions in the questionnaire for the locals are, as I mentioned earlier, a mixture of open and closed questions and many of them are quite similar to those for the volunteers. For instance, the four closed questions for the locals are almost identical with the closed questions for the volunteers. I decided to make the questions in two questionnaires similar and in some cases identical for several reasons. Firstly, I wanted responses from the volunteers and the locals that I could compare with each other to determine what role culture played as well as to obtain responses that I could use statistically. Secondly, I wanted the locals' opinion on some of the same matters as the volunteers to get a better and fuller picture of the matter. However, there are some questions that are quite different from those I asked the volunteers and vice versa. As the questions in the questionnaire for the locals are in Spanish, I have translated them into English from the Danish original for the purpose of the following section.

Question 1 is completely identical with question 1 in the questionnaire for the volunteers including the response alternatives. The reason for this is that I wanted to see if there was a connection between nationality and what definition of culture that the respondents chose as well as to give me an idea of how they regard culture. This means that because it is a closed question I can use the responses statistically, but I can also make a direct comparison of the volunteers' and the locals' responses on this matter and use that statistically.

#### 1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values
- Culture refers to the ways of life of a given nation/region
- Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

The same goes for question 2, which is more or less identical with questions 2 and 3 in the questionnaire for the volunteers except for one word in each case.

#### 2. How would you characterise your communication with the volunteers?

- It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- It has been good although there have been some misunderstandings
- Not so good, I cannot always understand what they mean
- Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

Question 3 is an open question and quite similar to question 4 in the questionnaire for the volunteers although it is not as open as that one. I wanted the locals' opinion on the cultural differences they themselves had experienced with the volunteers and also to see if they had noticed if there were any.

3. What are the most significant cultural differences you have experienced with the volunteers so far?

Question 4 is more or less a follow-up question to question 3 as it also revolves around cultural differences. However, with this question I wanted to find out if the locals view all the international volunteers as one united group with one label, such as 'Europeans' or 'volunteers'. I also wanted to find out if they can tell a difference in behaviour between the volunteers from different countries.

4. Have you observed any cultural differences between the volunteers or do you see them as one united group?

With question 5 I wanted to find out if the locals could differentiate between the different nationalities based on the volunteers' behaviour. This question relates somewhat to stereotypes as I am not expecting all the locals to have a deep insight in to all the different cultures represented by the volunteers and therefore I expect that their observations to be relatively superficial.

Nevertheless, I wanted their opinion on this matter and I particularly wanted to find out if they found volunteers from specific countries to be more open-minded, rude, naïve etc. than other nationalities or if all of that had more to do with the person than his or her nationality.

5. In your opinion, is there a connection between how the volunteers behave and where they come from?

Question 6 also partly revolves around stereotypes, but it is a bit more negative aspect of stereotypes. I wanted to find out if the locals found that volunteers from one or two specific countries behaved more problematic than other volunteers in general or if it again was more a question of personality rather than nationality.

6. Have you experienced more problems with volunteers from one particular country or is it a mixture of countries?

Question 7 is a follow-up question to question 6, in case the response to that question was affirmative.

7. If so, which country?

Question 8 revolves around stereotypes and first impressions and is quite similar to question 6 in the questionnaire for the volunteers. I wanted to find out if the locals have the same stereotypes in mind as the volunteers when they meet somebody from a different country for the first time.

8. When you meet the volunteers for the first time, can you usually tell which country they come from or do they all seem the same to you?

Question 9 is very similar to question 8 in the questionnaire for the volunteers, because I wanted to find out if there were aspects of the volunteers' cultures that had been frustrating for the locals, if any.

9. What aspect of the volunteers' cultures has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

Question 10 is another question that is almost identical with a question in the questionnaire for the volunteers and revolves around communication and the occasional language barrier. I wanted the locals' opinion on what had made communicating with the volunteers challenging besides the occasional language barrier.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the volunteers other than the language barrier?

The last two questions, 11 and 12, are completely identical with the last two questions in the questionnaire for the volunteers. I wanted to find out if the locals have ever heard of intercultural communication and what they think it refers to, just like with the volunteers. As the questions are closed, I can use the responses statistically and I can also make a direct comparison with the responses from the volunteers on the same matter as they are completely identical.

11. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- Yes

- No
- Maybe

12. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- Communication across cultural boundaries
- How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- A specific way of communicating between different cultures.

### Theory

There are several definitions of the concept of culture and none are more right or wrong than the other, nevertheless, there is always one that you agree with more than the others. Although Geert Hofstede is my main theorist, I have decided to use another theorist when it comes to defining the concept of culture. I find that Fons Trompenaars' definition of the concept of culture is more tangible than that of Hofstede and have therefore decided to use Trompenaars' definition in this thesis.

According to Trompenaars' theory culture consists of three layers: the outer, the middle and the core. Both the outer and middle layers are explicit whereas the core is implicit (Trompenaars: 2003, pp. 21-23). The outer layer consists of what we see when we first arrive at a new country, i.e. artefacts, architecture, fashion, food, etc. The middle layer consists of something we cannot see but only experience when we arrive in a foreign country, namely their norms and values. Norms refer to what a society or group considers to be right or wrong and values refer to what a society or group consider to be good or bad. Norms, for instance, can be explicit in the shape of laws and regulations, whereas values are inward reflections in the sense that it gives people an idea of what the desired behaviour is (Trompenaars: 2003, p. 22). The core consists of our most basic assumptions about life and our surroundings. These basic assumptions have secured our survival for centuries in our respective natural environment, which have challenged the survival of different people in different ways such as earthquakes, hurricanes, droughts, avalanches, etc. all depending on geographic location. When these basic assumptions are questioned by outsiders, it usually leads to confusion or irritation, because they are so deeply embedded in who we are that they have become a matter of course and are more or less considered a fact of life.

As mentioned earlier, Hofstede operates with five dimensions: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long-and short-term-orientation. However, I will only use the first four dimensions as the fifth dimension does not include the cultures of Costa Rica and Ecuador among others. I do believe that how we manage time is an important aspect of our culture, however, as I cannot place some of the cultures that are central to this thesis in a graph and I do not care to guess where they should be, because that would corrupt my data, I have decided to leave that aspect out of the equation. In the following I will give a brief description of the four dimensions: power distance, individualism, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance as well as show in a graph in each dimension where the different cultures that I encountered are located in regards to each other. In all four dimensions, the two extreme sides of the dimension are described and reality is somewhere in between these two extremes.

#### Power distance

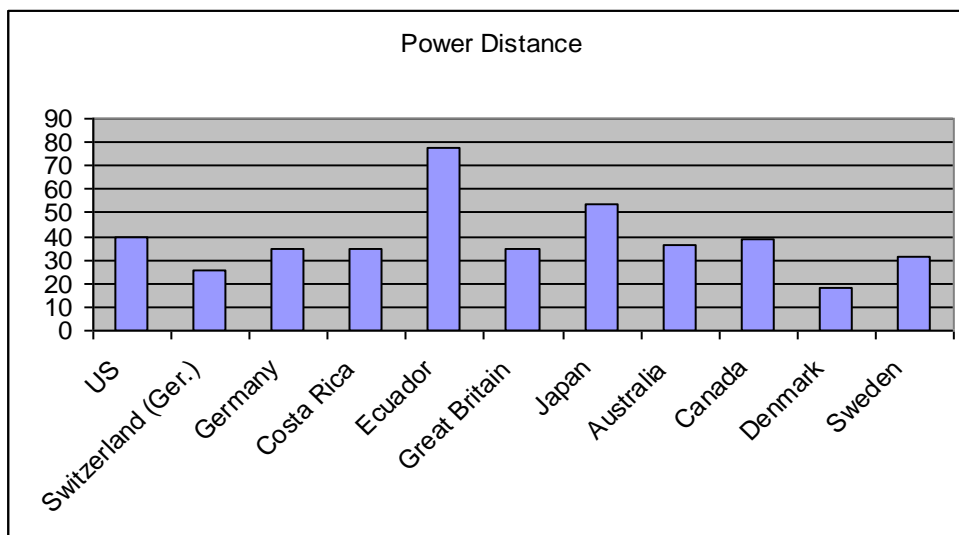
This dimension revolves around how we deal with inequality in society, more accurately how the less powerful members of society "expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede: 2005, p.46). Inequality in society also includes the relationships between family members as well as the relationships between student & teacher, boss & subordinates and citizen & state. In societies with large power distance inequality in society is expected and desired and this is something everybody learns at a young age. The children are raised to respect the older members of the family, especially the parents and grandparents, and society and are furthermore expected to be obedient of not only the parents, grandparents and older siblings, but also of the teachers (Hofstede: 2005, p. 53).

The relationship with family is very strong and so is the dependence on family, which goes both ways. The children depend on their parents for advice and help to make important decisions and in return the children are expected to help their parents both financially and practically when and if needed later on in life. This means that family play an important, if not key role in every person's life and many of the characteristics of the 'family' relationship is copied into other relationships including those at the workplace.

In countries with large power distance the subordinates expect to be told what task to do and how to do it by their boss and therefore a good boss in their opinion is a benevolent autocrat or 'good father' (Hofstede: 2005, p. 55). Consequently, the relationship between superior and subordinates is of a more emotional character than in countries with low power distance.

In countries with low power distance equality and independence are the key words. From an early age children are treated as equals by the parents are encouraged to find their own way in life and be independent. At school the teachers also treat them as equals and learning is a two-way communication process, where the student is encourage to speak his/her mind even if it contradicts what the teacher has said. At the workplace the relationship between superior and subordinates is pragmatic and a good boss is a resourceful democrat, who the subordinates can consult with on various work tasks (Hofstede: 2005, p. 56). Moreover, the subordinates also expect that the superior consults with them on everything that has an influence on their work situation before any decisions are made.

The different nationalities that I encountered can be seen in the diagram below, where their scores from the power distance index (ibid. pp. 43-44) are visible.



#### Individualism and collectivism

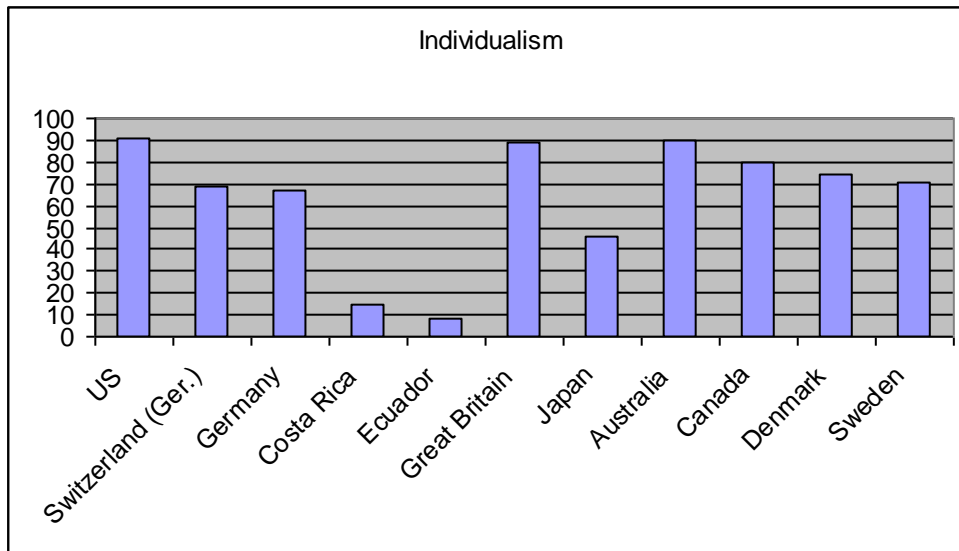
This dimension revolves around how we relate to ourselves and other members of society, more specifically whether we identify ourselves as part of 'we' or if we identify ourselves as 'I'. The societies in which people identify themselves as being part of a group, i.e. 'we', are collectivist societies. In these societies, which constitute the majority of the world, the interests of the group prevail over those of the individual (Hofstede: 2005, p. 74). In contrast to this, the interests of the individual prevail over those of the group in individualist societies.

In collectivist societies, family consists not only of the immediate family, i.e. parents, children and grandparents, but also aunts, uncles cousins, close friends of the family etc., which is known as the

extended family. The extended family often constitutes the 'we' that individuals from collectivist societies identify themselves as being part of, because not only is the family a source of information and opinions that the individual take on as his/her own, it is also a source of friendship and status in society. This means that children are brought up with turning to the family for advice on different matters as well as information on what is going on in the world. Furthermore, friendships and other relationships have their roots in the family in one way or the other to ensure that the relationships meet the standards of the family as well as the status that the family holds in society.

In collectivist societies status is something that is ascribed to you on the basis of different facts, such as family, job, friends and even age (the older you are, the higher your status is). Consequently, it is important that the people you surround yourself with are of similar status and someone you can trust not to bring shame on to you. Because in collectivist societies, shame or losing face is not something that only affect the person in question, but also that person's entire network will be affected. Losing face occurs when you or someone close to you does something unacceptable in the eyes of society, which can be anything from breaking the rules to failing to perform an expected task (ibid, p. 89). Because the family ties are so strong and sharing opinions with one's family is common practice, the communication does not need to be explicit and is therefore much more context based than in individualist societies, where speaking explicitly is essential as well as to speak one's mind and the truth regardless of the consequences.

In individualist societies, family consists of the immediate family, i.e. parents, children and grandparents, which is also known as the nuclear family (ibid, p. 75). Here the children are brought up to be independent and make up their own mind on different matters rather than taking on the opinions of the family. There is not as much reliance on the family in terms of information about the outside world as well as for friendships and other relationships, which are usually formed independently and therefore require more caring and nursing as it is voluntarily formed without family strings attached. In these societies, people turn to the media for information on what is going on in the world and status is something you achieve through your actions and is therefore independent of who your family and friends are, which means that in order to have a high status in society you need to have accomplished something important or relevant to society. Individualist societies are known to have guilt cultures when it comes to acting against the norms and values of that given society (ibid, p. 89). This means that the perpetrator often feels guilty for what (s)he has done, but only the person in question is affected by his/her own actions and not that person's entire network.



Source: (ibid. pp.78-79)

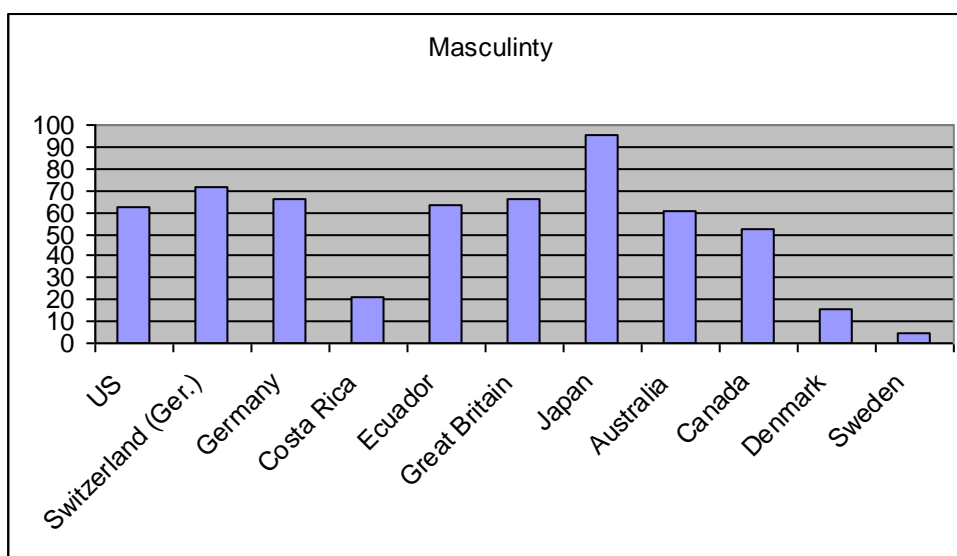
#### Masculinity and femininity

In masculine societies, the gender roles are clearly distinct between men and women. Men are supposed to be assertive, tough and ambitious, which in many Latin American cultures is also known as 'machismo', whereas women are expected to be tender and take care of relationship. This distribution of expected behaviour is apparent in the family where the father is expected to deal with facts and the mother is supposed to deal with feelings.

In masculine societies, students often base their career choice on perceived career opportunities and value earning more money higher than having more leisure time, which corresponds with their work ethos 'live in order to work' (ibid, p. 144). When a conflict or problem arises at the workplace, it is perceived as a win-lose situation where the strongest one wins. This notion that the strongest one wins or is successful prevails in most aspects of masculine societies as well as in attitudes towards different aspects of society, such as poverty.

In feminine societies, the key words are equality, relationships and quality of life and they are considered to be important in all aspects of life. In these societies, not only equality for women is important, but also equality for men, meaning that both genders share characteristics such as responsibility, ambitiousness, caring and gentleness. This also affects the gender roles, where there is no clear distinction and both men and women deal with the same aspects of family life, in that both parents deal with facts and feelings (ibid, p. 130).

In feminine societies, it is optional for both sexes to make a career; however, the career choice is more often based on an interest in the subject area than on career opportunities. Having a good relationship with one's superior and colleagues is important for a good working environment and when a conflict or problem arises, it is resolved by ways of compromise and negotiation in order to create a win-win situation for all involved (ibid, p. 143). Having more leisure time is valued higher than earning more money, which corresponds to the work ethos 'work in order to live' (ibid, p. 144). Most feminine countries have a social welfare system where the government provides a minimum quality of life i.e. healthcare, education etc. through a redistribution of wealth by means of taxes. Because children are taught modesty and solidarity from an early age, helping the needy and less fortunate is important regardless of whether it is people in one's own society or abroad.



Source: (ibid. pp. 120-121)

#### Uncertainty avoidance

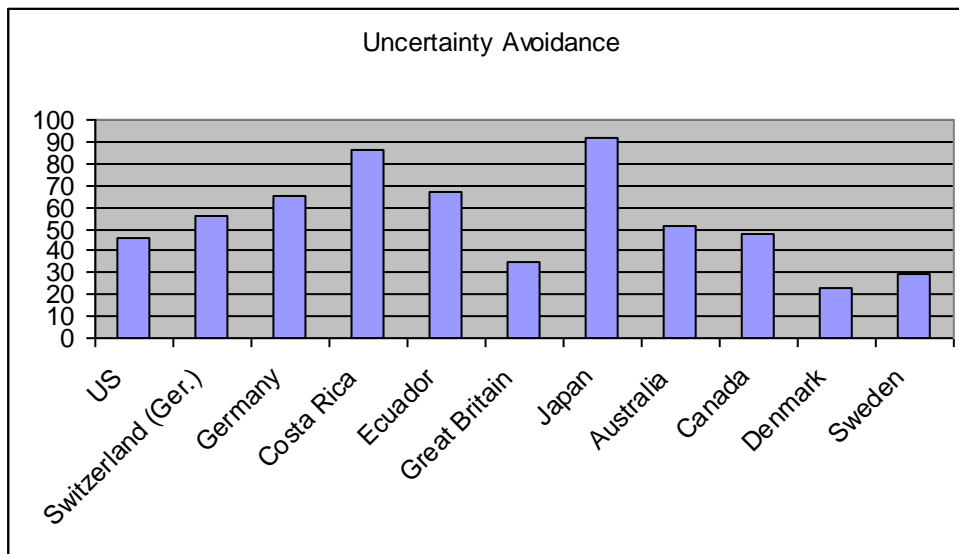
This dimension revolves around how people deal with ambiguous or unknown situations and whether they consider what is different to be dangerous or curious (ibid, p. 169). In countries with strong uncertainty avoidance, children are taught from an early age that what is dirty is dangerous and the classifications of dirty and dangerous are tight and absolute. This also applies to ideas, meaning that some ideas are good and some are taboo and also here the rules are firm. Children in countries with strong uncertainty avoidance are more often protected from experiencing unknown situations, because what is different is dangerous and they are furthermore taught that the world is a hostile place (ibid, p. 175). In these countries, it is more likely that the national language differentiate between a formal you and an informal you, each to be used in the appropriate situation.

Because the children have been raised with structure and firm rules in the family life, they have come to expect the same structure at school. This has an influence on the type of assignment they feel comfortable with, such as detailed assignments with one correct answer and strict timetables. The students furthermore expect the teacher to be an expert within his/her subject field and should therefore have all the answers (ibid, p. 179). The need for structure and rules are apparent in all aspects of society in countries with strong uncertainty avoidance, which means that there is an emotional need for many formal laws and informal rules to control the right and duties of employees and employers (ibid, p. 182). People feel a need to work hard and prefer to be busy, because time is money.

In countries with weak uncertainty avoidance, children are also taught what is dirty can be dangerous, but the rules are more lenient and parents teach their children to give the benefit of doubt in unknown situations. The reason for this is that people from weak uncertainty countries consider and accept uncertainty as a normal part of life. This also affects how they view the world, which is as basically good and experiencing new things is often encouraged by the parents. Language wise the majority of the countries with weak uncertainty avoidance do not differentiate between a formal you and an informal you, e.g. the English 'you'.

At school the desire for lenient rules continues and influences the type of assignments that the students prefer to work with, which are broad assignments with several possible answers and no timetables.

In countries with weak uncertainty avoidance there is general consensus that there should be no more rules than strictly necessary and if the rules do not work, then they should be changed. Consequently, there are few and general laws and unwritten rules. People do not feel a need to work hard, but will if needed and they prefer to relax, because here time is not money but a framework where one can orient oneself in.



Source: (ibid. pp. 168-169)

### The projects

In order to write the following, I used pieces of information which were given to me either by i-to-i in the welcome package or the locals working on the projects. The information I obtained from the locals was often given to me in a conversation where after I wrote it down or made a mental note of it, which means that I do not have an official source to match all the facts except for my second project in Costa Rica, which has a website. Furthermore, the volunteer work tasks that I have described are the tasks given to me while on the projects. This does not mean that all the volunteers over time have performed those specific tasks that I did as the tasks can vary depending on weather, season as well as the need of the local community.

### Ecuador

In Ecuador I worked on a nature conservation project at the Biological Reserve Rio Bravo, which is situated in the heart of the Ecuadorian Andes and approximately 10km from the town of Mindo. The journey from Mindo takes almost two hours and has to be done in a four-wheel drive due to the mountainous terrain. The reserve is situated between two mountains and therefore contains both rainforest and cloud forest and as it is approximately 6,000hectares, large parts of the forest is completely undisturbed by humans, i.e. virgin forest. Due to its remoteness, not many tourists visit the reserve, which instead is visited by research groups and school groups, who come to study the plants and wildlife especially the many different types of birds. The reserve is looked after by Sonia and her younger brother Luis, whose uncle own the reserve, and they usually have 2-4 volunteers helping. We were only two volunteers there during my three week stay and that was Phil from Scotland and myself. The work we were doing was mainly trail maintenance and gardening, which

is always needed in the rainforest, because everything grows so fast and if you are not careful everything will be overgrown including buildings and trails, which due to the immense humidity and occasional rain have to be checked regularly. We also expanded existing compost, which included digging out fertile soil near a pond and relocated trees as well as cut the grass with a machete and rebuilt the steps on the trails that had been destroyed by the rain. Because the reserve is relatively secluded, we were also more or less self-sufficient with a little help from the neighbour and his garden, which made our fruit and vegetable garden very important. The remoteness also meant that there was no electricity other than what an old generator and some solar cell could muster, which was not much and not enough to heat the water that came from an underground river. We had the weekends off, but for the most part we stayed at the reserve and went exploring there and saw a lot of wildlife.

#### Costa Rica

In Costa Rica I worked on two different conservation projects whereof one was quite similar to the one I worked on in Ecuador. The first project was a sea turtle and nature conservation project at Romelia Wildlife Refuge, which is situated at the Pacific coast on the Nicoya Peninsula near the town of Montezuma. The refuge is situated in the rainforest and close to the beach and the only way to get to the refuge is on foot along the beach. The refuge covers a total area of 415 acres and protects beach and tropical forest areas on the Pacific coast (appendix IV, Romelia). We were 8-10 international volunteers, one Costa Rican volunteer, one cook, one manager and his two assistants who were both Costa Rican and to begin with we shared the kitchen with a Nicaraguan refugee family who were living on the grounds but not working on the project.

There was plenty of work to be done, both night and day, as the sea turtles only come up to the beach and lay there eggs after nightfall. This meant that the evenings and nights were spent patrolling the 3km stretch of private beach that belongs to the refuge to look after sea turtles as well as poachers. Because the beach was very flat and the tide very high, we had to relocate all the natural nests we found on the beach to the hatchery<sup>1</sup> in order to ensure the survival of the baby turtles. When we came across a sea turtle our job was to document everything about the sea turtle, such as their size, any unusual markings, check their tags if they had any, and if not, then tag them. We would also take notes on the size of the nests for the purpose of relocation, especially the depth as it is the temperature in the nest that determines the sex of the turtles; as well as the

---

<sup>1</sup> A hatchery is a fenced in part of the beach situated at the highest point where all the sand has been cleaned in order to protect the eggs from crabs, mosquitoes and other predators including poachers.

number of fertile and unfertile eggs along with the average size of the fertile eggs, which is found by measuring 10 fertile eggs.

During the day there always had to be at least one person at the hatchery to protect the nests from predators and poachers as well as help the baby turtles out of the hatchery and save them from the sun in case they came out during the day instead of at night-time. Some of the other work tasks that needed to be done during the day were trail maintenance, cleaning the living quarters and working in the greenhouse. At Romelia they are trying to grow vegetables that normally would not grow in the tropical forest due to humidity and heat in order to become more self-sufficient as the nearest town is a 30 minutes walk away along 4 different beaches and this walk cannot be made during high tide as most of the beaches are completely flooded at that time. During my stay at Romelia, we also built an outdoor kitchen due to conflicts with the Nicaraguan refugee family over the kitchen facilities. We furthermore had to reinforce the hatchery with sandbags and driftwood before and after extreme high tides, which occurred every two or three nights every fortnights. At this project it was not possible to get an entire weekend off, because somebody had to stay at the refuge to patrol the beach and watch over the hatchery. Instead we would get the occasional night and sometimes following morning off, which gave us the opportunity to go to Montezuma and check emails and relax.

The second project I worked on in Costa Rica was a nature conservation project in the northern region of Bijagua, not far from the Nicaraguan border, situated just outside of the town Bijagua at a place called Las Heliconias Eco Lodge. Las Heliconias Eco Lodge is a private reserve and is run and owned by ten local families (<http://www.heliconiaslodge.com/about>). The lodge itself was built in 1996 and was financed by the World Wildlife Fund and a local conservation program. The grounds around the lodge consist of 80 hectares of both primary and secondary forest and borders up to the Volcano Tenorio National Park (<http://www.heliconiaslodge.com/>). The lodge also has a restaurant where both tourists and locals dine as well as enjoy the amazing view of Lake Nicaragua and the Miravelles Volcano.

We were two international volunteers from i-to-i and two Costa Rican volunteers working there, however, we worked on different parts of the project. The other international volunteer, Debbie from England, and I worked on the conservation part, i.e. outdoors, and the two Costa Rican volunteers worked in the restaurant and in other indoor areas such as the laundry service and cleaning service. Nevertheless we would sometimes help each other in our respective areas, if needed. So when a large group of tourists were due to arrive at the lodge Debbie and I would help

clean and prepare the accommodations. The conservation work tasks at this project consisted mainly of trail maintenance, gardening and maintenance work. Because we were at the end of the rainy season, there was a lot of trail maintenance that needed to be done as well as general maintenance of the three hanging bridges, which are a part of the trail, such as changing screws and bolts. We also did a lot of gardening work i.e. cutting down old branches, plants and the grass to protect the tourists from venomous snakes and frogs which thrives in long grass and overgrown plants. This meant that the work was relatively dangerous as we saw many different venomous snakes, such as the yellow viper, when working in the garden, so we always had to work with the local wildlife guide, Henry, when working there. Henry was also participating in a local reforestation project with some of the local youths where tourists and locals can adopt a tree, which Debbie and I would sometimes help with as well. The work on the reforestation project included caring for small trees in the greenery as well as help planting the trees that were adopted on local farmers' lands. We had the weekends off and were encouraged to explore the surrounding national parks as well as the neighbouring country, Nicaragua, which Debbie and I did.

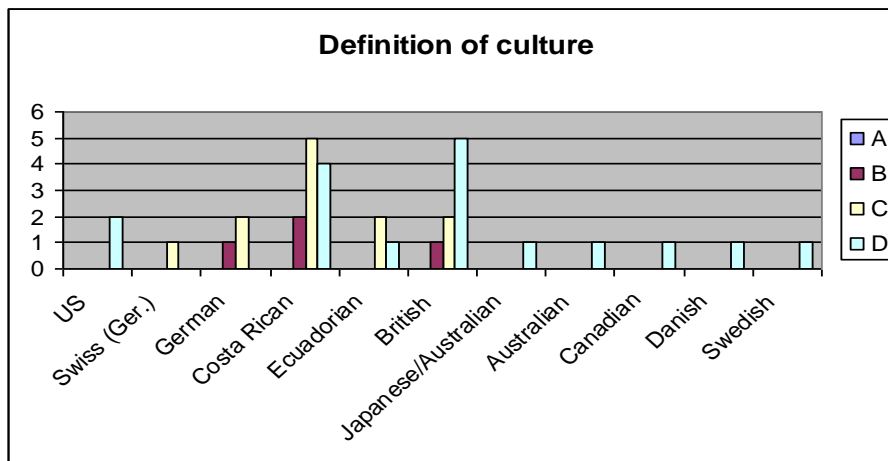
### Analysis

In this section I will analyse the responses from the volunteers and locals and see if any patterns emerge. I will furthermore look into the role of the different nationalities and try to see how they influenced the responses and if so, in what way and is there a connection between the responses and Hofstede's four dimensions. In order to make graphs of the multiple choice questions and their different response alternatives, I have labelled them A, B, C, D with A being the first response alternative and B the second and so forth.

When looking at the responses for question 1 from both the locals and volunteers, there does not seem to be a pattern at first glance as to which definition of culture the respective nationalities agree with except that no-one has chosen responses alternative A.

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

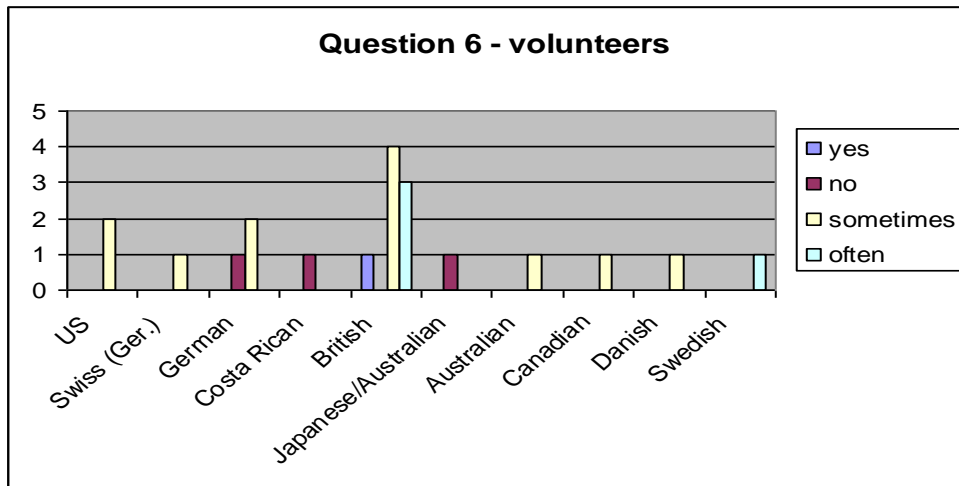
- A - Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- B - Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values
- C - Culture refers to the ways of life of a given nation/region
- D - Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.



However, after taking a closer look I noticed that the two German-speaking nationalities, German and Swiss German, were the only ones who did not choose D at all, which is the primary response for many of the other nationalities. For the German-speaking nationalities response alternatives B and C were the most popular, with B getting one vote and C three votes. Only two other nationalities had C as the most popular choice and that were the two Spanish-speaking nationalities, Costa Rican and Ecuadorian. However, for both the Spanish-speaking nationalities the second most popular response alternative was D and not B as it was for the German-speaking nationalities. Only the Costa Ricans and the British chose three different response alternatives, however, both with one clear winner. For all other nationalities, only one response alternative was chosen, namely D.

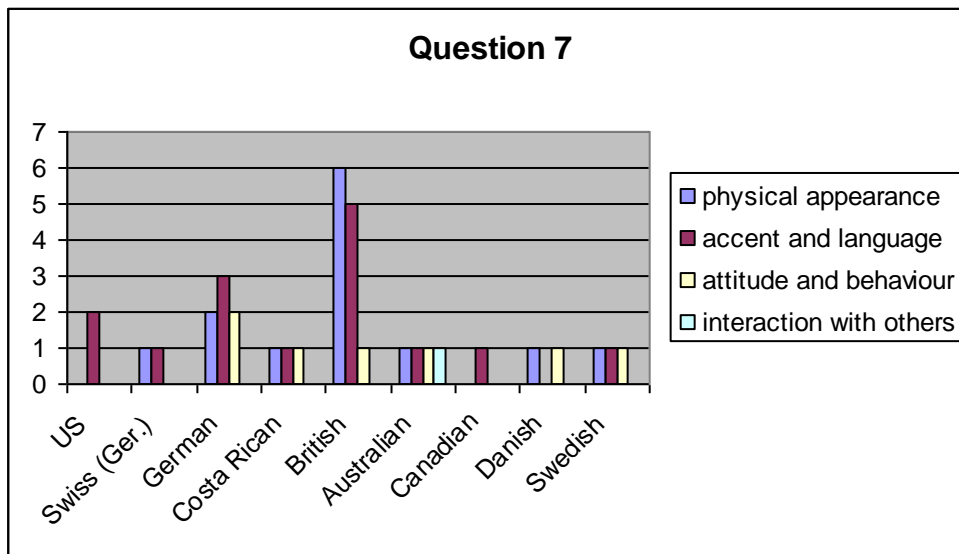
To sum up question 1 and the patterns that emerged, the German-speaking and Spanish-speaking nationalities favoured response alternative C whereas all other nationalities favoured response alternative D. However, it is difficult to see their respective nationalities influenced their choice, because there is no right or wrong answer to this question; it is simply a matter of opinion and what you have been taught at school or elsewhere.

With questions 6 and 7 in the questionnaire for the volunteers, I wanted to find out if there is a connection between nationality and who feel they can tell where people are from when they first meet them and what they think gives people's nationality away. I furthermore want to see if I can connect the responses to any of Hofstede's four dimensions.



As can be seen in the graph, the majority of the different nationalities feel that sometimes or often they can tell where people are from when they first meet them except one of the Germans, the Costa Rican volunteer and the Japanese/Australian volunteer, who all answered no. It is quite interesting that the three persons who answered no to this question all come from countries with relatively strong uncertainty avoidance and the only who answered yes, a British volunteer, comes from a country with relatively weak uncertainty avoidance. This could be connected with how they view the world, which leaves the Brit more open-minded to new impressions, because for the Brit what is different is curious (Hofstede: 2005, p. 176).

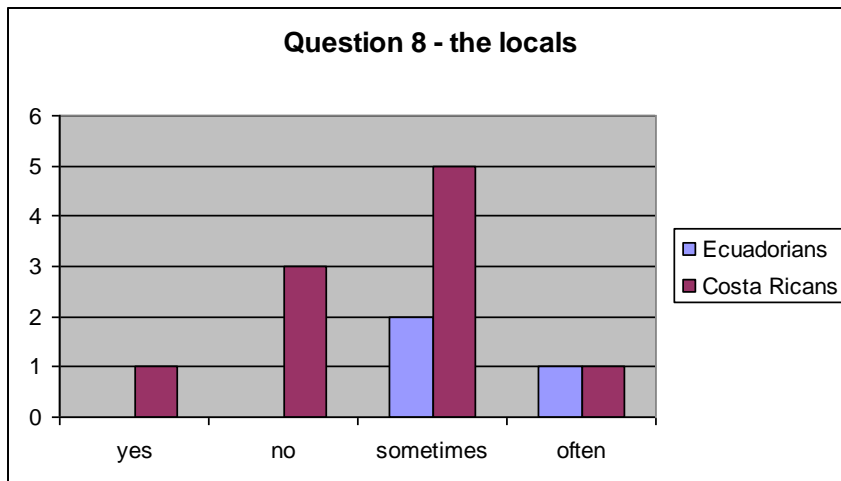
When asked what they think gives a person's nationality away, the majority answered either physical appearance, such as facial features, hair colour, skin tone, tattoos, piercings and clothes or language and accents or both. Often people mentioned more than one contributing factor, such as clothes and accent. Another feature that some of the volunteers feel is a revealing factor is behaviour and attitude, such as how well people adapt to their new environment and how aware they are of their surroundings, not to mention how they interact with other people at the project and in the local community.



I find it quite interesting that most nationalities answered that there are more than one contributing factor except for the American and Canadian volunteers, who all feel that that they can tell where somebody is from based on their accent and language. I think that one of the reasons for this is that in their home countries English is the national language, except for the French-speaking part of Canada, and therefore the easiest way to tell whether somebody is from New York, Texas or Michigan is by listening to their accent, because most parts of the US have very distinctive accents. Whereas the Europeans are used to people speaking different language and most have English as their second language and therefore they do not solely trust their ears when guessing where somebody is from, but also rely on other factors.

I also asked the locals if they feel that they can tell where a volunteer is from when they first meet them or if all volunteers seem similar to them. As can be seen in the graph below, the majority of Ecuadorians and Costa Ricans answered that sometimes they felt that they can tell which country or continent the volunteers are from when they first meet the, especially volunteers from well-known or distinct cultures<sup>2</sup>. Only one Costa Rican answered yes and three answered no.

<sup>2</sup> A couple of the Costa Ricans answered that it was particularly the well-known cultures, that they could recognise, but did not elaborate it further.



Some of the locals elaborated their answer a bit further and explained what they thought gave the volunteers' nationalities away. One of the Costa Ricans wrote that the volunteer's accent and clothes helped him determine where they were from<sup>3</sup>, whereas one of the Ecuadorians was much more specific. He wrote that the English are pretty expressive and nice, the Americans too and the Australians are more serious but nice people<sup>4</sup>.

#### Communication

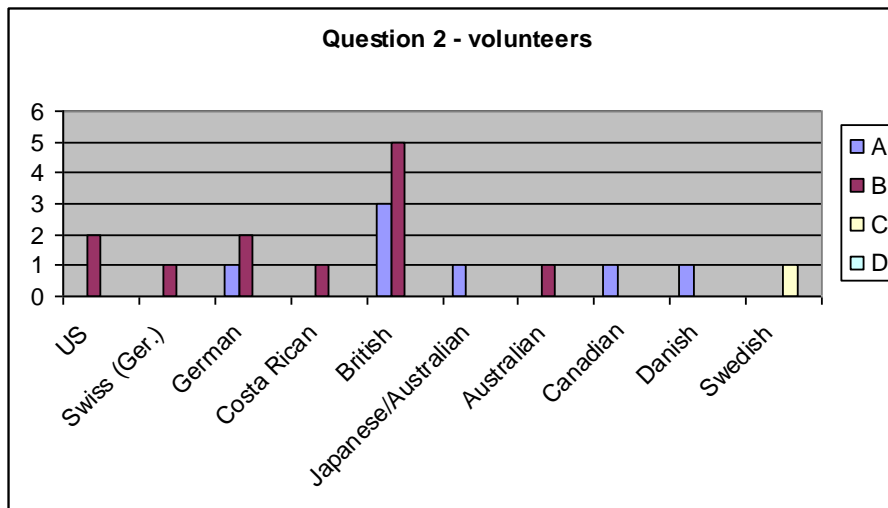
When looking at the responses for question 2 in the questionnaire for the volunteers, it is apparent that almost all of the volunteers characterise their communication with the other volunteers as either excellent or good, i.e. response alternatives A or B.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- A - It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- B - It has been good although there have been some misunderstandings
- C- Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- D - Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

<sup>3</sup> Questionnaire for the Costa Ricans no. 10, my translation

<sup>4</sup> Questionnaire for the Ecuadorians no. 2, my translation



As can be seen in the graph above, only one volunteer chose response alternative C and none chose response alternative D. The Swedish volunteer who chose response alternative C specified in the questionnaire who it was she did not always understand and that was one of the British volunteers by the name of Ben<sup>5</sup>.

There does not seem to be a pattern in the responses, not even between the nationalities who speak the same language. However, I think one of the reasons for this is that the volunteers did not all work at the same project and therefore did not meet the same people or encounter the same cultures.

There seem to be a greater consensus among the volunteers in regards to how they would characterise their communication with the locals, i.e. question 3 in the questionnaire for the volunteers.

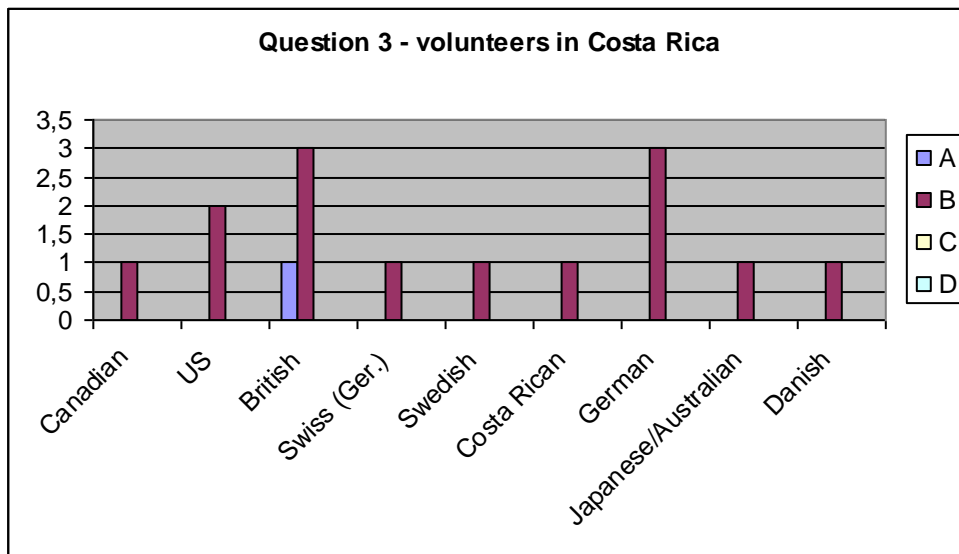
### 3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- A- It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- B - It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- C - Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- D - It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do.

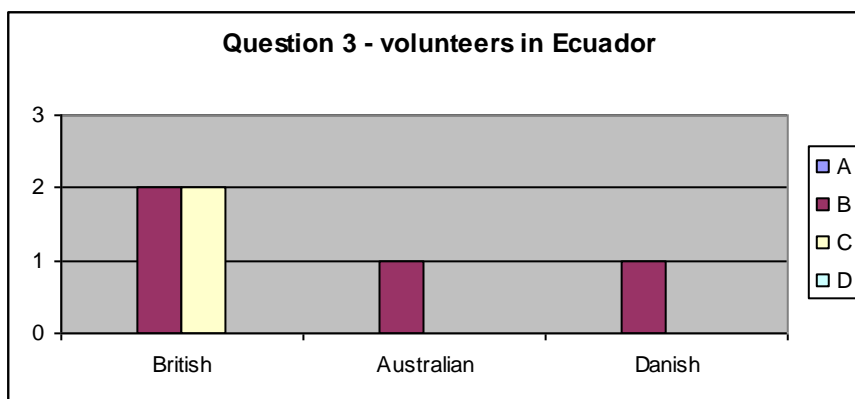
As can be seen in the graph below, all but one volunteer in Costa Rica chose response alternative B and the one British volunteer who did not choose B chose response alternative A.

---

<sup>5</sup> Questionnaire volunteers no. 8

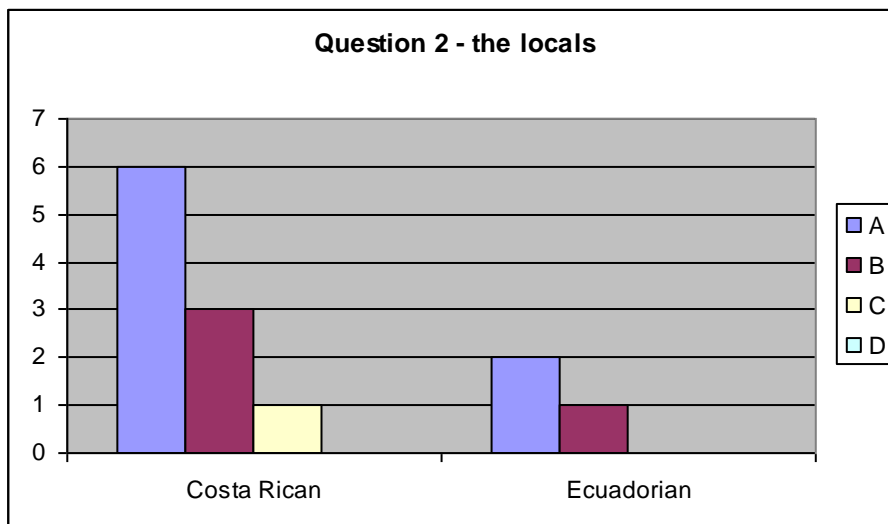


This means that none of the volunteers in Costa Rica felt that they had any severe problems with communicating with the locals in contrast to the volunteers in Ecuador where two British volunteers chose response alternative C and four volunteers chose response alternative B meaning that the volunteers in Ecuador found it a bit more difficult to communicate with the locals than the volunteers in Costa Rica.



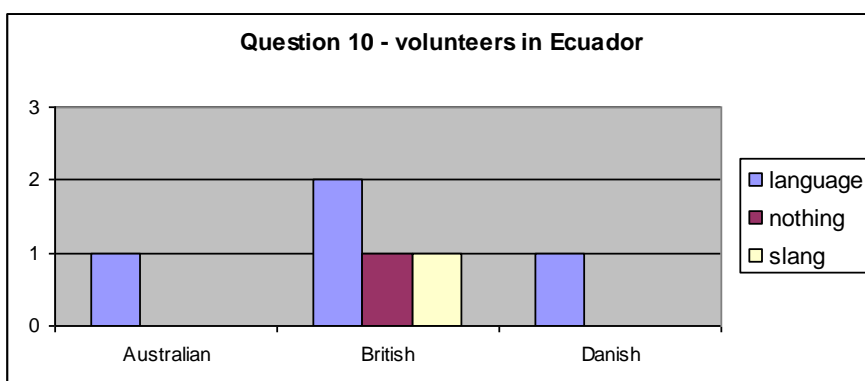
This difference between the volunteers in Costa Rica and Ecuador can be related to Hofstede's dimension 'Individualism' where Ecuador scored the lowest of the eleven nationalities I encountered and all the volunteers' countries scored higher. In collectivist countries, such as Ecuador, the communication can be quite context based in contrast to individualist countries where the communication is often very direct (Hofstede: 2005, pp. 86-87). However, if this is the case then it should also be reflected in the responses from the volunteers in Costa Rica, because Costa Rica scored the second lowest of the eleven nationalities I encountered. This factor leads me to believe that it is more likely connected with language, more specifically the volunteers' Spanish skills and the locals' English skills.

I asked the locals the same question, how they would characterise their communication with the volunteers, with the same response alternatives and here the majority of both the Costa Ricans and the Ecuadorians chose response alternative A, as can be seen in the graph below.

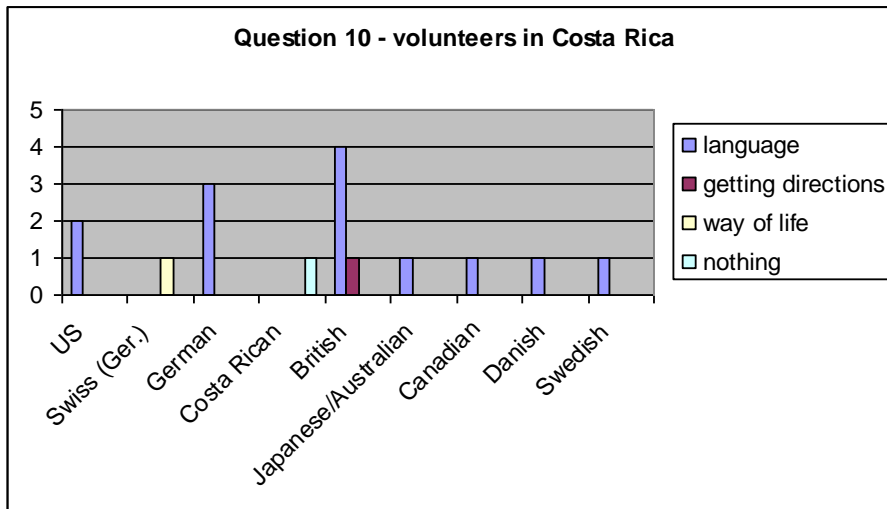


This means that the majority of the locals would characterise their communication with the volunteers as fantastic or good and only one Costa Rican felt that the communication with the volunteers had not been so good. I think it is interesting that the majority of the locals felt that the communication with the volunteers had been practically problem free whereas the majority of the volunteers felt that the communication with the locals had been good though there had been some misunderstandings. Nevertheless, I find it very positive that the majority of both the volunteers and the locals felt that the communication between them had been fantastic or good and none had felt that it had been horrible.

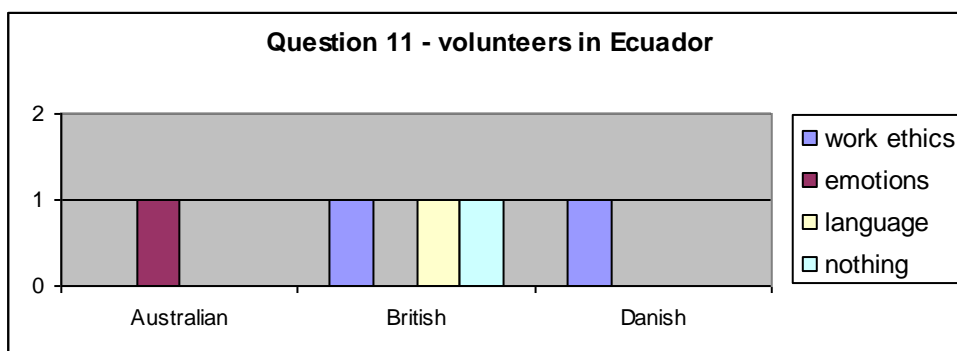
I also wanted to find out what the volunteers had found challenging in communicating with the locals and as can be seen in the graphs below both the volunteers in Costa Rica and Ecuador characterised the language barrier as their greatest challenge.



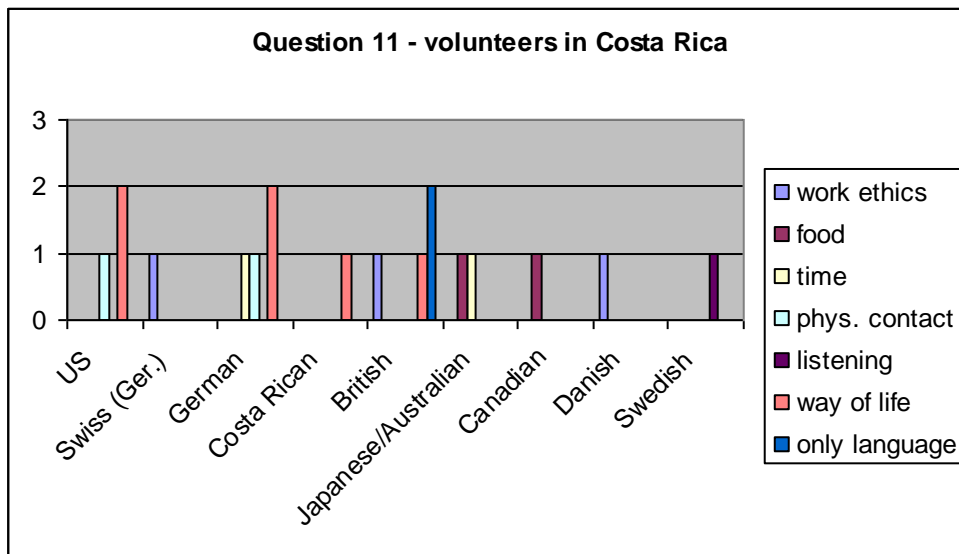
One of the British volunteers in Ecuador specified that it was the locals' use of slang that posed as a challenge whereas another British volunteer said nothing had posed as a challenge in communicating with the locals.



The Costa Rican volunteer in Costa Rica also answered nothing, which is understandable. One of the British volunteers in Costa Rica found it quite difficult getting directions from the locals due to the lack of street signs in Costa Rica and the use of building and landmarks to tell which way to go, which can be quite confusing. Nevertheless, the majority of the volunteers in both countries felt that the language barrier posed as the greatest challenger. However, when taking the language barrier out of the equation, almost all the volunteers were able to find other factors that played a role in the communication with the locals such as food, time and way of life<sup>6</sup>.



<sup>6</sup> Some did answer specifically way of life, however, others answered party scene and acceptance of deceitful attitude, which I have put under way of life, because I find both aspects to be part of a given nation's way of life.



I find it very interesting that the Costa Rican volunteer answered way of life as he is Costa Rican, however, he does specify his answer and explains that city life as he knows it from San Jose is quite different from the beach way of life, where the project took place<sup>7</sup>. In Costa Rica, six of the volunteers felt that the locals' way of life posed as the greatest challenge and three volunteers felt that the locals' work ethics posed as the greatest challenge communication wise. The volunteers who answered work ethics all referred to different aspects of work ethics, e.g. the Swiss volunteer found it challenging that the locals did not have any problems with a job not being done perfectly or as good as it could be done whereas one of the British volunteers found that how the working hours had been planned challenging<sup>8</sup>.

In Ecuador, work ethics also posed as a challenge for two volunteers, but for the British volunteer here, it was more the locals' lack of consideration for the volunteer's limitations regarding hard manual labour<sup>9</sup>. The Australian volunteer in Ecuador wrote that he found the Ecuadorians to be very emotional people, which is something he is not used to dealing with<sup>10</sup>. This can be related to Hofstede's dimension 'power distance', where Australia scored lower than Ecuador, as working relationships in countries with high power distance are more emotional than the working relationships in countries with low power distance.

I was surprised to see that only two volunteers had chosen time as I had expected more to have answered that. Two of the volunteers in Costa Rica found the physical contact challenging, because they felt that their personal sphere was invaded by the locals, due to the local custom of

<sup>7</sup> Questionnaire Volunteers no. 9

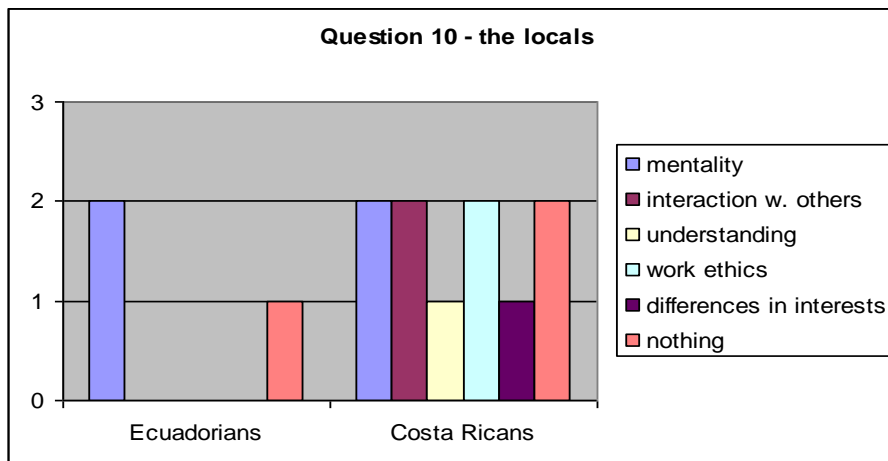
<sup>8</sup> Questionnaire Volunteers no. 7 and no. 4

<sup>9</sup> Questionnaire Volunteers no. 19

<sup>10</sup> Questionnaire Volunteers no. 16

kissing on the cheek as a form of greeting as well as not being able to walk down the street without being approached by locals.

I asked the same question to the locals in Costa Rica and Ecuador, i.e. what they would characterise as their greatest challenge in communicating with the volunteers apart from the language barrier and some of their answers were quite similar to those of the volunteers as can be seen in the graph below.



I think it is interesting that work ethics is something that both the Costa Ricans and some of the volunteers have felt created a communication barrier. Both the Ecuadorians and the Costa Ricans felt that the volunteers' mentality posed as a challenge communication wise, however, many of them describe different aspects of the volunteers' mentality. For instance, one of the Costa Ricans wrote that often the volunteers want to do things their way without consideration for how the locals do things<sup>11</sup> whereas another Costa Rican answered that sometimes the volunteers seem to forget that they are in different country where things are handled differently than what they are used to at home<sup>12</sup>. Two other Costa Ricans felt that often the volunteers were not interested in having a relationship with the other workers at the project other than each other, which I think is a quite interesting observation. I also find it interesting that one of the Ecuadorians and two of the Costa Ricans answered that nothing had posed as a challenge in communicating with the volunteers apart from the language barrier.

To sum up, the majority of the volunteers characterised their communication with the other volunteers as having been either excellent or good. Moreover, the majority of the volunteers in Costa Rica characterised their communication with the locals as having been good and in Ecuador the majority of the volunteers characterised their communication with the locals as having been

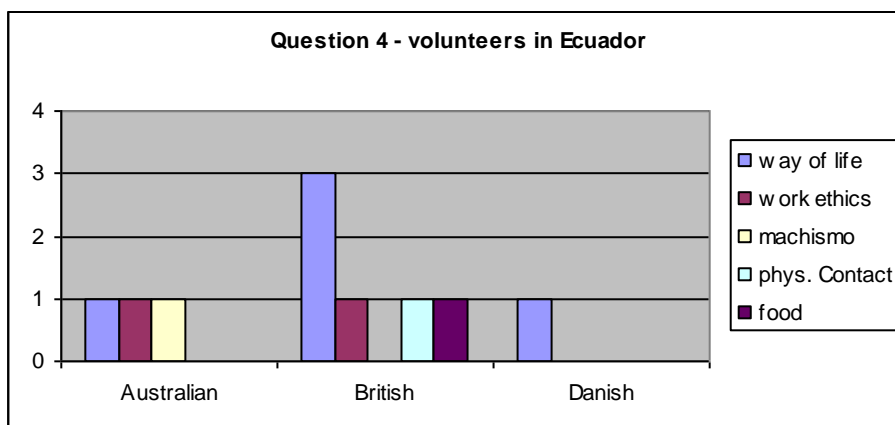
<sup>11</sup> Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica no. 10

<sup>12</sup> Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica no. 3

good and a minority of the volunteers there characterised as having been not so good. The majority of the locals in both Ecuador and Costa Rica characterised their communication with the volunteers as having been either fantastic or good. Both in Costa Rica and Ecuador, the majority of the volunteers felt that the language barrier posed as the greatest challenge in communicating with the locals and it was not until that was out of the picture before they answered other aspects, such as way of life and work ethics. For the locals, mentality, work ethics and interaction with other workers at the project were some of the aspects that they felt posed as a challenge in communicating with the volunteers apart from the language barrier.

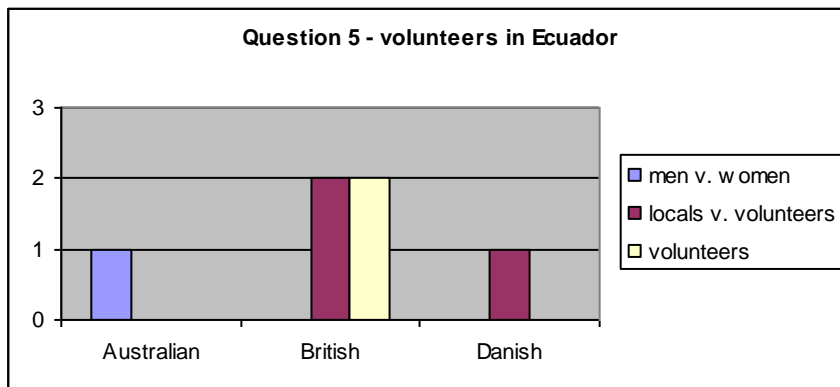
#### Cultural differences

I wanted to find out what cultural experiences the volunteers had observed and between whom as well as what cultural differences the locals had experienced with the volunteers. In Ecuador, the volunteers all noticed the differences in the way of life in Ecuador compared to what they are used to in their respective home countries, as can be seen in the graph below.

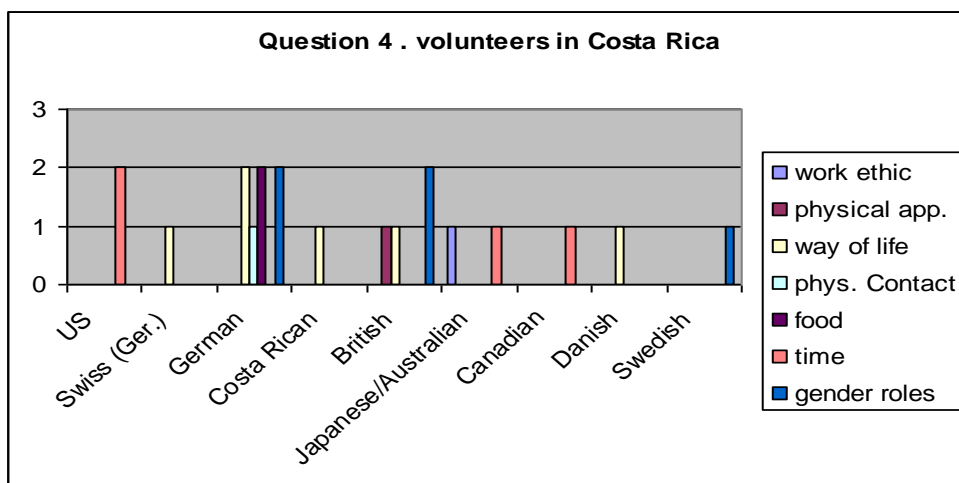


I find it very interesting that it is a male volunteer from Australia who refers to the Ecuadorian men's attitude towards women as chauvinistic and also point to the Ecuadorian women's accepting attitude of this behaviour<sup>13</sup>, which is also known as machismo, because both Australia and Ecuador are fairly masculine countries according to Hofstede's work. The Australian volunteer furthermore noticed that how the locals look after their children is different than what he is used to. When asked between whom they had noticed the differences, the volunteers in Ecuador mainly answered the locals and the volunteers as well as between the volunteers, but did not specify it any further. The Australian volunteer answered between the men and women, but did not specify whether it was only between the local men and women or if it also included the male and female volunteers.

<sup>13</sup> Questionnaire volunteers no. 16



In Costa Rica, many of the volunteers also observed a difference in the way of life, but they focused on different aspects of it, such as personal safety, manners etc. A couple of the volunteers noticed that there was a difference in the distribution of gender roles, i.e. how the local men and women behaved around each other as well as the importance in family as can be seen in the graph below.



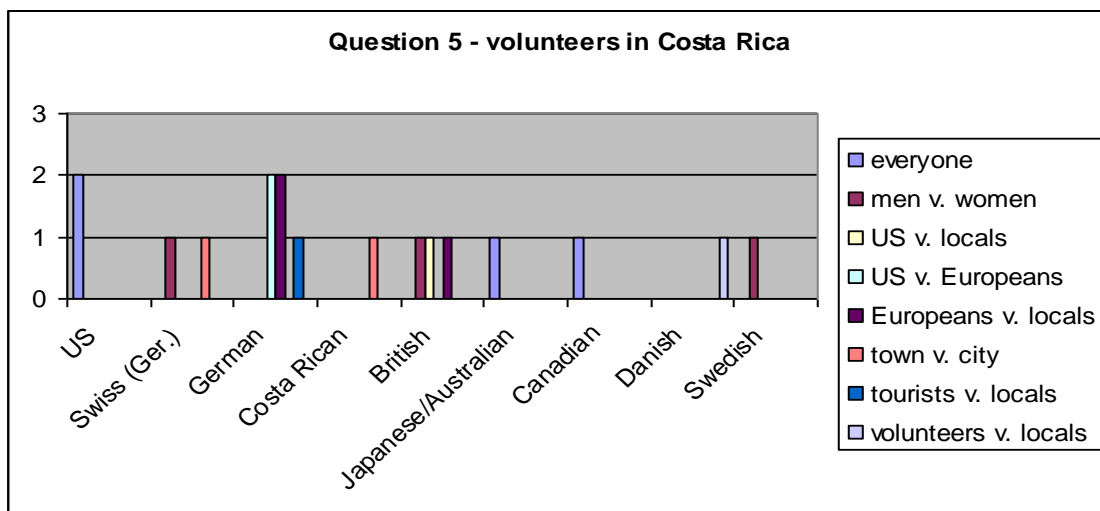
It is interesting that in Costa Rica it is a female volunteer who noticed the local men's behaviour towards women and the local women's response to it, however, it is also understandable as many of the female volunteers experienced this behaviour themselves i.e. being hit on and men shouting 'bonita' (beautiful) after them in the streets. Nevertheless, a male volunteer from Great Britain also observed this behaviour, however, for him it related more to physical appearance, especially dress style of the female volunteers, but also body art, such as piercings and tattoos on the male volunteers, because apparently body art is related to gangs in Costa Rica, which was something he was quite surprised to find out<sup>14</sup>. I also find it interesting that one of the male volunteers from Great Britain noticed a demographic difference in that he observed that people are younger in Costa Rica when they get married and have children<sup>15</sup>. Another cultural difference a couple of the

<sup>14</sup> Questionnaire volunteers no. 14

<sup>15</sup> Questionnaire volunteers no. 6

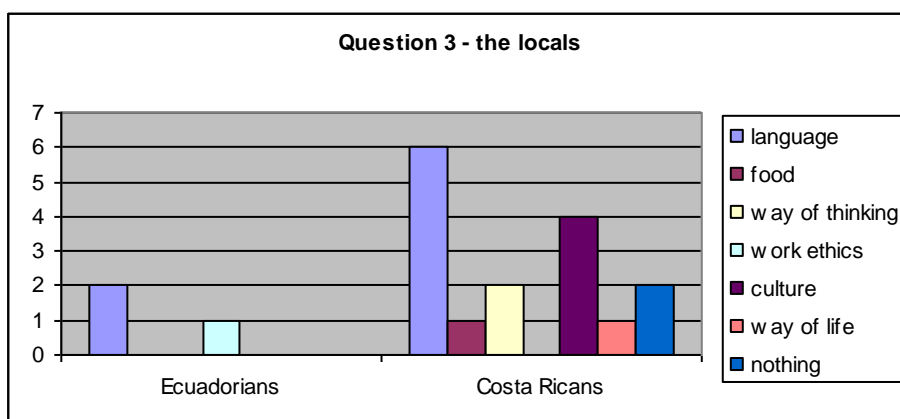
volunteers observed was the whole time issue and many found life in Costa Rica to be more laid-back and people as well as public transportation to be less punctual than they are used to in their respective home countries.

When looking at between whom the volunteers noticed these cultural differences, they all have different answers, as can be seen in the graph below.



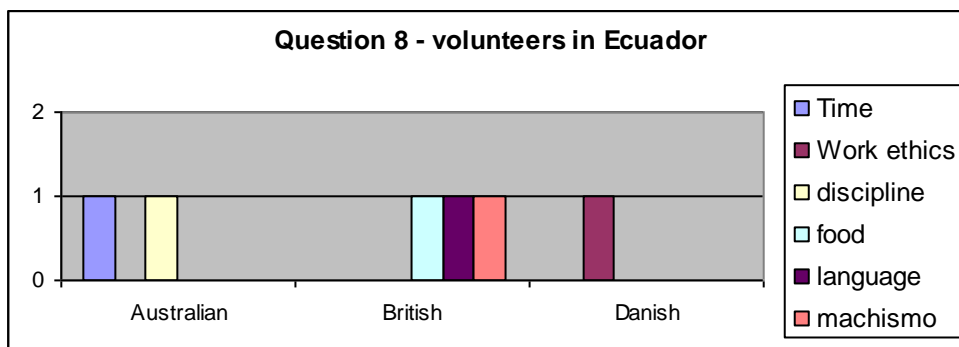
However, in contrast to the volunteers in Ecuador some of the volunteers in Costa Rica have specified between which nationalities or continents they had observed any cultural differences such as the Americans and locals. Furthermore, three of the volunteers in Costa Rica noticed a cultural difference between the men and women, which is quite interesting, because Costa Rica is a fairly feminine culture and therefore should 'machismo' not play as big a role there as it should in Ecuador.

When looking at what cultural differences the locals had noticed, it is interesting to see that they overall had noticed many of the same differences as the volunteers.



As can be seen in the graph above, many of the locals felt that language was the biggest cultural difference they had experienced with the volunteers. Many of the Costa Ricans also noticed a difference in cultures, but did not specify it any further. One of the Ecuadorians complimented the volunteers' work ethics and wrote that they are in general disciplined, punctual and practical<sup>16</sup>. I think it is interesting that some of the cultural differences that some of the volunteers noticed are also some that a couple of the locals noticed.

I also wanted to find out what aspect of the Latin-American culture that had frustrated the volunteers as well as what aspects of the volunteers' culture that had frustrated the locals, if any. In Ecuador all the volunteers answered different things, as can be seen in the graph below, however, after having read through the Australian volunteer's response, many of things he has written are related to work ethics, which is what the Danish volunteer (I) answered.



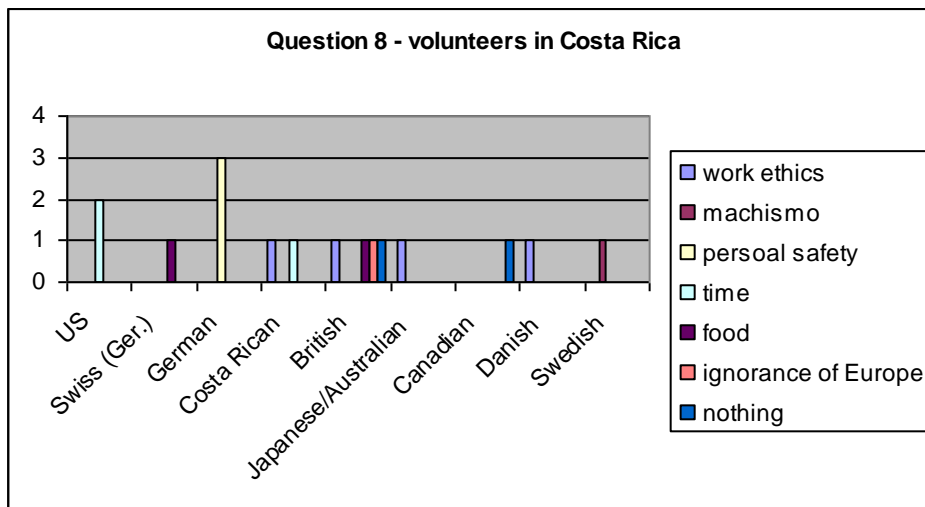
The different attitudes towards discipline and work ethics can be related to the nationalities different scores in Hofstede's dimension 'power distance' where both Australia and Denmark scored relatively low and Ecuador high. Because in countries with small power distance, such as Australia and Denmark, people are used to taking initiative in the work place whereas in countries with large power distance, such as Ecuador, people are used to being told what to do<sup>17</sup>, which can be seen as lack of discipline by somebody who is used to taking initiative. For one of the British volunteers, a female volunteer, the Ecuadorian men and their behaviour towards women was a source of irritation, which is quite interesting as Great Britain actually scored slightly higher than Ecuador on Hofstede's masculinity index. However, in this case it is more a question of socially acceptable behaviour towards women and as she wrote, if a guy acted like the Ecuadorian men do in England he would be classified as sleazy, but in Ecuador this type of behaviour is perfectly normal<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Encuesta para los habitantes de Ecuador no. 3

<sup>17</sup> Hofstede: 2005, p. 55

<sup>18</sup> Questionnaire volunteers no. 19

In Costa Rica, some of the volunteers from the same countries answered the same thing and others something completely different, as can be seen in the graph below.

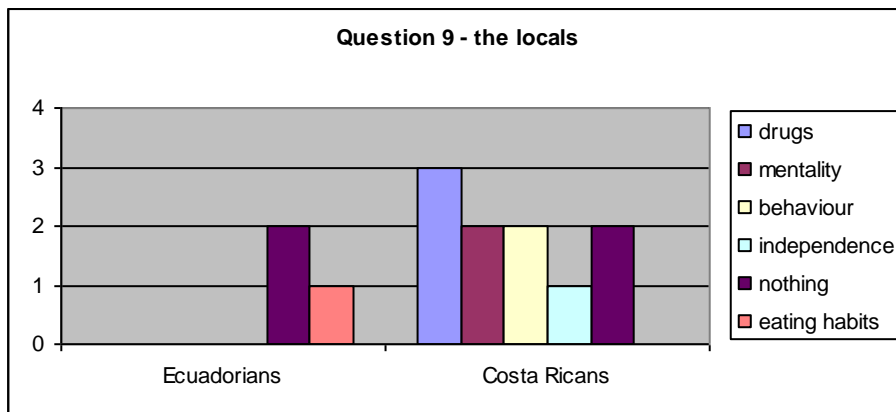


The three German volunteers, all female, were frustrated with the fact that in Costa Rica it is not safe to walk around alone after dark, especially for women, as well as with crime and drugs in Costa Rica, which is very interesting, because I had expected them to be more frustrated with the time issue more particularly punctuality as the Germans are known for their punctuality, which even Hofstede refers to<sup>19</sup>. Nevertheless, some of the volunteers were frustrated with the time issue and they were the two American volunteers and the Costa Rican volunteer; which just goes to show that regional differences also plays a role. The Costa Rican volunteer also answered work ethics along with three other volunteers and they almost all refer to efficiency. Only one female volunteer, the Swedish volunteer, was frustrated with the Costa Rican men's behaviour towards women, however, she was more frustrated with the fact that it was difficult for her to discuss important issues, such as the environment, with male Costa Rican, because they did not listen to her opinion. She was also frustrated with the gender roles, because as she experienced it at her home-stays the women did all the work in the house, which shows that even the Costa Rica is fairly feminine and Sweden very feminine, that little difference does matter.

I asked the locals the same question, i.e. what aspect of the volunteers' culture that had frustrated them, if any and the responses I received from the Costa Ricans were quite different than the ones I received from the Ecuadorians, as can be seen in the graph below. In Costa Rica a couple of the locals were frustrated with the volunteers' attitude towards drugs and their occasional consumption of drugs, whereas others were frustrated with the volunteers' mentality and behaviour. One of the Costa Ricans elaborated on this and wrote that sometimes the volunteers try to impose their

<sup>19</sup> Hofstede: 2005, p. 164

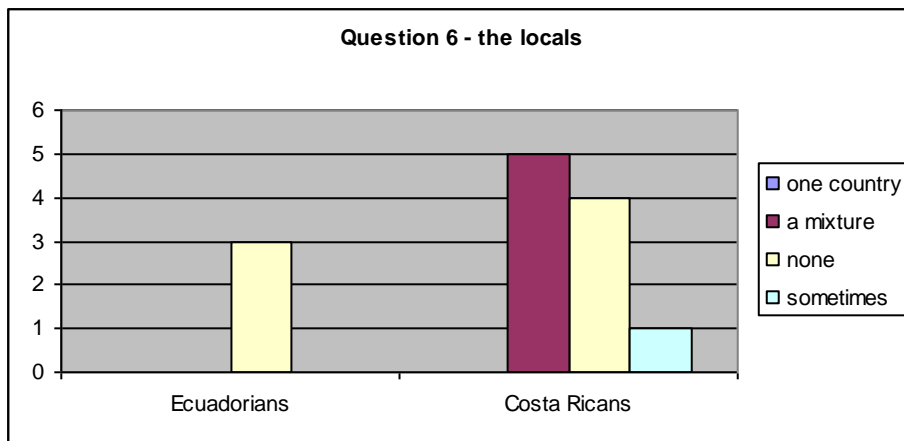
culture on the Costa Ricans and want to behave like they do at home without any regards to how life is in Costa Rica<sup>20</sup>.



In Ecuador, none of the locals mention anything about drugs; in fact two out of three Ecuadorians said that nothing about the volunteers' culture frustrated them. The one who answered eating habits elaborated it further and explained that he had observed that Europeans in general eat what you serve to them (except for the vegetarians, of course) whereas the Americans are more picky. I think this is a very interesting observation and something I cannot explain other than perhaps the Europeans are more aware of their behaviour being perceived as offending than the Americans, but I cannot place this in any of Hofstede's four dimensions.

I was curious to know whether the locals felt that there was a connection between the volunteers' behaviour and their nationality as well as whether they had experienced more problems with volunteers from one specific country or if it was a variety of countries. Out of the ten Costa Ricans who filled out the questionnaire, eight said yes and two said sometimes there is a connection between the volunteers' behaviour and nationality in their opinions. In Ecuador it is pretty much the same picture with two answering yes and one sometimes, which means that all the locals believe that there is or sometimes is a connection between the volunteers' behaviour and which country they are from. Moreover, none of the locals in both countries had experienced more problems with volunteers from one specific country, but said it was either a mixture of countries or none at all, as can be seen in the graph below.

<sup>20</sup> Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica no. 10

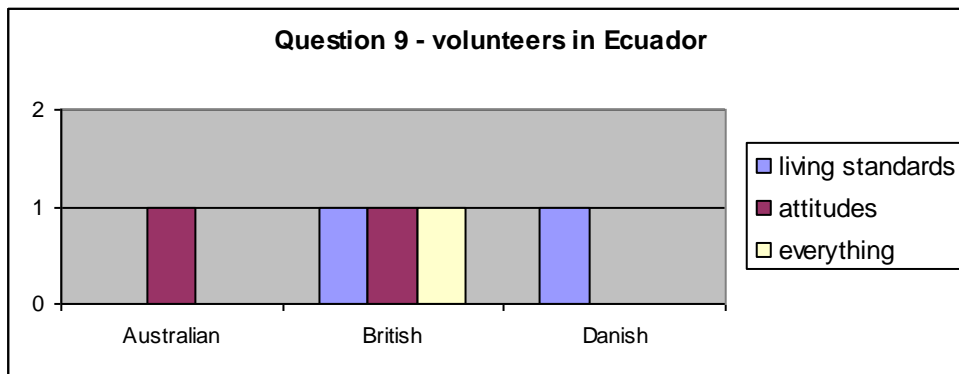


Those who answered a mixture of countries, three of them elaborated it a bit further and mentioned some countries, USA, England and Spain with England being the only country mentioned by all three. This means that although the locals in both countries think that there is or sometimes is a connection between the volunteers' behaviour and nationality they have not experienced more problems with volunteers from one specific country.

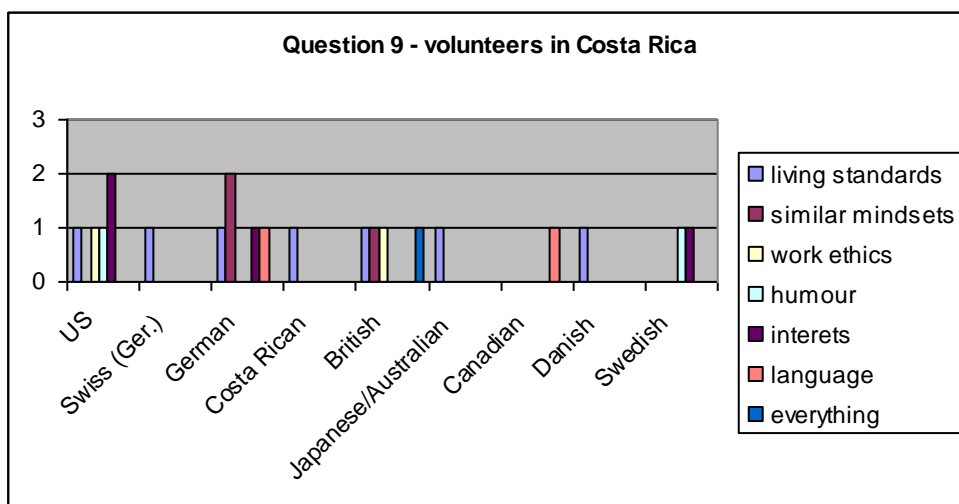
To sum up, both the volunteers and the locals noticed several cultural differences between each other and in some cases the differences they noticed were the same, such as way of life. The volunteers had also observed several cultural differences in both Ecuador and Costa Rica, between the locals and volunteers as well as between men and women, especially the local men's behaviour stood out to many of the volunteers. The locals all believe that there is a connection between how the volunteers behave and where they are from, but they have not experienced more problems with volunteers from one specific country.

#### Cultural similarities

I also wanted to find out what cultural similarities the volunteers had noticed between themselves and the other volunteers as well as whether these similarities had an influence on the locals' perception of the volunteers, i.e. whether the locals see the volunteers as one collected group or they observed cultural differences between the volunteers. In Ecuador, the volunteers had noticed that they are all accustomed to another living standard than the locals and also have a different attitude.



As can be seen in the graph above, only one volunteer answered something different than the others, namely everything. The British volunteer elaborated it a bit further and explained that at the project where she worked, all the volunteers were British except for one Canadian, so there the age gap constituted the only difference in behaviour among the volunteers<sup>21</sup>. In Costa Rica the volunteers found several similarities among each other and two of the most recognised ones were living standards and similar mindsets, as can be seen in the graph below.

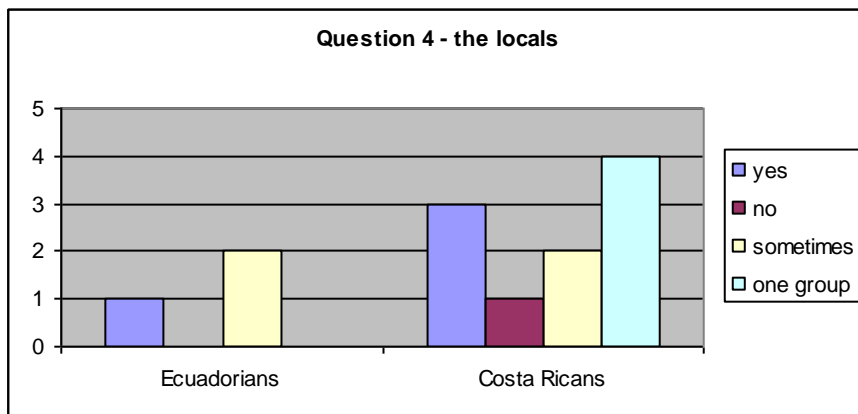


The really interesting detail about this is that the Costa Rican volunteer is one of the six who answered living standards and under question 10 he elaborates it a bit further and says that because he is from the city, he is used to a different way of life than the locals at the project and therefore finds it easier to get involved with the volunteers than the locals<sup>22</sup>. A couple of the volunteers also noticed that they had the same interests that some of the other volunteers and one volunteer also pointed humour out.

<sup>21</sup> Questionnaire volunteers no. 19

<sup>22</sup> Questionnaire volunteers no. 9

As mentioned earlier, I was curious to find out whether the locals were able to differentiate between the volunteers' different nationalities or if they see them as one collected group and their response can be seen in the graph below.

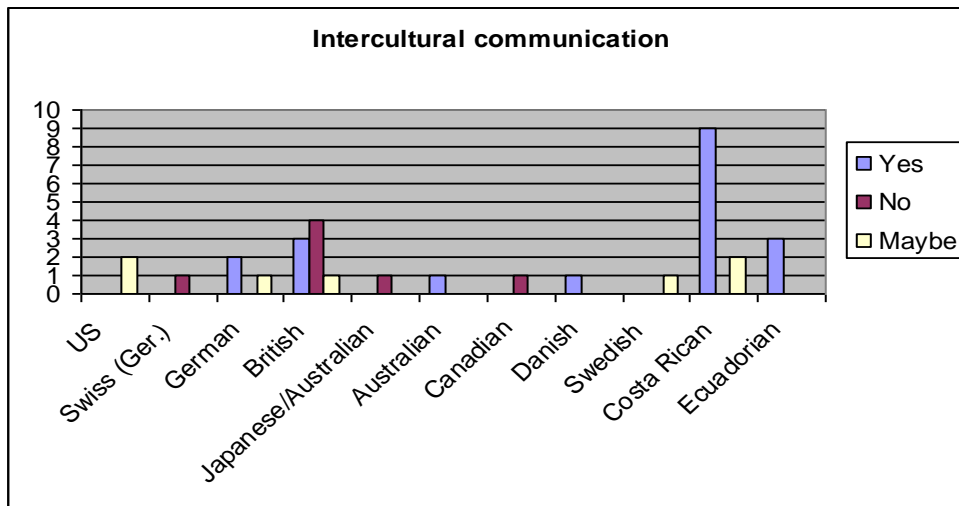


I interpret the answers 'yes', 'no' and 'sometimes' as responses to whether they see the volunteers as one group and therefore I will say that the majority of the locals see the volunteers as one collected group either always or sometimes. Only one person, a Costa Rican answered 'no' i.e. that he does not see the volunteers as one group, but have in fact observed cultural differences between the volunteers.

To sum, many of the volunteers in both Ecuador and Costa Rica observed that most of the volunteers are accustomed to similar living standards or have similar mindsets and interests. This might also influence the locals' perception of the locals, because all the locals but one Costa Rican said that they see the volunteers as one group sometimes or always.

#### Intercultural communication

Because the overall subject in this thesis is intercultural communication, I was curious to find out how many of both the volunteers and the locals had heard of it before as well as what they think it refers to hence the last two questions in both questionnaires.

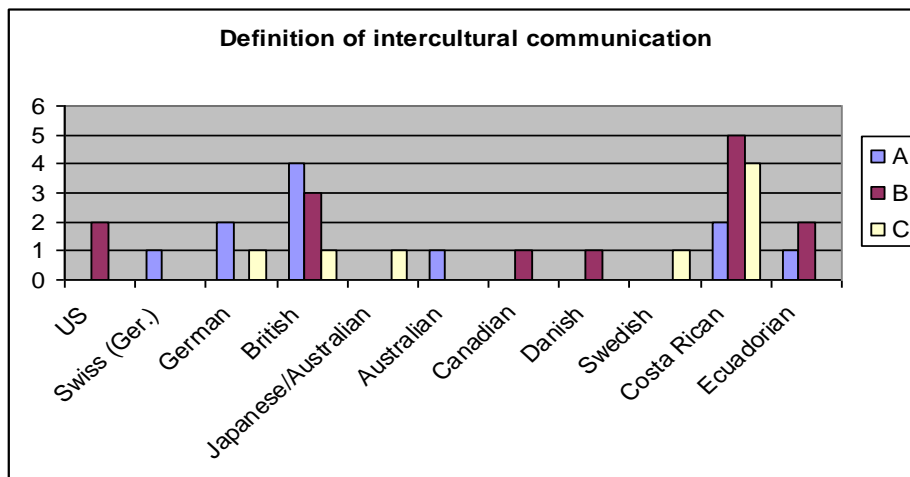


As can be seen in the graph above, the majority of the Costa Ricans and Ecuadorians all said that they had heard of intercultural communication before, whereas half of the British volunteers said 'no', they had never heard of intercultural communication before. In fact, the only ones who answered 'no' were the volunteers whereof the majority was British. In total seven volunteers said that they had never heard of intercultural communication before, seven volunteers said they had heard of it before and six volunteers said 'maybe', which makes the volunteers' responses quite evenly distributed. In contrast, the Ecuadorians were in full agreement as they all answered 'yes' and the Costa Ricans were almost in full agreement with only two answering 'maybe', whereof one was a volunteer, and the remaining answering 'yes' they had heard of intercultural communication before.

However, when it came to defining intercultural communication the responses varied, as can be seen in the graph further below. As mentioned earlier, there is not really a right or wrong answer to this question, although response alternative C might not be considered to be a definition of intercultural communication by the experts within the area.

What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- A - Communication across cultural boundaries
- B - How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- C - A specific way of communicating between different cultures.



Nevertheless, four volunteers and four Costa Ricans (excluding the Costa Rican volunteer) chose response alternative C. Response alternative B was the most popular one for the Costa Ricans, Ecuadorians and the Americans as well as overall with fourteen votes distributed over six different nationalities. Response alternative A was the second most popular with twelve votes also distributed over six different nationalities and was the most popular response alternative among the British volunteers. I find it interesting that none of the different definitions of intercultural communication received significantly more votes than the others and I cannot explain this, because I had not expected that response alternative C would receive as many votes as it did. I had expected it to be a two-horse-race between response alternatives A and B. However, I was also surprised to see how many had never heard of intercultural communication before, especially among the volunteers, because all the volunteers I met and talked with had all as a minimum finished an upper secondary education and many also had a university degree. Unfortunately, I did not think to ask the locals about their educational background, so I cannot really compare the educational background of the volunteers with that of the locals.

To sum up, nearly all of the locals answered that they had heard of intercultural communication before and those who did not answer 'yes' answered 'maybe'. The volunteers were almost evenly divided between those who had, those who had not and those who maybe had heard of intercultural communication before. When asked what they thought it refers to, the responses were almost evenly divided between the three response alternatives, with response alternative B (how people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them) receiving two votes more than A and four more than C.

### Discussion

As mentioned in the analysis, some of the responses from the volunteers and the locals were quite surprising to me and different from what I had expected. This made me curious to find out whether the culture clashes that should have occurred according to Hofstede's theory occurred and between who they occurred. When looking at the different countries' score in Hofstede's four dimensions<sup>23</sup>, there are some noticeable differences between some of the countries, which could and perhaps should have caused some culture clashes, but did they?

### Individualism

In the dimension Individualism, it is clear to see that there is a large gap between the two Latin-American countries and the US, Australia and the European countries with Costa Rica and Ecuador scoring respectively 15 and 8 in the Individualism Index whereas the US, Australia and the European countries all scored between 67 and 91 with the US scoring 91 and thereby ranking no. 1 in this dimension in total (Hofstede: 2005, pp. 78-79). As such, culture clashes within this dimension are to be expected with such a large gap between the individualist countries such as the US, Great Britain and Australia, and the collectivist countries such as Ecuador and Costa Rica. However, none of the volunteers have mentioned anything that frustrated them about the Ecuadorian and Costa Rican culture that can be related to this dimension other than the communication. As mentioned in the analysis, two of the British volunteers in Ecuador characterised their communication with the locals as – not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do. This could be related to the volunteers' Spanish skills and the Ecuadorians' English skills; however, it could also be related to the individualism dimension as high-context communication prevails in collectivist countries such as Ecuador.

One of the Costa Ricans, a young male, gave a surprising answer to question 9 – what aspects of the volunteers' culture has frustrated you, if any? Because his answer was their independence<sup>24</sup>, which is something that is very relevant to this dimension as it shows the differences in children's up-bringing in collectivist and individualist countries. In collectivist countries, such as Costa Rica, children are taught interdependence i.e. to rely on the family and vice versa, whereas children in individualist countries, such as Great Britain, are taught to be independent.

Overall these two examples were the only ones I came across in regards to the dimension Individualism, which is not much considering what could have been. Hypothetically, the collectivist

---

<sup>23</sup> As mentioned earlier, Hofstede discovered five dimensions, however, as he does not have data from some of the nationalities I encountered in one of his dimensions, Long- and short-term orientation I have decided not to use it.

<sup>24</sup> Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica no. 9

Costa Ricans and Ecuadorians could have been frustrated with the individualist volunteers' habit of putting their own interests before those of the group as is common practice in individualist countries. And many of the individualist volunteers could hypothetically have been frustrated with the collectivist Costa Ricans and Ecuadorians' habit of putting group harmony above all else including speaking one's mind. Nevertheless, none, neither the locals nor the volunteers have made any such reference, which I find quite interesting.

#### Power Distance

In the dimension Power Distance only Ecuador has a score that is significantly higher than the ten remaining nationalities I encountered (ibid. p. 43). This means that if any culture clashes were to occur within this dimension, they should have occurred in Ecuador between the locals and the volunteers at the various projects. Out of the six volunteers who worked on projects in Ecuador, two of them had noticed a cultural difference between themselves and the locals that can relate to this dimension. They, an Australian and a Dane, were both frustrated with the locals' work ethics and discipline, which can be related with their countries different scores in the Power Distance Index, as in countries with large power distance, such as Ecuador, the employees are used to being told what to do and how to do it by the employer and therefore not used to taking initiative; whereas in countries with small power distance, such as Australia and Denmark, the employees are used to taking initiative in work situations. As such, people from countries with small power distance can perceive people from countries with large power distance as lacking discipline, because they rely on their superior to tell them how to solve a problem or execute a work tasks as well as what work task to execute.

Another aspect of this dimension that came to my attention that shows the differences between countries with small and large power distance is the strong ties with family. In one of my conversations with one of the local Ecuadorians, a 47-year-old female, she told me that her mother died at a young age and as the oldest of 14 she took over the role of mother and raised her younger siblings. This is a very good example of the strong ties with family as well as the dependence on family which are quite characteristic of countries with large power distance, where the relationship with family is usual very strong.

Overall two out of six volunteers in Ecuador noticed a cultural difference that relates to this dimension, which means that one third of the volunteers noticed these differences including myself and therefore I would say that there were some culture clashes within this dimension, however, it was not only in Ecuador that they occurred. Because some of the volunteers in Costa Rica also

noticed some cultural differences that can be related with this dimension, namely work ethics including efficiency. The Japanese/Australian volunteer observed a difference in efficiency between what she is used to at home in the UK and at her project in Costa Rica. However, this difference in efficiency did not cause any frustration, it was merely an observation. One of the British volunteers and the Danish and Costa Rican volunteer were all frustrated with different aspects of the local Costa Ricans' work ethics, which is quite surprising as Costa Rica and Great Britain have the same score in the Power Distance Index, but Denmark has a lower score than Costa Rica, which can help explain the difference in work ethics noticed by the Danish volunteer (ibid.). As such, some of the volunteers and locals experienced culture clashes that were to be expected according to the countries' respective score in the Power Distance Index, however, there also occurred some culture clashes that were not as expected, because the countries involved had the same score and one of the volunteers who noticed a difference in work ethics was furthermore Costa Rican working on a project in Costa Rica.

#### Uncertainty Avoidance

In the dimension Uncertainty Avoidance the scores of the respective countries are more evenly divided than in the other dimensions, however, there are some differences in that Costa Rica, Ecuador, Germany and Japan<sup>25</sup> all have a score well above 50 with Costa Rica and Japan as the highest scorers; whereas Great Britain has a score just above 30 and Denmark and Sweden both have a score below 30 (ibid. pp. 168-169). This means that if any culture clashes were to occur within this dimension, they would most likely occur between Costa Rica, Ecuador and Germany, i.e. the countries with high uncertainty avoidance and Great Britain, Denmark and Sweden i.e. the countries with low uncertainty avoidance according to Hofstede's theory.

When looking at the responses from the locals and volunteers, none of them really seem to mention anything that frustrated or irritated them that can be related to this dimension. I find this very interesting, because theoretically there should have been some misunderstandings or frustrations related to this dimension, but there does not seem to be any, at least not any that the locals and volunteers have experienced or observed. Hypothetically, some of the people from countries with low uncertainty avoidance, such as Great Britain and Sweden, could have been frustrated with the need for rules they might find unnecessary, but people from countries with high uncertainty avoidance, such as Costa Rica and Germany, find them very necessary. Moreover, some of the people from countries with high uncertainty avoidance could have been frustrated with

---

<sup>25</sup> One of the volunteers defined her nationality as Japanese/Australian and therefore is Japan included.

the lenient attitude towards rules that some of the people from countries with low uncertainty avoidance might have displayed.

However, although none of the locals and other volunteers have not written any observations down that can be related to this dimension, I did notice something at the first project I worked on in Costa Rica, which I found a bit odd at the time, but did not pay any particular attention to and retrospectively it could very well be related to this dimension. At the project at Romelia Wildlife Reserve, I noticed some posters from ASVO<sup>26</sup> hanging around the volunteers' quarters stating the rules for the volunteers working on the project at Romelia. Unfortunately I did not write them down or take a photo of them, nevertheless I do recall some of them, although not the exact wording of them, such as 'Act mindfully', 'No alcoholic drinks', 'No use of illegal drugs' etc. To me, many of these rules seemed unnecessary to have in writing all over the volunteers' quarters, because I think of them as common sense when working as a volunteer abroad. I did not think anymore of it until I was writing the theory section, more specifically about uncertainty avoidance and then I realised that although I find these rules unnecessary, they are very important to the local Costa Ricans, because rules in general are very important to people from countries with high uncertainty avoidance, such as Costa Rica, as they represent an emotional need.

#### Masculinity

In the dimension Masculinity, Sweden, Denmark and Costa Rica all have a very low score especially compared with the US, Switzerland (Ger.), Ecuador, Great Britain, Australia, Japan and Canada who all have a high score as well as a relatively even score with the exception of Japan who has a slightly higher score than the rest (ibid. pp.120-121). When looking at the responses from the volunteers, there is one thing that many of them have noticed and that is the local men's seemingly chauvinistic behaviour towards women as well as the local women's accepting attitude of this behaviour, which is also known as 'machismo'. As explained earlier, 'machismo' refers to a phenomenon known from Latin America where the gender roles are clearly defined and the men are expected to be very macho and the women are expected to be a combination of near-saints and submissive (Hofstede: 2005, p. 129). However, according to Hofstede 'machismo' is mainly known in the masculine Latin American countries where there is also a large power distance, but if that is truly the case then why did the volunteers in Costa Rica observe 'machismo' there, as Costa Rica is a feminine country with a fairly small power distance?

---

<sup>26</sup> The Volunteer Association for the Protected Areas, Costa Rica

When looking at the historical background of Costa Rica along with the cultural profile<sup>27</sup>, some of the country's feminine characteristics are quite evident, such as its highly functional welfare system, the fact that it is a very stable democracy with extremely few civil wars or for that matter wars in general in its history and the fact that it has no standing army. Moreover Costa Rica's desire to protect its natural environments as well as the amount of resources it spends on protecting its nature through national parks and biological reserves are all aspects highly related with femininity. As such, it is quite clear that it is a feminine country, but for some reason it has not had a noticeable effect on the gender roles, more specifically 'machismo', which there could be several reasons for. One reason could be that perhaps 'machismo' is not solely connected with this dimension, but a left-over from the Spanish conquistadores and European settlers who never really left the country in that 94 per cent of the population today are of European descent (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2019.htm>). Because based on my own experiences in Latin America, 'machismo' is quite dominant in all of the Latin American countries I have visited, however, it has been displayed in different ways, such as men shouting or whispering 'bonita' or 'linda' (both words for beautiful) after me in the streets, men following me or walking next to me in an attempt to get my attention or be seen with me by friends and thereby get attention from the local women and men. Nevertheless, I have had similar experiences in Latin Europe, e.g. Spain, Portugal and Italy, which leads me to suspect that it is simply a part of the Latin culture that outsiders cannot truly comprehend or understand and therefore not solely connected with Masculinity, but also something more, however, what exactly I do not know. Moreover, some of the volunteers from masculine countries also observed cases of 'machismo' and some were even frustrated by it, even some of the male volunteers.

As such, many of the culture clashes that somewhat relate to this dimension all revolve around 'machismo' and therefore did not follow the theory as they occurred between the locals of the two Latin American countries and the international volunteers and not between the people from the feminine countries and those from the masculine countries as it should have been according to the theory.

#### External factors

The following is based solely on my observations and experiences in regard to what external factors I think played a role in creating a volunteer culture. As for which external factors that played a role, I have narrowed it down to two; isolation and i-to-i.

---

<sup>27</sup> Both can be found in Appendix III

At the very first project in Ecuador, we were, as mentioned earlier, quite isolated from the rest of the world and therefore did not really have any contact with outsiders during the week. This meant that for the most part we lived in our own little world in the forest and because we were only four people in total, two locals, Luis and his older sister Sonia and two international volunteers, Phil from Scotland and me from Denmark, we soon came to feel like family. I often talked with Phil about this and he agreed with me. He also felt that we were like a small family consisting of a mother, our food-mum Sonia, and three children as Sonia was some years older than the rest of us and Phil and Luis were almost the same age. We all had a set routine; after breakfast, Luis, Phil and I would go to work in the forest or garden and Sonia would clean up the kitchen and start preparing for lunch. When lunch was ready, she would call for us and after lunch we would all return to our respective work tasks with Sonia in the kitchen and the rest of us in the forest or garden. Dinner was served in Sonia's dining room and after dinner Luis, Phil and I would stay and play cards and sometimes Sonia would join us after she had finished cleaning up after dinner. After only a few days in this routine, both Phil and I felt like part of the family and that feeling only somewhat disappeared when real relatives came to visit on the weekends, but even then we did not feel like visitors, we still felt like we belonged there at Rio Bravo Biological Reserve.

At the first project I worked on in Costa Rica at Romelia, there was a similar feeling among the volunteers and locals involved in the project. Although we were only a 30 minute walk away from the nearest town, it felt further away due to the high tides, which made it impossible to walk into town during high tide, because the beaches were completely flooded. The high tides along with the limited free-time due to the sea turtles meant that we only went in to town once or twice a week and only for short periods and therefore spent most our time at Romelia. This also meant that the locals did not go home in the evening or after they had finished their shift, but stayed at the project. There were separate sleeping quarters for the volunteers and locals working on the project, but everything else was shared. This meant that we worked, ate and slept side by side more or less, which gave us plenty of time and opportunity to get to know each other and bond and that is what we did. Again it felt like we had created our own little world where all new-coming volunteers were welcomed in to when they arrived at the project and within a few days it felt like they had been there the whole time. I also noticed that our language changed a bit in the sense that we talked a lot about the sea turtles and took on new vocabulary we learned in connection with our work at the project, such as 'hatchery' and everybody were in tuned with it. Sometimes when we went in to town and meet other volunteers from other projects, I noticed that they often had to ask us to explain some of the things we were talking about, because they did not understand us, as they did not understand what all the words we used meant. I furthermore noticed that the manager at this

project was really good at delegating the work tasks not only to his assistants but also to the volunteers who had expressed experience within a certain field. For instance, I had told him that my grandparents were farmers and that my family had always had a large fruit and vegetable garden, and in return he gave me the responsibility of planting tomatoes in the greenery at the project and told me to take some volunteers with me and one of the assistants, so they could learn how to do it. This display of trust in the volunteers' ability and experience was taken very positively by everyone involved and strengthened the bond between all of us, because it made the volunteers feel more included and it gave the locals the opportunity to learn something new, which they were very interested in.

At the second project I worked on in Costa Rica at Heliconias, things were different than at the two previous projects. Firstly, the project was situated in the outskirts of a small town, which meant that more tourists visited and almost all the locals who worked on the project went home to their families every day after their shift. Secondly, because there was a restaurant at the project where some of the locals from the town came to dine once in a while, we were not as isolated as we had been at the two previous projects. Consequently, there was not the same intimate atmosphere at this project and I did not feel as strongly connected with the locals at the project, because I only saw them during the day when we were working and judging from the responses from some of the locals from this project<sup>28</sup> I was not the only one who felt that way. As mentioned in the analysis, some of the locals from this project had written that they were frustrated that some of the volunteers did not seem interested in interacting with the other workers at the project. However, I do not think that it is solely lack of interest from the volunteers' part, but also lack of opportunity as the only opportunity we had to talk with the other workers at the project was during the lunch break, because after work they went home and we stayed behind. As such, the volunteers mainly bonded with each other, because we were the only ones who were there in the evenings apart from one or two locals working at the front desk.

Overall I would say that isolation played a vital role in creating an intimate atmosphere where the volunteers and locals could bond, because it puts them in a similar situation away from home and family. This also increased the willingness and opportunity of the locals and volunteers to form a relationship that was desired and entered voluntarily, but still based on the given circumstances in that there was nobody else to talk with. Because the two first projects were almost completely isolated from the rest of the world, we were able to create our own little world, which consisted of

---

<sup>28</sup> I know the responses came from the locals from this project, because at first I kept the questionnaires from the locals separate according to the different projects.

several different people and therefore also of different aspects of different cultures, which we all brought with us.

The other external factor that I think played a role in creating a volunteer culture is, as mentioned earlier, i-to-i. During the in-country orientation the local i-to-i staff gave us all a description of the local culture, what to expect in general and at the projects as well as the do's and don'ts of their country along with what is considered sociable acceptable behaviour in the local communities. All these pieces of information helped us volunteers to get pass the initial culture shock, because we were prepared for it and we had been told how to handle the different situations. I think it also gave us the courage to be more open-minded than usual and more acceptable to trying new things and not expect everything to be as we are used to.

To sum up, many of the culture clashes I had expected to occur according to theory often did not occur and the culture clashes that did occur were often few and not as severe as they could have been when looking at the different countries' respective scores within the four dimensions. Furthermore, there were also some culture clashes that occurred, which cannot completely be explained by the theory, namely machismo. As for which external factors that played a role, I would say that the isolated placement of two of the projects played a vital role in connecting the people working on the project with each other, thereby giving us the opportunity to create our own world or culture without many disturbances from the outside world. Moreover, I also think that the organisation i-to-i played an important role, as the local i-to-i office prepared us for what was to come and gave us the tools to deal with the new and different aspects of the local culture, which helped many volunteers get passed the initial culture shock and thereby giving us the courage to be more open-minded as well as more acceptable of becoming part of something new and for many people different, namely the opportunity of being a part of a volunteer culture.

## Conclusion

The two questions I have been searching for an answer for throughout this thesis are:

*When volunteers from different countries work together on a project, do they create a mutual culture that surpasses their national cultures? And what external factors play a role?*

To answer the second question first, I have noticed that isolation in regard to the location of the project plays a vital role for several reasons. First and foremost, it puts the volunteers and the

locals in a similar situation in that both parties do not have the possibility of going home in the evenings, but live, eat, work and sleep side by side everyday. Secondly, because they live together, they have the time and opportunity to really get to know each other and thereby create an intimate and homey atmosphere. Thirdly, because there was limited contact to the outside world, it reinforced the feeling that we had created our own little world. Furthermore, as the first two projects I worked on were quite isolated compared to the last project I worked on in Costa Rica, I was able to observe and experience the significance of isolation. Based on that I would say that an isolated location of a project provides very good conditions for the people involved in the project to create their own little world and thereby a mutual culture.

Another external factor, I would say played a role is the organisation i-to-i in that all the pieces of information they gave to us during the in-country orientation were something we could use at our respective projects. During the in-country orientation all of us volunteers also had the opportunity to get to know each other before we went out to our respective projects, which gave us the feeling of having a network in a foreign country and that is a very reassuring feeling to have, because then you do not feel so alone.

Overall isolation and i-to-i played a role in giving the opportunity and the tools to create a mutual culture. However, I would not say that they are the only external factors that played a role; they are just the ones I have observed. There could easily be other factors that I have not noticed for different reasons or do not feel qualified to comment on, such as personality.

As for the first question, I would say that based on several different aspects all covered in the analysis and the discussion that the volunteers in cooperation with the locals create a mutual culture, a volunteer culture, which to some degree surpasses their national cultures. When looking at the communication, the vast majority of both the locals and the volunteers would characterise their communication with each other as being fantastic, excellent or good, but with some misunderstandings. When asked what had been the most challenging aspect in communicating with the locals, almost all of the volunteers answered the language barrier and it was not until that was taken out of the equation that some of them answered something else. Overall, almost everybody agreed that the communication had been either fantastic or good, which is a very positive result.

Both the volunteers and the locals observed and experienced cultural differences, but not as many as there could have been according to Hofstede's theory. When looking at the different countries'

respective scores in four of Hofstede's dimensions, there should have been more culture clashes than what the volunteers and locals noticed, at least in theory. However, when looking at the responses from the locals and volunteers it is clear to see that many of the culture clashes that should have occurred often did not. Nevertheless, in the case of 'machismo' it was the reverse situation as it was also noticed by the volunteers in Costa Rica, where it should not have occurred according to the theory.

In conclusion, I would say that the volunteers and locals involved in the projects created a mutual culture that surpassed their national cultures. However, those projects that are located in isolated areas provide a better foundation for creating such a culture in that there are so few disturbances from the outside world and the people involved in the project live together. Furthermore, the information that the volunteers received from i-to-i also helps, in that it prepares the volunteers for what is to come and gives them the tools to handle it.

Moreover, I believe that the mutual culture at the various projects is a combination of the local culture and the cultural influences from the different international volunteers who have worked on the projects over the years the projects have existed. As such, it is almost always changing as it to some degree adapts to the people working on the projects at a specific time. This means that when a new group of volunteers arrive at a project, they adapt to the culture at the project, but the culture also to some extent adapts to them and their cultural backgrounds as the foundations for a volunteer culture have already been laid by those who have worked on the project previously, but the new-comers also have an influence on it; that is at least my theory.

Based on the responses from the locals and the volunteers as well as my conversations with them, I would say that the other volunteers also felt that they became a part of the local community at the projects and to some degree felt at home at the projects and in some cases even like part of the family. That sense of belonging along with good communication laid the foundations for creating a mutual culture, a volunteer culture; however, some external factors do play a role, such as isolation and the organisation i-to-i.

## List of references

### Literature:

**McKenzie, George; Powell, Jackie & Usher, Robin (ed)** (1997) *“Understanding Social Research: Perspectives on Methodology and Practice”*

London, Falmer Press

**Hofstede, Geert** (2002). *“Dimensions Do Not Exist: A Reply to Brendan McSweeney.”*

Published in Human Relations Vol. 55, No. 11, [November] 2002, pp. 1355-1361

**Hofstede, Geert & Hofstede, Gert Jan** (2005). *“Cultures and Organizations – Software of the Mind.”*

Revised and expanded second edition, New York, McGraw-Hill

**Palmerlee, Danny; Armstrong, Kate; Bao, Sandra; Benson, Sara; Brash, Celeste; Green, Molly; Kohn, Michael; Kohnstamm, Thomas; McCarthy, Carolyn; St Louis, Regis & Vidgen, Lucas** (2007). *“South America – on a shoestring.”*

Tenth edition, Singapore, Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd.

**Rachowiecki, Rob** (2002). *“Costa Rica.”*

Fifth edition, Victoria (Australia), Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd.

**Rickman, H.P.** (1990). *“Science and Hermeneutics”*

Published in Philosophy of the Social Sciences Vol. 20, No. 3, 1990, pp. 295-316

**Crane, Robert & Rizowy, Carlos** (2005). *“Latin American Business Cultures.”*

New Jersey, Pearson Prentice Hall™

**Trompenaars, Fons & Hampden-Turner, Charles** (2003). *“Riding the waves of culture – understanding cultural diversity in business.”*

Second edition, London, Nicholas Brealey Publishing

**Rasmussen, Erik S; Østergaard, Per & Beckmann, Suzanne C.** (2006). *“Essentials of Social Science Research Methodology.”*

A volunteer culture?  
Britt Stridh Christensen

Odense, University Press of Southern Denmark

**McSweeney, Brendan** (2002). *"Hofstede's Model of /ational Cultural Differences and Their Consequences: A triumph of faith - A failure of analysis"* (full length version)

Published in Human Relations, Vol. 55, No. 1, [January] 2002, pp. 89-118

**McAuley, John** (1985). *"Hermeneutics as a Practical Research Methodology in Management"*

Published in Human Relations, Vol. 16, No. 3, [March] 1985, pp. 292-299

Websites:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/north-central-america/costa-rica;jsessionid=5B408B206E547D3FD76CE1AA663B446D.tomcat2> The Foreign and Commonwealth Office

[www.i-to-i.com](http://www.i-to-i.com)

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2019.htm> - The U.S. Department of State's background notes on Costa Rica

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35761.htm> - The U.S. Department of State's background notes on Ecuador

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35761.htm> The U.S. Department of State

[http://www.inbio.ac.cr/en/inbio/inb\\_queinbio.htm](http://www.inbio.ac.cr/en/inbio/inb_queinbio.htm) - The National Biodiversity Institute of Costa Rica

<http://www.heliconiaslodge.com> - Las Heliconias Eco Lodge 09.10.2010

## **Appendix I - i-to-i** History

i-to-i was founded in 1995 by Deidre Bounds who decided to start her own ethic travel company after spending time abroad teaching English as a foreign language in Japan, China and Greece. She started with offering weekend courses where people could learn how to teach English as a foreign language (TEFL) and from there it just took off.

Today i-to-i train more than 10,000 TEFL teachers a year and the TEFL course is accredited by the Open and Distance Learning Council (ODLQC), which is a guardian of the British government to ensure quality in open and distance learning. It was set up by the British government in 1968, but is today an independent organisation (kilde). In the travel section, i-to-i place over 5,000 volunteers in locally run and operated projects all over the world on an annual basis.

## Philosophy

On their website, i-to-i writes: "Respectful and informed cultural exchange is at the very heart of what we do"(kilde). There are several other places where they emphasises that going abroad with them, especially as a volunteer, is not only a life changing experience but also a unique cultural experience, as the volunteers not only work alongside the local people on the projects but also live with them in the local community. As such, the volunteers will gain a better understanding of the local way of life, because they are experiencing it on a daily basis and thereby gain a deeper insight in the local culture.

i-to-i is against aid reliance and therefore does not give direct funding to the projects they work with but have instead created a fund from which the projects can apply for financial support. i-to-i instead seeks to support the local community by using locally run accommodation for the volunteers and locally owned transport. This means that the booking fee that the volunteers pay i-to-i does not go directly to the project they are going to work on, but does support the local community as it pays for food, accommodation and transport for the volunteer.

i-to-i also points out on their website that the cultural exchange that takes place between the volunteers and the local community goes both ways. Not only do the volunteers gain a better and deeper understanding of the local culture but also give the local people the opportunity of learning about a new country and culture they might not have heard of before or would ever have had the possibility of learning about. As i-to-i writes on their website: "By taking these small steps (and travelling with an open mind) maybe, just maybe, we can all become a little closer and break down the misunderstandings and stereotypes that separate us". (kilde)

### The organisation

Today i-to-i is an international organisation with offices in the UK, US, Ireland and Australia and cooperates with other travel agencies such as STA Travel and Lonely Planet to name a few. On a worldwide basis i-to-i employs 130 people whereof 50 work full time in the i-to-i offices, 40 are overseas coordinators, 30 are freelance TEFL tutors and 10 are in-country leaders. All of these employees contribute to sending more than 5,000 volunteers to 500 countries in 5 continents a year as well as train 15,000 TEFL teachers whereof 500 of them end in paid teaching jobs abroad.

### The projects

The projects that i-to-i cooperates with are all locally run and locally organised meaning that they have either been started by the local community or a local NGO. In Costa Rica i-to-i also cooperates with the organisation ASVO, the Volunteer Association for the Protected Areas, which is a non-profit ONG. Everybody who wants to work as a volunteer on any conservation project in Costa Rica must register with ASVO including i-to-i volunteers.

In order to ensure that the projects i-to-i cooperates with are safe for the volunteers to work on, i-to-i has created i-to-i Venturesafe, whose responsibility it is to set an industry standard for volunteers and travellers to refer to. As such, i-to-i is the first volunteer travel company that has developed an external monitoring system that assess risk levels at the different projects they send volunteers to. It falls under the responsibility of the in-country coordinators to assess all the projects and suppliers in their respective countries in order to ensure that they comply with i-to-i safety standards. The projects and the suppliers are also audited on a regular basis to make sure that they continue to meet the standards set by i-to-i Venturesafe. Furthermore, i-to-i Venturesafe keeps a detailed database of all accidents and incidents overseas in order to track and record them.

## Appendix II -Ecuador

In order to write a historically accurate timeline with the most important events, I have used three different sources for information, so that it would not be too one-sided. The three sources I have used are the Lonely Planet: South America on a shoestring, Latin American Business Cultures and the U.S. Department of State's background notes on Ecuador, which is also the primary source used for facts and figures as it contain the latest figures from 2009.

Ecuador is the second smallest country in South America and is one of the most bio diverse countries in the world. Unlike Costa Rica, Ecuador has a long and rich indigenous history that continues up until today. Before the Incas arrived to Ecuador in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, there were three important indigenous cultures present in Ecuador and they were the Cañari in the south, the Quito-Caras, who were a merger of the peaceful Quito from the highlands and the expansionist Cara from the Coast and together the Quito-Caras were the dominant force in the highlands until the 1300s where the third culture, the Puruchá, became increasingly powerful in the highlands. When the Incas reached Ecuador in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, they encountered fierce resistance from both the Cañari and the Quito-Caras. However, Incas triumphed over both these cultures and in just one battle near the city Otavalo, the Incas massacred thousands of Caras and then dumped the bodies in a nearby lake thereby turning its water red of blood according to legend. This gave the lake its name Laguna Yaguarcocha, which means Lake of Blood. The subjugation of all of Ecuador especially the north took many years during which time the Inca ruler Tupac had fathered a son, Huayna, with a Cañari princess. Huayna grew up in Ecuador and when the time came he succeeded his father Tupac as ruler of the Inca Empire. Huayna fathered two sons, Atahualpa and Huáscar, and when he died in 1525 he left the Empire not to one son as was tradition, but to both his sons, which caused internal struggles that lead to civil war. After a couple of years of civil war, Atahualpa managed to defeat his brother, but when the Spanish conquistadores arrived in Peru in 1532 it was a weakened and still divided Empire he was ruling. It only took the Spanish three years to fight off the Inca warriors and thereby control the former Inca Empire. Although many indigenous people died of diseases and in battle against the Spanish, there were still enough left for the Spanish to organise a system of forced labour.

It took more than 250 years for the first serious attempt of independence from Spain took place. In 1809 a partisan group took Quito and installed a government, but it only lasted 24 days as royalist troop regained control of Quito. In 1822 the independent forces succeeded in defeating the royalist troop and Ecuador joined Simon Bolivar's Republic of Gran Colombia. Ecuador, however, only remained a part of Gran Colombia for eight years and in 1830 it became fully independent. For the next couple of decades, political instability marked the country as warfare between liberals and

conservatives took place. The rivalry between the two political wings also took place geographically as Quito emerged as the main centre for the church-backed conservatives and Guayaquil, the second largest city in Ecuador, as the main centre for the liberals and socialists. The rivalry has escalated to violence on several occasions and in some cases even extreme violence. In 1875 the conservative president García Moreno was shot and killed and in 1912 the liberal president Eloy Alfaro was killed and burned by a mob in Quito.

The political turbulence continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century including a period of military dictatorship from 1972 until 1979 before Ecuador returned to democracy. On two separate occasions, the power to rule the country has been handed over to the vice-president. The first occasion was a culmination of many things, the last one being when President Mahuad declared his plan to exchange the national currency to US dollars due to the country's severe financial problems. On 21 January 2000 protesters led by a three-person junta forced Mahuad to resign and handed the power over to vice-president Noboa who went along with the dollarization. The other occasion was in 2002 when Colonel Lucio Gutiérrez, one of the members of the three-person junta, won the presidential election based on a leftist, populist agenda and promises to end governmental corruption. However, shortly after taking office he backed down on his promises, adopted a relatively conservative fiscal policy and expelled his rivals from the Supreme Court among other things, which all lead to a public uproar and in April 2005 the Congress decided by vote to replace Gutiérrez with vice-president Alfredo Palacios.

On 29 November 2007 a new constitution was drafted and came into effect in October 2008 and became Ecuador's 20<sup>th</sup> constitution since independence from Spain. The political instability in Ecuador is reflected in its popular disillusionment, traditional power structures and weak political institutions, which is clearly shown in the organisation of the political parties that have historically been loose and dependent on a charismatic leader to secure votes rather than ideology. This type of politics is very common in Latin American and is known as *personalismo*. In the 1996 election the indigenous population participated actively thereby abandoning their traditional shunning of elections. They now play an important role in Ecuadorian politics as they account for approximately 25 per cent of Ecuador's 14.5 million population (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35761.htm>), which is a massive difference to Costa Rica's 1 per cent.

### Cultural profile

When looking at Ecuador according to Hofstede's theories, it is clear that Ecuador has a relatively large power distance and is furthermore extremely collectivist ranking 73 out of 74 on the individualism index along with Guatemala just below and Panama, Venezuela and neighbouring

country Colombia above. This combination of large power distance and strong collectivism is quite typical for Latin American countries and the Latin American need for charismatic political leaders, personalismo, is a great example of this. On the masculinity index Ecuador scores fairly high and substantially higher than Costa Rica and ranks 17-18 along with South Africa and closely followed by the US and Australia. On the uncertainty avoidance index Ecuador is in the lower half ranking 42 just above Germany and is furthermore the lowest ranking Latin American country in this dimension.

### Appendix III - Costa Rica

In order to write a historically accurate timeline with the most important events, I used three different sources for information so that it would not be too one-sided. The three sources I have used are the Lonely Planet: Costa Rica, Latin American Business Cultures and the U.S. Department of State's background notes on Costa Rica, which is also used as the primary source for facts and figures as it contains the latest figures from 2009. I furthermore used the National Biodiversity Institute of Costa Rica as the primary source for the part about the Costa Rican environment and the facts and figures hereof.

Costa Rica is a quite remarkable country and differs from most other Latin American countries in more than one way. Historically Costa Rica stands out as it is one of the very few Latin American countries that hardly has any visible artefacts left from its pre-Colombian era. There are several reasons for this; however, the main ones are that the location of the country along with its high mountains and swampy lowlands impeded the migration of advanced cultures such as the Aztecs and Mayas. Another reason is that at that time Costa Rica was sparsely populated by indigenous people, who were poorly organised and offered little resistance to the conquering Spaniards who killed the majority part of the indigenous population with the diseases they brought with them. Of the present 4.3 million population only 1 per cent is of indigenous extraction and 94 per cent are of European descent (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2019.htm>).

During the colonial era, Costa Rica was one of the poorest colonies in the Spanish empire and as there were only very few indigenous people left and there were no resources to import slaves with, the settlers had to do all the work themselves. Consequently, Costa Rica was not under strong Spanish rule and therefore went its own way. This distance from Spain became even more evident in 1821 when the news of Central America's declaration of independence from Spain did not reach Costa Rica until one month after it had taken place. Shortly thereafter, Costa Rica joined the other Central American countries in the United Provinces of Central America in 1823. Because Costa Rica had not had strong colonial institutions and there had been an early modernisation of the economy along with an increased export of coffee, the country became more successful with stable foundations for democracy. As the export of coffee grew, the many coffee growers became increasingly rich and in particular three families became quite powerful and are still considered to be so today in the sense that they have provided the majority of Costa Rica's presidents. The shift to democracy took place in 1889 as the first democratic elections were held where the rich coffee growers as well as the poor peasants voted.

The 1940s marked a decade with social reforms such as land reform, minimum wage, paid vacation and social security that were supported by the poor and criticised by the rich. It was also the decade in which the 40-days civil war took place, which claimed over 2,000 lives. This civil war was a result of tensions in connection with allegations of fraud in the presidential election in 1948. In the year after the civil war, the Costa Rican Constitution came into effect in which blacks and women were given the right to vote, a neutral election tribunal was established to ensure fair and free elections, a presidential term limit was established and the armed forces were outlawed leaving Costa Rica without a standing army, which still holds true today.

After the formation of the Constitution, the country returned to stability with social and economic progress as well as free and fair elections. It was not until the 1980s that Costa Rica experienced another crisis, but this time it was a financial crisis leaving the country with the unfortunate honour of having the greatest debt per capita in the whole world. The financial crisis and the overwhelming debt were a result of many different aspects such as the costs of social welfare, plummeting prices on coffee, banana and sugar as well as the disruption to trade caused by the war in the neighbour country, Nicaragua. In 1986 Costa Rica elected Oscar Arias as president and his main efforts to help the country out of the crisis consisted of bringing peace to all of Central America. In 1987 his efforts paid off as his Central American peace plan was signed by the five other Central American presidents. Arias later went on to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his achievements.

Today Costa Rica is known for its export of coffee, banana and sugar as well as its incredibly rich and diverse nature, which draws over 1.5 million tourists a year to the country. Costa Rica is furthermore one of the top 20 most bio diverse countries in the world and more than 500,000 species are found here that makes up 4 per cent of the total species found worldwide. As such, Costa Rica has spent substantial resources on protecting its environment and today a little more than 25 per cent of the country is under some kind of governmental protection, which has also boosted the country's ecotourism. Costa Rica has furthermore a very comprehensive legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, which has been further strengthened by the enactment of the Biodiversity Law from 1998 ([http://www.inbio.ac.cr/en/inbio/inb\\_queinbio.htm](http://www.inbio.ac.cr/en/inbio/inb_queinbio.htm)). Costa Rica moreover stands out from other Central American countries by having the highest social indicators in health and education in the region with a literacy rate of 95.2 per cent and a health care system of the highest standard in Latin America (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2019.htm>).

### Cultural profile

When looking at Costa Rica's ranking in Hofstede's 4 dimensions<sup>29</sup>, the Costa Rican culture can be described as having an exceptionally low power distance especially compared to other Latin American countries but also quite group oriented, which is an usual combination as the countries with low power distance such as Great Britain and Australia for the most part are individualistic. Costa Rica is in fact an exception to the Latin American rule of dependence on a charismatic, political leaders also known as *personalismo*<sup>30</sup>. In the masculinity – femininity dimension, Costa Rica scores the highest feminine ranking of all the Latin American countries though closely followed by Chile. Costa Rica's social welfare system along with its efforts to protect its natural environment are good examples of the feminine characteristics described by Hofstede. As for the uncertainty avoidance dimension, Costa Rica scores fairly high and is ranked 17-22 along with among other Argentina, Chile, Panama and the old colonial power Spain.

---

<sup>29</sup> In this case it is only 4 as Costa Rica and Ecuador are not ranked in the fifth dimension – the long term orientation Index.

<sup>30</sup> For more information on personalismo, please see "Ecuador".

#### **Appendix IV - Information from i-to-i**



## **About Romelia Wildlife Refuge**

The Romelia Refuge is located far south from Nicoya Peninsula, in Puntarenas province and it has a total area of 415 acres. The Romelia Refuge protects beach and tropical forest areas on the coast close to Montezuma.

The date of creation of the park was October 24<sup>th</sup> 1997. ASVO are currently placing focus on this park try to make improvements. Currently there are no park facilities at Romelia, although people do pass by the beach.

The nearby community of Montezuma is where you can find public transportation service, hotels, restaurants, Internet service, supermarkets and Canopy Tours. In Cóbano (approx 30 minutes) there is a postal office, Banco Nacional de Costa Rica (bank), drug store, doctors and hardware stores.

Other protected areas close to Romelia Wildlife Refuge are Cabo Blanco, the Curú Mixed Wild Life Refuge and the Absolute Natural Reserve Nicolás Wessberg.



## About ASVO

The Volunteer Association for the Protected Areas, ASVO, is non-profit ONG, with no political or religious affinity, that was founded in January 27th, 1989.

ASVO's objective is to improve the conditions and usage of volunteer work, at a national and international level, without age, sex or profession distinction.

ASVO offers participation opportunities through its occasional volunteering national and international program, and its permanent volunteering national program that includes activities in Control and Protection, Environmental Education and Investigation.

## The mission

To accomplish our objectives through an effective, systematic and integral management approach, which is also highly productive, will strengthen the different volunteering projects and the involvement of our members through teamwork, commitment, self development and loyalty.

## The vision

Volunteer work that supports investigation, education and conservation of the environment with social commitment; To establish strategic alliances with non governmental and governmental agencies for the fulfillment of its goals; governed by objectives that allow the organization to grow in an autonomous and self-sufficient way capable to fund its own projects and activities.

## **Appendix V – Questionnaire volunteers**

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: Danish

Age: 27

Sex: female

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☒ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☒ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☐ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

how people act in and re-act to the new surroundings. some of the volunteers are very frustrated that things are very different from what they are used to, other just go with the flow

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

the different volunteers and the locals

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

Sometimes

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

behaviour, facial features, clothes

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

everything is done at their pace and time and often you don't finish one job before moving on to the next, so you constantly have halfly finished projects/work tasks around you. Also that if you give them an idea on how to solve a work task, they ignore your idea.

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

We are all accustomed to a different way of life and people handle this very differently. Some people just adapt and go with the flow, where others just complain about everything that will be different.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

My sometimes limited Spanish. I really wish that my Spanish was better and my vocabulary bigger.

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

Sometimes I didn't always understand what task they wanted me to do, because they only gave instructions such as 'dig a hole there', but didn't tell me what they needed the hole for, so I was confused as to how deep and big a hole I should dig.

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☐ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☒ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: Jpns/Australian

Age: 29

Sex: f

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☐ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☐ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☐ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

A work ethic and the concept of efficiency and time differed a lot to what I am used to in UK.

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

Costa Ricans and American/British/Canadians etc

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

No.

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?  
Efficiency. But I wouldn't say it frustrated me that much. It was just more relaxed.

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?  
Hard to say because I didn't go on the trip looking to understand other cultures specifically. I went to volunteer and make new friends and have a nice time . But it would mainly be the level of standards that westerners are accustomed to. Ie – slightly higher than in Latin America.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals? My limited Spanish held me back slightly but the locals are so friendly and understanding they do not make me feel lost.

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier? It is difficult to complain about standards of service or delivery times for meals etc as wha we are used to and what they are used to is different.

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☐ Communication across cultural boundaries

- How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- A specific way of communicating between different cultures



## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: USA

Age: 23

Sex: Female

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of life of a given nation/region.
- ☒ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☒ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

In Costa Rica, people are MUCH more laid back than in the U.S. Their concept of time is very casual. There is no such thing as punctuality. I also find people to be much more friendly here. They are a very friendly people in general.

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

I think it's easy to find differences among all the people I've encountered from different cultures/countries, however, what is more important, and has had the most impact on me, is the similarities you find in people ~~from~~ no matter their origin.

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

Not really ha... Sometimes but usually in the general vicinity.

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

Their language...

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

Punctuality - Tico time!

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

Interests, work ethic, sense of humor

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

Their speed of talk - I need my despacio to understand ha....

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

Sometimes too friendly and talkative - I can't go anywhere without someone trying to talk to me and it's nice to not have to talk sometimes

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☐ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☒ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: British

Age: 25

Sex: Female

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of life of a given nation/region.
- ☒ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☒ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

The pace of life compared to the Ticos – theirs is much slower + disorganised  
 Manners compared to some Germans – have found them to be quite rude + impatient  
 Behaviour of the men in Costa Rica – very over-friendly + 'steazy' on several occasions  
 that often makes me feel uncomfortable but they seem to be the same way

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences? with Ticos too so it's obvious just their way + they're not all like it.

As above

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

Some people I can make a good guess such as Costa Ricans after having been here  
 + Germans + Americans but it's never completely obvious until  
 they start speaking, + even then it could be tricky to  
 guess.

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

Often hair colour / dress sense. For example many Spaniards have dark hair, are tanned + wear a lot of piercings + tattoos. Americans tend to wear more sporty clothes + head bands.

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

It has taken a while to adjust to the way they work - no schedules + even if something is meant to be done at a certain time it often isn't, also the type of work often seems somewhat pointless when there are other more important jobs to be done in my opinion.

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

Similar way of working back home compared to the Ticos, similar standards of cleanliness / eating habits.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

Sometimes the language as my Spanish is bad but many of the Costa Ricans have very good English.

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

The working ethic - how sometimes they expect us to work for 4<sup>1/2</sup> hours in the middle of the night with little sleep for many nights after working all morning + afternoon then struggling to get a day off to rest. They don't seem to understand but then they would give us the morning off when we don't need it.

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?  
☒ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ Maybe  
it - it's just a case of re-adjusting to their way of life + rolling with it - Tranquillite + Pura Vida!

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☒ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☐ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: *British*

Age: *28*

Sex: *Male*

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☒ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☐ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☒ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☐ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

*Yes. Generally.*

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

Accents, language, Stereotypes

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

None at all,

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

Similar mindsets + outlooks on life

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

Limited Spanish on my part,

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No
- ☐ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☐ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☒ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: BRITISH

Age: 33

Sex: M

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of life of a given nation/region.
- ☒ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☒ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

Looking at Tico families the majority of people above the age of about 23 have spouses or children. This is different to the demographic that I am used to in England.

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

Ticos + Brits.

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

Not all the time, Americans, and some European countries I can tell, Canadians and now I notice the difference between Ticos and Nicos.

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

Europeans : accent  
Americans : dress / clothing  
Ticos / Nicos : look

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

I expected the food to be a real problem as I am vegetarian but in fact there has been little problem. Only on a couple of occasions have I explained vegetarianism and often meat in my meal.

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

As far as popular culture is concerned most volunteers are aware of American TV and British music. Discussions of family / travel and education are normally fruitful, most people like to talk about these things.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

The language barrier and accent.

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

I have found the locals to be, on the whole, interested in a wide range of topics for communication but found it interesting that, at one project I worked on locals who were known to be preachers tried to get involved with the turtle project. Their intention was to improve their English, and this deceitful attitude constituted a barrier for me.

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☒ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☒ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: Swiss

Age: 37

Sex: male

## 1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☒ Culture refers to the ways of life of a given nation/region.
- ☐ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

## 2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☒ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

## 3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

## 4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

People are open and  
they have no problems with  
Tourist and People from other Countries

## 5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

Most in small towns and  
families who is living

## 6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

Sometimes

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

How they look and how they talk

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

Gaiko Panto

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

Same background and  
sometimes same ~~education~~ education

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

I take it more easier and  
flowier now than before

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

they don't take it exactly like in  
Swiss and have no problems when  
something is not perfect how it can be.

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No
- ☐ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☒ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☐ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

6

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: Swedish

Age: 20

Sex: Female

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☒ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☐ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☒ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean (Ben)
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

The way of expressing feelings is different in different countries. ~~It~~ Makes it a lot harder to read people and what they want to say with body language and stuff like that.

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

Between the people here in Costa Rica the most. The guys in the street shouting "BONITA" I don't think I ever could get used to that and feel comfortable and say thank you. And I heard that women here like it. ~~the way~~ m.m the relationship man-woman is different in US and UK from SWE

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

Very often I can. I think it's pretty easy. The clothes gives a lot, but also the look like how ~~they~~ ~~there~~ their faces look like. And definitely when people start to talk.

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

Accent, way of speaking, loudness,  
clothes etc.

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

Guys way of treating girls. Hard ~~to~~ to discuss  
environment problems with them. Marxism. Living with  
a family and accept that ~~that~~ sisters are doing all  
the work for others. Hard for me to try to translate.

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

My ~~the~~ humor is more similar ~~to~~ to Europeans than  
Americans. The girls from Europe and America like doing  
"men stuff" like work hard and sports. Costa Rican  
girls are more "girly".

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

I don't like asking twice about what they said  
which means there's a lot of guessing in my conversation.  
Challenge to not get stuck in a conversation where it's  
too late to say that you don't get it and have to look like  
you do.

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

Locals most of them LOVE to talk and they're not  
always the best listeners.

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☐ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☐ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☒ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: COSTARRICENSE /  
COSTARRICAN

Age: 24

Sex: MASCULINO / MALE

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☒ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☒ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

FOREIGNERS ALSO ARE MORE OPEN MINDED BUT THEY KEEP THE DISTANCE WHEN THEY TRY TO BE SOCIAL. TILOS 'RE MORE COMUNICATIVE BUT MORE IRRESPONSABLES. EUROPEANS FOLLOW AN ORGANIZATION

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences? SCHEME IN THEIR DAILY LIVE.

COSTARRICANS MAYBE DO THINGS BY THEY APPEAR ON THE ROW. WE'RE IN OUR WAY MOSTLY KIND AND WARMFULL, EUROPEANS AT LEAST ARE COLDERES BUT WHEN THEY TRUST YOU THEY

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

NO, ONLY 5 MINUTES AREN'T NECESSARY TO KNOW WHERE 'RE YOU FROM WHEN YOU MEET SOMEONE.

IS MORE DIFFICULT TO GUESS MAYBE A CUP OF COFFEE SHOULD HELP TO KNOW THE OTHER!!! HEHE...

OFFERS YOU A FRIENDSHIP RELATION. ALSO YOUR EDUCATION AN GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ON CULTURAL FOLTS IS BIGGER!!

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

WELL, THE LANGUAGE, PHYSICAL FACTS AND SOME FORMS OF THINKING MAY HELP YOU TO KNOW FROM WHICH REGION MAYBE HE OR SHE IS. BUT ONLY BY THE DAILY LIVING YOU SHOULD KNOW, THAT IN THE CASE OF EUROPEANS THAT'RE SO

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any? SIMILAR BY NEVER BEING ON TIME, BEING SO LAZY AND THE FIRST WAIT FOR THE OTHERS TO DO SOMETHING. THAT'S MELTING WHY WE LIVE IN THE THIRD WORLD. HEHE!!!

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

WELL GLOBALIZATION, INTERNET AND THE CONSUMIST AMERICANS WAY OF LIVE MAYBE MAKE US MORE SIMILAR CAUSE OUR SUPERFICIAL NECESSITIES SOMETIMES ARE THE SAME.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

NO ONE ... BUT BECAUSE I'M FROM ZARAGOZA AND I HAVE A DIFFERENT WAY OF LIFE BY THE CITY I THINK THAT'S EASIER TO ME TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE VOLUNTEERS THAN WITH THE LOCALS.

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

BLEAK AND EDUCATION PATTERNS. SOMETIMES IS DIFFERENT WHEN YOUR BEHAVIOR IS NOT SO COMMON RELATED TO THE BEACH WAY OF LIFE...

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☐ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☒ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: German

Age: 20

Sex: female

## 1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☒ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☐ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

## 2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☒ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☐ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

## 3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☒ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☐ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

## 4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

- simply the way of life. → Pura Vida!  
 - food  
 → other main points e.g.: dirt, healthcare, in time...

## 5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

tourists and costarricans,

backpackers are able to change their point of view and anytime they can change their main points of life

## 6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

not first sight, but it's very easy to say "this is an european and this is a gringo"

The behavior of backpackers and tourists is not the same.

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

- no black hair
- way of speaking
- a backpack!

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

- no safe areas after 7 p.m.

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

- open minded
- the feeling: 'I want to travel around the world'

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

- don't be afraid. - And of course language..!

There are always some guys, who know you are a tourist. You are blond and ~~are~~ unsure how to act

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☐ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☐ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☒ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: American (US)

Age: 22

Sex: Female

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☒ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☒ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

Obviously a main one is the laid back nature of the Costa Ricans. The culture doesn't worry much about punctuality, whereas I am used to the importance of being on time, or early. Stores will be closed for no reason at all.

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

I think there are small culture differences between everyone.

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

Not usually. I can maybe tell if someone is from the U.S. or Canada but other than that I definitely have to ask where everyone is from.

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

The main thing I can use to guess is by the accent people have.

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

I'm going to return to the time issue, and things. Time is very relaxed to. Ticans. Also the stores and bus system seem very disorganized. Buses are often individually owned and your schedule is at the mercy of when they show up.

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

There are a lot of similarities, probably too many to list. Overall it seems people's manners and the way they are taught to socialize and treat other people are similar. We are all here to learn, experience, and meet new people.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

My Spanish could use some work.

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

The difference in their culture and my personal way of life. It's all about beer and partying for many locals trying to get us to come out at night but that is not really my scene.

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☐ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☒ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: German

Age: 19

Sex: female

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☒ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☐ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☒ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

The way people treat each other is different, besides the attitude towards life. The Costa Ricans are more friendly and open-minded.

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

Between people from my country and people from Costa Rica, besides between Germans and e.g. US-Americans.

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

Sometimes

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

Appearance Language Behaviour

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

Drugs + criminality

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

Most of the volunteers are from Europe or the US so the cultures and ways of life are quite similar because the conditions in the home countries are similar.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

To get into the language.

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

that they have a different way of life, not so strict, for example they are not always there in time, I always have to wait.

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

☒ Communication across cultural boundaries

☐ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them

☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: canadian

Age: 24

Sex: female

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☐ **Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.**

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ **It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all**
- ☐ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☐ **It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them**
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

They are on their own time schedule. At home its go go go and in costa rica they seem to go whenever they feel like it

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

everyone

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

I have a general idea with accents but i am not always correct

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

Answered above

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

Nothing frustrating. You can't be frustrated; it's their way of life

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

Quite a few. I am Canadian. We are easily relatable to other English speaking countries

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

I don't know Spanish. So i speak to them in English and they reply in Spanish and we just have to figure it out

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

Getting used to their food. Soo much rice. So bland

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ **No**
- ☐ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☐ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☒ **How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them**
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: Welsh

Age: 19

Sex: Male

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☐ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☐ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☐ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

I didn't find much difference between our cultures. The only difference I can say I have notice is, the way we present ourselves in what we dress. For e.g. A girl wore hot pants in a small town, the result- men hitting on her and women screaming insults at her...whereas if you were back in Wales nobody would really take any notice. Same with facial piercings, as it represents gangs in Costa Rica.... We were treated as if we were gang members and that was the only major cultural difference that has really stood out for me.

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

Funnily enough it was mostly between the Americans and the locals.... Well we all know how Americans act right.. cocky, arrogant, obnoxious, loud etc the Americans treated everyone as if they were stupid and I've witnessed a few mishaps between the two cultures.

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

At first no, I got confused with the Canadian accent to the American. To the New Zealander to the South African... etc ...but the longer I stayed I could tell more clearly.

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

They way they pronounce things and sometimes the way they dress.

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

Explaining that Wales is not part of England, explaining that the whole of the UK is not just England and explaining that there are four other countries in the UK.

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

Pretty much the same everyone else was English and an Australian.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

Asking for directions, I was not getting used to going in blocks and not street names.

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

no, I think that was the only barrier for me, I used sign language if no one understood me and that worked well.

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☐ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☐ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: German

Age: 19

Sex: female

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☒ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☐ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☒ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

- food
- importance of family
- attitude towards time and life → pura vida
- being content with the life you have
- safety
- body contact
- ability to adapt → respect

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

- especially between Europe or Germany and the smaller cities / villages in CR → San Jose is totally different
- between North Americans (USA) and Europeans

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

- depends, but normally I can at least tell the continent
- the different countries in Europe are quite difficult and similar at times

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

- way of speaking
- ability to adapt

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

- the fact that you cannot walk around if it is dark

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

- open-minded
- world language English

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

- the Spanish, if they are talking fast and I am unable to understand what they want / if I don't know the words I want to use

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

- body contact → kissing and touching you, that's not typical in German

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☒ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☐ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: AUSTRALIAN

Age: 26

Sex: M

## 1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☒ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

## 2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☒ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings *only minor misunderstandings*
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

## 3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them *Mainly due to the language barrier.*
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

## 4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

• Attitude of men towards women → a lot more chauvinistic.  
+ the corresponding accepting attitude of the women.

• The general lack of discipline → reflects in most aspects of their lifestyle.

## 5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

*mainly the men & women.*

*Also how they look after their kids is different*

## 6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

*I can get a general impression based on skin colour, clothing, demeanor. And when they speak → yes. I can be wrong if*

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

- Awareness of their surroundings
- Language/accent
- Clothing + demeanor

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

Lack of discipline → mainly ~~and~~ <sup>regarding</sup> being on time (or not being on time).

It makes it difficult to do a lot in little time.

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

Eagerness to help.

Enjoyment of the differences in the local culture

Friendly.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

Language

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

They are a very emotional people. I'm not used to dealing with that.

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☒ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☐ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: English Age: 22 Sex: Not right now thanks (M)

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☐ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
- ☐ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above. – That One

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☐ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings – That One
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☐ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them

- Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do – That One
- It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

The Whole way of life in terms of how things are done from eating in restrnts to digging a hole, personally I would use a spade rather than a machettie.

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

Myself and the locals, also slight ones with other volunteers, but only really things the way things are pronounced of foods that are put together.

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

It depends, the majority of Europeans I can however I have diffulculty telling an American from a Cananden

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

The accent/Their attuatude

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

Not understanding the language as well as I would like to.

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

Most of them are from the same country as me so we are from the same culture.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

The language barrier

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

How did you know everyone would say that? I would say thats been the only one.

12.. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No – That one
- ☐ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☐ Communication across cultural boundaries – That one
- ☐ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures



## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: British

Age: 34

Sex: M

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

The locals are extremely polite, friendly and approachable, although they do greatly appreciate any effort made to speak their language.

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

The Irish and Australians seem to have a far more 'get-on-with-it' attitude, whereas the Americans and less travelled British expect things to be far more aligned to their needs, which often isn't possible in a developing country.

The Swedish seem oblivious to the fact they are staying with poorer families and cost them more money than the others would consider appropriate.

None of the above are necessarily caused by cultures, but more by the differing parental guidance.

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

Yes. often from look alone, secondarily from accent and occasionally from idioms.

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

Facial features.

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

The British and Australian seem to have a far more 'get-on-with-it' attitude, whereas the Americans expect things to be far more aligned to their needs, which often isn't possible in a developing country.

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

Nothing really. When I first arrived my Spanish was very poor but I still got by with charades and a dictionary. Additional Spanish just extended the scope of conversations.

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- No

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- Communication across cultural boundaries

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: British

Age: 27 at the start, 28 by the end!

Sex: Female

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?

- ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
- ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
- ☒ Culture refers to the ways of life of a given nation/region.
- ☐ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

- ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
- ☒ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
- ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
- ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.

3. How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

- ☐ It has been really good. I understand everything they say and do
- ☒ It has been good though there have been some misunderstandings and I don't always understand them
- ☐ Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do
- ☐ It has been really bad, I don't understand anything they say or do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

A lot more physical contact than in Britain.

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

The locals and the volunteers only as all of the volunteers were English speaking westerners.

6. Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

The more I travel, the more I am able to do this but I have learnt that, due to the extent of political undertones that affect most if not all parts of the world, that it is *always* better to ask where someone is from rather than guess.

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

Accent, skin tone and facial structure are the main giveaways.

8. What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

The way the men treat the women is a real contrast to what is 'acceptable' behaviour in the UK. In England if a British guy acted like a Latin American he would be classed as sleazy. In Latin America it is perfectly normal behaviour. It did not offend me but it got irritating being asked for my phone number so much

9. What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

Out of the 5 other volunteers (including myself) 4 were British and one was English speaking Canadian. There were very few cultural differences, if any! I would say the biggest differences between us in terms of behaviour were due to a large age gap. It was never a problem though, just... noticeable!

10. What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

The main problem I came across was, as I picked up more and more of the language, the more relaxed the locals became with me, which was great, but the unfortunate side effect was that they then relaxed the way they spoke as well. The more slang they used and the faster they spoke the less I understood and so at times I got very frustrated because I would feel like I was making a lot of progress and then suddenly I would become completely lost by what they were saying.

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

In our specific work placement there was a lot of hard manual labour to be done. I got stuck in and worked as hard as I could, even volunteering during our free time when the others were resting, but I have my physical limitations! 1) The sun was intense and I am not used to working in that amount of heat 2) I am a girl and therefore physically not as strong as they are 3) I am not used to doing long hours of manual labour in any situation, let alone on the equator! The men who worked at the sanctuary, worked *extremely* hard and I felt at times they were frustrated that we could not keep up with them. I understood their frustrations but it wasn't as though we weren't trying!

12. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No
- ☐ Maybe

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- ☒ Communication across cultural boundaries
- ☐ How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- ☐ A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: English

Age: 25

Sex: F

Which definition of culture do you agree with?

Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.

How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?

It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all

How would you characterise your communication with the locals?

Not so good, I have a lot of problems understanding them and what they do

4. What are the most significant cultural differences you have noticed so far?

Health and safety, Attire, Food, Work

5. And between who, have you noticed cultural differences?

Eh?

Can you tell which country people are from, when you first meet them?

Not always

7. If so, what do you think gives them away?

What aspect of the Latin-American culture has been the most frustrating to you, if any?

All the rice

What cultural similarities have you noticed so far between you and the other volunteers?

What would you characterise as your greatest challenge in communicating with the locals?

Not knowing the language.....

11. What have you found to be the most challenging aspect of communicating with the locals other than the language barrier?

Ummmmm, i don't communicate any other way.....

Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?

Yes

13. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them

## **Appendix VI – Questionnaire locals Ecuador**

## Encuesta para los habitantes de Ecuador

Nacionalidad: *Ecuatoriana* Edad: *49* Sexo (hombre/mujer): *X*

1. ¿Con qué definición de la cultura está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

- ☐ La cultura es lo que vive cuando llega a otro país.
- ☐ La cultura es compartir pensamientos, normas y valores.
- ☒ La cultura se refiere a la manera en que vive una nación/región.
- ☐ La cultura no sólo es una cosa, sino un conjunto de todos los otros aspectos arriba mencionados.

2. ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios? (marque con X)

- ☒ Ha sido fantástica, no ha habido problema ninguno ni malentendidos.
- ☐ Ha sido buena, pero ha habido algunos malentendidos y no siempre entiendo, por qué hacen las cosas como lo hacen.
- ☐ No muy buena y tengo dificultad para entenderlos y su forma de hacer las cosas.
- ☐ Fatal, no entiendo lo que dicen ni lo que hacen.

3. ¿Cuáles son las diferencias culturales más grandes que Ud. ha experimentado con los voluntarios?

*Realmente grandes diferencias no he experimentado, aparte del idioma que no ha sido complicado dado q. hablo un poco inglés*

4. ¿Ud. ha observado algunas diferencias culturales entre los voluntarios o los ve como un grupo unido?

*En general cuando ha habido voluntarios de diferentes países he observado q. logran rápidamente un entendimiento cordial y amigable*

5. ¿Para Ud. hay una relación entre cómo se comportan los voluntarios y su país de origen?

*Pienso, que tiene mucho que ver pues normalmente uno lleva consigo las costumbres que ha absorbido durante años en su formación personal*

6. ¿Ud. piensa que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de un país específico o es una mezcla de varios países?

*Bueno no podría hablar de ello dado que durante el tiempo que he manejado los grupos de voluntariado, jamás ha existido problema alguno*

7. En tal caso, ¿Qué país?

*Ninguno*

8. La primera vez que encuentra con los voluntarios, ¿Ud. puede adivinar de qué país son o parece una mezcla de diferentes países?

*Generalmente sí aunque ahora hay tanta mezcla y diversidad q' algunas veces hay que preguntar de donde vienen?*

9. ¿Qué aspecto de la cultura de los voluntarios le ha frustrado a Ud., si lo hubiere?

*Ningun aspecto*

10. A parte de la barrera lingüística, ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. su mayor desafío en relación con la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios?

*Existen muchos medios de comunicación; los gestos, los dibujos, y una ventaja es q' la mayoría de Europeos, Indios, Africanos o de Oriente medio, hablan Inglés*

11. ¿Ud. ha oído hablar del concepto "comunicación intercultural"? (marque con X)

☒ Sí

☐ No

☐ A lo mejor

12. ¿Con qué definición del concepto "comunicación intercultural" está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

☒ "La comunicación intercultural" se refiere a la comunicación a través de culturas

☐ Se trata de cómo se comportan las personas de diferentes países y culturas, cómo se comunican y cómo ven el mundo que los rodea.

☐ "La comunicación intercultural" es una forma de comunicar entre diferentes culturas.

*Confalt*

## Encuesta para los habitantes de Ecuador

Nacionalidad: ECUATORIANO

Edad: 40

Sexo (hombre/mujer):

X

1. ¿Con qué definición de la cultura está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

- ☐ La cultura es lo que vive cuando llega a otro país.
- ☐ La cultura es compartir pensamientos, normas y valores.
- ☒ La cultura se refiere a la manera en que vive una nación/región.
- ☐ La cultura no sólo es una cosa, sino un conjunto de todos los otros aspectos arriba mencionados.

2. ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios? (marque con X)

- ☒ Ha sido fantástica, no ha habido problema ninguno ni malentendidos.
- ☐ Ha sido buena, pero ha habido algunos malentendidos y no siempre entiendo, por qué hacen las cosas como lo hacen.
- ☐ No muy buena y tengo dificultad para entenderlos y su forma de hacer las cosas.
- ☐ Fatal, no entiendo lo que dicen ni lo que hacen.

3. ¿Cuáles son las diferencias culturales más grandes que Ud. ha experimentado con los voluntarios?

BUENO NO ES MUY GRANDE REALMENTE PORQUE ES FÁCIL COMUNICARSE PERO EL IDIOMA ES UNA DIFERENCIA

4. ¿Ud. ha observado algunas diferencias culturales entre los voluntarios o los ve como un grupo unido?

NORMALMENTE SON GRUPOS UNIDOS Y AUNQUE ALGUNOS SON DE PAÍSES DIFERENTES, EL IDIOMA LOS UNE Y SE COMPLEMENTAN CON EL TRABAJO Y ACTIVIDADES DE RELAJACIÓN (FINES DE SEMANAS LIBRES).

5. ¿Para Ud. hay una relación entre cómo se comportan los voluntarios y su país de origen?

EN ALGÚN MODO SÍ POR SUS PROPIAS COSTUMBRES, PERO SE ADAPTAN RÁPIDOS Y ADENÁS TIENEN INTERÉS POR APRENDER COSAS NUEVAS PARA ELLOS.

6. ¿Ud. piensa que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de un país específico o es una mezcla de varios países?

HA HABIDO MEZCLA DE VARIOS PAÍSES, PERO TAMBIÉN HAN SIDO/MUCHO MÁS PREDOMINANTES LOS INGLESES PORQUE ES OBVIO I TO I ES UNA FUNDACIÓN DE INGLATERRA Y CREO QUE AÚN ASÍ NO HAY NINGÚN PROBLEMA NI EXAGERADO NI GENERAL.

7. En tal caso, ¿Qué país?

NINGUNO

8. La primera vez que encuentra con los voluntarios, ¿Ud. puede adivinar de qué país son o parece una mezcla de diferentes países?

ES DIFÍCIL ADIVINAR AUNQUE LOS INGLÉSES SON BASTANTE EXPRESIVOS Y JOVIALES, LOS AMERICANOS TAMBIÉN Y LOS AUSTRALIANOS SON MÁS SERIOS PERO BUENAS PERSONAS.

9. ¿Qué aspecto de la cultura de los voluntarios le ha frustrado a Ud., si lo hubiere?

CREO QUE NO HAY MUCHO QUE ANOTAR SOBRE ESTO PERO UNA OBSERVACIÓN ES QUE LOS EUROPEOS COMEN TODO Y DE TODO (CLARO CON EXCEPCIÓN DE LOS VEGETARIANOS) MIENTRAS QUE LOS AMERICANOS SON UN POCO MÁS ESPECÍFICOS Y SELECTIVOS.

10. A parte de la barrera lingüística, ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. su mayor desafío en relación con la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios?

LO IMPORTANTE ES SOBER ILEGAR A ELLOS A TRAVÉS DE LOS PROYECTOS Y TAREAS A EMPRENDER, HACERLES ENTENDER LA IMPORTANCIA DE SU COLABORACIÓN E INTEGRACIÓN EN LOS MISMOS.

11. ¿Ud. ha oído hablar del concepto "comunicación intercultural"? (marque con X)

☒ Sí

☐ No

☐ A lo mejor

12. ¿Con qué definición del concepto "comunicación intercultural" está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

☐ "La comunicación intercultural" se refiere a la comunicación a través de culturas

☒ Se trata de cómo se comportan las personas de diferentes países y culturas, cómo se comunican y cómo ven el mundo que los rodea.

☐ "La comunicación intercultural" es una forma de comunicar entre diferentes culturas.

## Questionnaire volunteers

Nationality: Ecuatoriano

Age: 62

Sex: M

1. Which definition of culture do you agree with?
  - ☐ Culture is simply what you see and hear when you first arrive at a new country
  - ☐ Culture is sharing opinions as well as norms and values.
  - ☐ Culture refers to the ways of live of a given nation/region.
  - ☐ Culture consists of several layers including all of the above.
2. How would you characterise your communication with the other volunteers?
  - ☐ It has been excellent – no problems and misunderstandings at all
  - ☐ It has been good although there has been some misunderstandings
  - ☐ Not so good, I cannot always understand what the others mean
  - ☐ Horribly, I don't understand a word they are saying to me.
3. Los voluntarios por lo general son disciplinados, puntuales y prácticos.
4. si existen diferencias entre los voluntarios y eso se origina por que tienen diferente medio social por tener diferentes nacionalidades.
5. Hay una relación directa entre el comportamiento de los voluntarios y su país de origen, pues cada uno aplica lo que aprendió en su país.
6. Diría que no han sido problemas, sino dificultades pequeñas que se solucionan fácilmente. No tiene importancia el país de origen.
7. n/a
8. Sí, en un 60 o 70 %
9. no
10. Es muy importante recomendar los sitios, lugares que deben visitar para que tengan un mejor conocimiento del país.
11. Have you ever heard of the concept 'intercultural communication'?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

- Maybe

12. What do you think 'intercultural communication' refers to?

- Communication across cultural boundaries
- How people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world around them
- A specific way of communicating between different cultures

## **Appendix VII – Questionnaire locals Costa Rica**

## Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica

Nacionalidad: Costarricense Edad: 38Sexo (hombre/mujer): Mujer

1. ¿Con qué definición de la cultura está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)
  - ☐ La cultura es lo que vive cuando llega a otro país.
  - ☒ La cultura es compartir pensamientos, normas y valores.
  - ☐ La cultura se refiere a la manera en que vive una nación/región.
  - ☐ La cultura no sólo es una cosa, sino un conjunto de todos los otros aspectos arriba mencionados.
  
2. ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios? (marque con X)
  - ☒ Ha sido fantástica, no ha habido problema ninguno ni malentendidos.
  - ☐ Ha sido buena, pero ha habido algunos malentendidos y no siempre entiendo, por qué hacen las cosas como lo hacen.
  - ☐ No muy buena y tengo dificultad para entenderlos y su forma de hacer las cosas.
  - ☐ Fatal, no entiendo lo que dicen ni lo que hacen.
  
3. ¿Cuáles son las diferencias culturales más grandes que Ud. ha experimentado con los voluntarios?  
El idioma
  
4. ¿Ud. ha observado algunas diferencias culturales entre los voluntarios o los ve como un grupo unido?  
Los veo como un grupo unido
  
5. ¿Para Ud. hay una relación entre cómo se comportan los voluntarios y su país de origen?  
Sí
  
6. ¿Ud. piensa que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de un país específico o es una mezcla de varios países?  
No

7. En tal caso, ¿Qué país?

8. La primera vez que encuentra con los voluntarios, ¿Ud. puede adivinar de qué país son o parece una mezcla de diferentes países?

No, porq' parecen de otro país

9. ¿Qué aspecto de la cultura de los voluntarios le ha frustrado a Ud., si lo hubiere?

Que hay voluntarios que el consumo de drogas lo ven normal y en este país no lo aceptamos.

10. A parte de la barrera lingüística, ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. su mayor desafío en relación con la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios?

Tratar de entenderle = Dealing with the foreigner

11. ¿Ud. ha oído hablar del concepto "comunicación intercultural"? (marque con X)

☒ Sí

☐ No

☐ A lo mejor

12. ¿Con qué definición del concepto "comunicación intercultural" está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

☐ "La comunicación intercultural" se refiere a la comunicación a través de culturas

☐ Se trata de cómo se comportan las personas de diferentes países y culturas, cómo se comunican y cómo ven el mundo que los rodea.

☒ "La comunicación intercultural" es una forma de comunicar entre diferentes culturas.

## Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica

Nacionalidad: *Costarricense*Edad: *19*

Sexo (hombre/mujer):

1. ¿Con qué definición de la cultura está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)
  - ☐ La cultura es lo que vive cuando llega a otro país.
  - ☐ La cultura es compartir pensamientos, normas y valores.
  - ☐ La cultura se refiere a la manera en que vive una nación/región.
  - ☒ La cultura no sólo es una cosa, sino un conjunto de todos los otros aspectos arriba mencionados.
  
2. ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios? (marque con X)
  - ☒ Ha sido fantástica, no ha habido problema ninguno ni malentendidos.
  - ☐ Ha sido buena, pero ha habido algunos malentendidos y no siempre entiendo, por qué hacen las cosas como lo hacen.
  - ☐ No muy buena y tengo dificultad para entenderlos y su forma de hacer las cosas.
  - ☐ Fatal, no entiendo lo que dicen ni lo que hacen.
  
3. ¿Cuáles son las diferencias culturales más grandes que Ud. ha experimentado con los voluntarios?  
*Ninguna.*
  
4. ¿Ud. ha observado algunas diferencias culturales entre los voluntarios o los ve como un grupo unido?  
*NO*
  
5. ¿Para Ud. hay una relación entre cómo se comportan los voluntarios y su país de origen?  
*Un poco.*
  
6. ¿Ud. piensa que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de un país específico o es una mezcla de varios países?  
*NO*

7. En tal caso, ¿Qué país?
8. La primera vez que encuentra con los voluntarios, ¿Ud. puede adivinar de qué país son o parece una mezcla de diferentes países?  
No
9. ¿Qué aspecto de la cultura de los voluntarios le ha frustrado a Ud., si lo hubiere?
10. A parte de la barrera lingüística, ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. su mayor desafío en relación con la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios?  
Bueno.
11. ¿Ud. ha oído hablar del concepto “comunicación intercultural”? (marque con X)
- ☒ Sí
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ A lo mejor
12. ¿Con qué definición del concepto “comunicación intercultural” está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)
- ☐ “La comunicación intercultural” se refiere a la comunicación a través de culturas
  - ☒ Se trata de cómo se comportan las personas de diferentes países y culturas, cómo se comunican y cómo ven el mundo que los rodea.
  - ☐ “La comunicación intercultural” es una forma de comunicar entre diferentes culturas.

## Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica

acionalidad: Costarricense

Edad: 30 años

Sexo (hombre/mujer):

1. ¿Con qué definición de la cultura está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

- ☐ La cultura es lo que vive cuando llega a otro país.
- ☒ La cultura es compartir pensamientos, normas y valores.
- ☐ La cultura se refiere a la manera en que vive una nación/región.
- ☐ La cultura no sólo es una cosa, sino un conjunto de todos los otros aspectos arriba mencionados.

2. ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios? (marque con X)

- ☐ Ha sido fantástica, no ha habido problema ninguno ni malentendidos.
- ☒ Ha sido buena, pero ha habido algunos malentendidos y no siempre entiendo, por qué hacen las cosas como lo hacen.
- ☐ No muy buena y tengo dificultad para entenderlos y su forma de hacer las cosas.
- ☐ Fatal, no entiendo lo que dicen ni lo que hacen.

3. ¿Cuáles son las diferencias culturales más grandes que Ud. ha experimentado con los voluntarios?

Comida  
Vida social

4. ¿Ud. ha observado algunas diferencias culturales entre los voluntarios o los ve como un grupo unido?

Se ven un grupo unido.

5. ¿Para Ud. hay una relación entre cómo se comportan los voluntarios y su país de origen?

Si

6. ¿Ud. piensa que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de un país específico o es una mezcla de varios países?

Varios pais

7. En tal caso, ¿Qué país?

8. La primera vez que encuentra con los voluntarios, ¿Ud. puede adivinar de qué país son o parece una mezcla de diferentes países? *Muchas veces Si*

9. ¿Qué aspecto de la cultura de los voluntarios le ha frustrado a Ud., si lo hubiere?

*Que estando en una cultura diferente quisieran que las cosas funcionen como si estuvieran en su propio país.*

10. A parte de la barrera lingüística, ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. su mayor desafío en relación con la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios?

*Llegar al entendimiento que ellos están en otro país y que nosotros operamos de manera diferente, pero que el objetivo siempre se cumple.*

11. ¿Ud. ha oído hablar del concepto "comunicación intercultural"? (marque con X,

☒ Sí

☐ No

☐ A lo mejor

12. ¿Con qué definición del concepto "comunicación intercultural" está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

☐ "La comunicación intercultural" se refiere a la comunicación a través de culturas

☐ Se trata de cómo se comportan las personas de diferentes países y culturas, cómo se comunican y cómo ven el mundo que los rodea.

☒ "La comunicación intercultural" es una forma de comunicar entre diferentes culturas.

## Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica

Nacionalidad: COSTA RICA  
costarricense

Edad: 47

Sexo (hombre/mujer): hombre

1. ¿Con qué definición de la cultura está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)
- ☐ La cultura es lo que vive cuando llega a otro país.
  - ☐ La cultura es compartir pensamientos, normas y valores.
  - ☒ La cultura se refiere a la manera en que vive una nación/región.
  - ☒ La cultura no sólo es una cosa, sino un conjunto de todos los otros aspectos arriba mencionados.

2. ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios? (marque con X)
- ☒ Ha sido fantástica, no ha habido problema ninguno ni malentendidos.
  - ☐ Ha sido buena, pero ha habido algunos malentendidos y no siempre entiendo, por qué hacen las cosas como lo hacen.
  - ☐ No muy buena y tengo dificultad para entenderlos y su forma de hacer las cosas.
  - ☐ Fatal, no entiendo lo que dicen ni lo que hacen.

3. ¿Cuáles son las diferencias culturales más grandes que Ud. ha experimentado con los voluntarios?

*Algunas de las cosas que he experimentado son:*  
*1. El idioma, no todos hablan español.*  
*2. La forma de pensar y actuar, algunos son muy diferentes a los costarricenses.*

4. ¿Ud. ha observado algunas diferencias culturales entre los voluntarios o los ve como un grupo unido?

*Si, pero los voluntarios se comportan como un grupo unido.*  
*pero es evidente que cada uno tiene algunas diferencias culturales.*  
*Esos son los que hacen la experiencia rica.*

5. ¿Para Ud. hay una relación entre cómo se comportan los voluntarios y su país de origen?

*Si, creo que si hay una relación entre el comportamiento de los voluntarios y su país de origen.*  
*Por ejemplo, algunos son muy reservados y otros son muy abiertos.*  
*Esto depende de la cultura de cada país.*

6. ¿Ud. piensa que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de un país específico o es una mezcla de varios países?

*Creo que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de varios países.*  
*Porque cada uno tiene sus propias características y eso puede causar problemas.*  
*Es importante tener en cuenta las diferencias culturales para evitar malentendidos.*  
*La comunicación es clave para que todo funcione bien.*  
*Es importante ser respetuosos con las diferencias de cada uno.*

7. En tal caso, ¿Qué país?

- Ninguno -

8. La primera vez que encuentra con los voluntarios, ¿Ud. puede adivinar de qué país son o parece una mezcla de diferentes países? No es posible establecer su nacionalidad. Pero tampoco parecen una mezcla.

9. ¿Qué aspecto de la cultura de los voluntarios le ha frustrado a Ud., si lo hubiere?

Ninguno

10. A parte de la barrera lingüística, ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. su mayor desafío en relación con la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios?

El crear o establecer una conciencia ambiental. A veces los vol. tienen interés en la conservación, otras veces sus intereses son diferentes.

11. ¿Ud. ha oído hablar del concepto "comunicación intercultural"? (marque con X)

☒ Sí

☐ No

☐ A lo mejor

12. ¿Con qué definición del concepto "comunicación intercultural" está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

☐ "La comunicación intercultural" se refiere a la comunicación a través de culturas

☐ Se trata de cómo se comportan las personas de diferentes países y culturas, cómo se comunican y cómo ven el mundo que los rodea.

☒ "La comunicación intercultural" es una forma de comunicar entre diferentes culturas.

## Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica

Nacionalidad: CostarricenseEdad: 26Sexo (~~hombre~~/mujer):

1. ¿Con qué definición de la cultura está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)
- ☐ La cultura es lo que vive cuando llega a otro país.
  - ☐ La cultura es compartir pensamientos, normas y valores.
  - ☒ La cultura se refiere a la manera en que vive una nación/región.
  - ☐ La cultura no sólo es una cosa, sino un conjunto de todos los otros aspectos arriba mencionados.
2. ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios? (marque con X)
- ☒ Ha sido fantástica, no ha habido problema ninguno ni malentendidos.
  - ☐ Ha sido buena, pero ha habido algunos malentendidos y no siempre entiendo, por qué hacen las cosas como lo hacen.
  - ☐ No muy buena y tengo dificultad para entenderlos y su forma de hacer las cosas.
  - ☐ Fatal, no entiendo lo que dicen ni lo que hacen.
3. ¿Cuáles son las diferencias culturales más grandes que Ud. ha experimentado con los voluntarios?
- Idioma  
Cultura
4. ¿Ud. ha observado algunas diferencias culturales entre los voluntarios o los ve como un grupo unido?
- Si claro, pero en ocasiones no
5. ¿Para Ud. hay una relación entre cómo se comportan los voluntarios y su país de origen?
- Si, lo hay
6. ¿Ud. piensa que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de un país específico o es una mezcla de varios países?

Muchos países

7. En tal caso, ¿Qué país?

- Ticos
- Inglaterra

8. La primera vez que encuentra con los voluntarios, ¿Ud. puede adivinar de qué país son o parece una mezcla de diferentes países?

En las culturas muy <sup>from tradendi/kendte</sup> señaladas.

9. ¿Qué aspecto de la cultura de los voluntarios le ha frustrado a Ud., si lo hubiere?

Cuando tienen todo en casa y no realizan ninguna tarea propuesta.

10. A parte de la barrera lingüística, ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. su mayor desafío en relación con la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios?

- Trabajo.

11. ¿Ud. ha oído hablar del concepto "comunicación intercultural"? (marque con X)

☒ Sí

☐ No

☐ A lo mejor

12. ¿Con qué definición del concepto "comunicación intercultural" está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

☐ "La comunicación intercultural" se refiere a la comunicación a través de culturas

☒ Se trata de cómo se comportan las personas de diferentes países y culturas, cómo se comunican y cómo ven el mundo que los rodea.

☐ "La comunicación intercultural" es una forma de comunicar entre diferentes culturas.

## Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica

Nacionalidad: Costarricense

Edad: 28

Sexo (~~hombre~~/mujer):

1. ¿Con qué definición de la cultura está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)
  - ☐ La cultura es lo que vive cuando llega a otro país.
  - ☐ La cultura es compartir pensamientos, normas y valores.
  - ☒ La cultura se refiere a la manera en que vive una nación/región.
  - ☐ La cultura no sólo es una cosa, sino un conjunto de todos los otros aspectos arriba mencionados.
  
2. ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios? (marque con X)
  - ☐ Ha sido fantástica, no ha habido problema ninguno ni malentendidos.
  - ☐ Ha sido buena, pero ha habido algunos malentendidos y no siempre entiendo, por qué hacen las cosas como lo hacen.
  - ☒ No muy buena y tengo dificultad para entenderlos y su forma de hacer las cosas.
  - ☐ Fatal, no entiendo lo que dicen ni lo que hacen.
  
3. ¿Cuáles son las diferencias culturales más grandes que Ud. ha experimentado con los voluntarios?
  - Idioma
  - La misma cultura
  
4. ¿Ud. ha observado algunas diferencias culturales entre los voluntarios o los ve como un grupo unido?

Si: hay diferencias, pero en otras ocasiones hay grupos unidos.
  
5. ¿Para Ud. hay una relación entre cómo se comportan los voluntarios y su país de origen?

Si: por supuesto.
  
6. ¿Ud. piensa que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de un país específico o es una mezcla de varios países?

De varios países

7. En tal caso, ¿Qué país?

→ Inglaterra

→ Costarricenses

8. La primera vez que encuentra con los voluntarios, ¿Ud. puede adivinar de qué país son o parece una mezcla de diferentes países?

Sí, pero en algunas culturas muy <sup>adaptables / mixtas</sup> marcadas.

9. ¿Qué aspecto de la cultura de los voluntarios le ha frustrado a Ud., si lo hubiere?

Cuando se ponen en riñerios, y cuando están acostumbrados a que todo se lo dan y no quieren participar en los proyectos que se practican aquí.

10. A parte de la barrera lingüística, ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. su mayor desafío en relación con la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios?

• Trabajo (Diferencias) la forma de trabajo que es diferente de trabajo a la nuestra.

11. ¿Ud. ha oído hablar del concepto "comunicación intercultural"? (marque con X)

☒ Sí

☐ No

☐ A lo mejor

12. ¿Con qué definición del concepto "comunicación intercultural" está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

☐ "La comunicación intercultural" se refiere a la comunicación a través de culturas

☒ Se trata de cómo se comportan las personas de diferentes países y culturas, cómo se comunican y cómo ven el mundo que los rodea.

☐ "La comunicación intercultural" es una forma de comunicar entre diferentes culturas.

## Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica

Nacionalidad:

C.R.

Edad:

23

Sexo (hombre/mujer):

hombre.

1. ¿Con qué definición de la cultura está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)
  - ☐ La cultura es lo que vive cuando llega a otro país.
  - ☐ La cultura es compartir pensamientos, normas y valores.
  - ☐ La cultura se refiere a la manera en que vive una nación/región.
  - ☒ La cultura no sólo es una cosa, sino un conjunto de todos los otros aspectos arriba mencionados.
  
2. ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios? (marque con X)
  - ☐ Ha sido fantástica, no ha habido problema ninguno ni malentendidos.
  - ☒ Ha sido buena, pero ha habido algunos malentendidos y no siempre entiendo, por qué hacen las cosas como lo hacen.
  - ☐ No muy buena y tengo dificultad para entenderlos y su forma de hacer las cosas.
  - ☐ Fatal, no entiendo lo que dicen ni lo que hacen.
  
3. ¿Cuáles son las diferencias culturales más grandes que Ud. ha experimentado con los voluntarios?  
cultura  
Idioma
  
4. ¿Ud. ha observado algunas diferencias culturales entre los voluntarios o los ve como un grupo unido?  
Si existen diferencias.
  
5. ¿Para Ud. hay una relación entre cómo se comportan los voluntarios y su país de origen?  
Si
  
6. ¿Ud. piensa que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de un país específico o es una mezcla de varios países?  
Una mezcla de varios países.

7. En tal caso, ¿Qué país?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. La primera vez que encuentra con los voluntarios, ¿Ud. puede adivinar de qué país son o parece una mezcla de diferentes países?

Si puede adivinar.

9. ¿Qué aspecto de la cultura de los voluntarios le ha frustrado a Ud., si lo hubiere?

para ellos es mas normal el consumo de drogas

10. A parte de la barrera lingüística, ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. su mayor desafío en relación con la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios?

A veces no les importa mucho la relación con el equipo de trabajo.

11. ¿Ud. ha oído hablar del concepto “comunicación intercultural”? (marque con X)

☒ Sí

☐ No

☐ A lo mejor

12. ¿Con qué definición del concepto “comunicación intercultural” está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

☒ “La comunicación intercultural” se refiere a la comunicación a través de culturas

☐ Se trata de cómo se comportan las personas de diferentes países y culturas, cómo se comunican y cómo ven el mundo que los rodea.

☐ “La comunicación intercultural” es una forma de comunicar entre diferentes culturas.

## Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica

Nacionalidad:

C.R.

Edad:

24

Sexo (hombre/mujer):

Mujer.

1. ¿Con qué definición de la cultura está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)
  - ☐ La cultura es lo que vive cuando llega a otro país.
  - ☐ La cultura es compartir pensamientos, normas y valores.
  - ☐ La cultura se refiere a la manera en que vive una nación/región.
  - ☒ La cultura no sólo es una cosa, sino un conjunto de todos los otros aspectos arriba mencionados.
  
2. ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios? (marque con X)
  - ☐ Ha sido fantástica, no ha habido problema ninguno ni malentendidos.
  - ☒ Ha sido buena, pero ha habido algunos malentendidos y no siempre entiendo, por qué hacen las cosas como lo hacen.
  - ☐ No muy buena y tengo dificultad para entenderlos y su forma de hacer las cosas.
  - ☐ Fatal, no entiendo lo que dicen ni lo que hacen.
  
3. ¿Cuáles son las diferencias culturales más grandes que Ud. ha experimentado con los voluntarios?
 

Idioma  
cultura
  
4. ¿Ud. ha observado algunas diferencias culturales entre los voluntarios o los ve como un grupo unido?
 

Si tienen diferencias cultura
  
5. ¿Para Ud. hay una relación entre cómo se comportan los voluntarios y su país de origen?
 

Si
  
6. ¿Ud. piensa que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de un país específico o es una mezcla de varios países?
 

Una mezcla.

7. En tal caso, ¿Qué país?

8. La primera vez que encuentra con los voluntarios, ¿Ud. puede adivinar de qué país son o parece una mezcla de diferentes países?

Casi siempre adivino

9. ¿Qué aspecto de la cultura de los voluntarios le ha frustrado a Ud., si lo hubiere?

para ellos es mas normal el consumo de drogas. que nosotros

10. A parte de la barrera lingüística, ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. su mayor desafío en relación con la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios?

Casi siempre que llega un grupo de voluntarios, ellos no les ponen mucho interes a la relación con todos los trabajadores del albergue.

11. ¿Ud. ha oído hablar del concepto "comunicación intercultural"? (marque con X)

☒ Sí

☐ No

☐ A lo mejor

12. ¿Con qué definición del concepto "comunicación intercultural" está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

☒ "La comunicación intercultural" se refiere a la comunicación a través de culturas

☐ Se trata de cómo se comportan las personas de diferentes países y culturas, cómo se comunican y cómo ven el mundo que los rodea.

☐ "La comunicación intercultural" es una forma de comunicar entre diferentes culturas.

## Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica

Nacionalidad: CostarricenseEdad: 18Sexo (~~hombre~~/mujer):

1. ¿Con qué definición de la cultura está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

- ☐ La cultura es lo que vive cuando llega a otro país.
- ☐ La cultura es compartir pensamientos, normas y valores.
- ☒ La cultura se refiere a la manera en que vive una nación/región.
- ☐ La cultura no sólo es una cosa, sino un conjunto de todos los otros aspectos arriba mencionados.

2. ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios? (marque con X)

- ☒ Ha sido fantástica, no ha habido problema ninguno ni malentendidos.
- ☐ Ha sido buena, pero ha habido algunos malentendidos y no siempre entiendo, por qué hacen las cosas como lo hacen.
- ☐ No muy buena y tengo dificultad para entenderlos y su forma de hacer las cosas.
- ☐ Fatal, no entiendo lo que dicen ni lo que hacen.

3. ¿Cuáles son las diferencias culturales más grandes que Ud. ha experimentado con los voluntarios?

Su forma de pensar y realizar las tareas y el Idioma.

4. ¿Ud. ha observado algunas diferencias culturales entre los voluntarios o los ve como un grupo unido?

Sí, en realidad he tenido un buen grupo de voluntarios bien unido.

5. ¿Para Ud. hay una relación entre cómo se comportan los voluntarios y su país de origen?

Sí.

6. ¿Ud. piensa que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de un país específico o es una mezcla de varios países?

No.

7. En tal caso, ¿Qué país?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. La primera vez que encuentra con los voluntarios, ¿Ud. puede adivinar de qué país son o parece una mezcla de diferentes países?

Algunas.

9. ¿Qué aspecto de la cultura de los voluntarios le ha frustrado a Ud., si lo hubiere?

su autonomía.

10. A parte de la barrera lingüística, ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. su mayor desafío en relación con la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios?

Buena

11. ¿Ud. ha oído hablar del concepto “comunicación intercultural”? (marque con X)

☒ Sí

☐ No

☐ A lo mejor

12. ¿Con qué definición del concepto “comunicación intercultural” está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

☐ “La comunicación intercultural” se refiere a la comunicación a través de culturas

☒ Se trata de cómo se comportan las personas de diferentes países y culturas, cómo se comunican y cómo ven el mundo que los rodea.

☐ “La comunicación intercultural” es una forma de comunicar entre diferentes culturas.

## Encuesta para los habitantes de Costa Rica

Nacionalidad:  
Costarricense

Edad:  
20 años.

Sexo (~~hombre~~/mujer):  
Hombre.

1120

1. ¿Con qué definición de la cultura está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

- ☐ La cultura es lo que vive cuando llega a otro país.
- ☐ La cultura es compartir pensamientos, normas y valores.
- ☒ La cultura se refiere a la manera en que vive una nación/región.
- ☐ La cultura no sólo es una cosa, sino un conjunto de todos los otros aspectos arriba mencionados.

2. ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios? (marque con X)

- ☒ Ha sido fantástica, no ha habido problema ninguno ni malentendidos.
- ☐ Ha sido buena, pero ha habido algunos malentendidos y no siempre entiendo, por qué hacen las cosas como lo hacen.
- ☐ No muy buena y tengo dificultad para entenderlos y su forma de hacer las cosas.
- ☐ Fatal, no entiendo lo que dicen ni lo que hacen.

3. ¿Cuáles son las diferencias culturales más grandes que Ud. ha experimentado con los voluntarios?

La manera de pensar que tienen muchos veces no es a la que estamos acostumbrados.

4. ¿Ud. ha observado algunas diferencias culturales entre los voluntarios o los ve como un grupo unido?

Si claro, cada país tiene una cultura completamente diferente.

5. ¿Para Ud. hay una relación entre cómo se comportan los voluntarios y su país de origen?

Si, influye mucho la cultura del país donde viven, en el comportamiento de los diferentes voluntarios.

6. ¿Ud. piensa que ha habido más problemas con voluntarios de un país específico o es una mezcla de varios países?

Mmm, mas o menos, algunas culturas son mas difíciles de tratar por su manera de ver las cosas y actuar, son mas impositivos sus conductas.

7. En tal caso, ¿Qué país?

USA, Inglaterra, España.

8. La primera vez que encuentra con los voluntarios, ¿Ud. puede adivinar de qué país son o parece una mezcla de diferentes países?

Algunos voluntarios se reconocen a simple vista ya que tienen características muy fáciles de reconocer como el acento y forma de vestir.

9. ¿Qué aspecto de la cultura de los voluntarios le ha frustrado a Ud., si lo hubiere?

La apertura de la mentalidad, muchas veces los voluntarios quieren imponer su cultura, quieren actuar como en su casa y no saben que están en España.

10. A parte de la barrera lingüística, ¿Cómo caracterizaría Ud. su mayor desafío en relación con la comunicación entre Ud. y los voluntarios?

Muchas veces quieren hacer las cosas como ellos piensan que es y no como nosotros decimos.

11. ¿Ud. ha oído hablar del concepto "comunicación intercultural"? (marque con X)

☐ Sí

☐ No

☒ A lo mejor

12. ¿Con qué definición del concepto "comunicación intercultural" está Ud. más de acuerdo? (marque con X)

☐ "La comunicación intercultural" se refiere a la comunicación a través de culturas

☐ Se trata de cómo se comportan las personas de diferentes países y culturas, cómo se comunican y cómo ven el mundo que los rodea.

☒ "La comunicación intercultural" es una forma de comunicar entre diferentes culturas.