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Skype's the Limit Testing the Value of Cross-cultural Relationship-building in International Development

Charley Allegar
SIT Study Abroad

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Skype's the Limit

Testing the Value of Cross-cultural Relationship-building in
International Development

“Maybe it will be from us that [these students] receive help or advice. They can learn from us what is happening on the other side of the world. We can teach them about us.”

—Nashi Luni Marona, Olosho-Oibor resident

“I'm reminded that differences in culture are (of course) to be embraced and reveled in and learned about. Despite the thousands of miles that separate us, we are all connected, all human, all the same kind.”

—Jacob Taylor, Hamilton College Class of 2014

Charley Allegar, SIT Kenya: Health and Community Development, Spring 2013

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Dedication

To Simon, Ruth, Nashi Luni, Samson, Monica, Marias, Sironka, Natasha, Sophia, Michelle, Santa Fe, Lushate (and grandchildren), Lonna, Joseph, Ruth, Raeli, David, Rose, Lea, Peter, Andrew, and Mr. Yagayagayo—this study is for you guys. I hope you spread as much joy to others as you have to me.

Thank you all for your friendship!

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the value of cross-cultural relationship-building and international friendship in development. By connecting two groups of Americans each with a group of low-income Kenyans over Skype and by presenting the written expression of Kenyans' hopes and struggles to a third American group, the research analyzes whether face-to-face interaction and personal information sharing affects one's perception of people's needs. Though due to small sample sizes the results are generally inconclusive, qualitatively, the data suggest that relationship-building is a useful tool for development, defined as the improvement of a population's fundamental welfare. Moreover, the study finds that deliberate cross-cultural interaction can be a highly enjoyable and thought-provoking exercise for those who engage in it.

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Introduction

Olosho-Oibor, Ngong Hills, Kajiado District, Kenya

Forty-year-old Lonna and her fifteen-year-old daughter Lea rumble along in the backseat of an overcrowded van-sized taxi called a matatu, squished against the other passengers as the driver navigates the circuitous route to the town of Ngong. Though it is the closest town to their home in the thinly populated Maasai village of Olosho-Oibor, Ngong is still 10 miles away. The van repeatedly dips down and jerks back upwards as it goes over a particularly rocky patch on the road taking them there. Luckily for Lonna, it didn't rain yesterday, so the chances of getting stuck in the mud are relatively slim this morning; she'll be able to make the additional fourteen miles into Nairobi to sell her mom's beadwork handicrafts at the Maasai Market.

Out the window, Lea's gaze meets the familiar landscape of Ngong Hills. The Hills—one massive, jagged, elongated mountain—tower over one side of a flat, uncultivated plain filled with thorny acacia trees, rocks, and newly green patches of grass (in March, the rains started flushing away the sepia coloring of the desiccated February vegetation). On the other side of the plain, hundreds of miles more of majestic, rolling hills project outward to the west. The Maasai, Lonna and Lea's tribe, dominate this entire landscape. With their extended, often polygamous families, the villagers live in fenced enclosures called bomas, spaced approximately 1000-1500ft apart, on average.

In Olosho-Oibor, which sits in the center of the plain, the principal occupation is commercial pastoralism. In the early 1980s, increased demand for land resources in Kajiado District caused these Maasai to privatize their land, spurring the ongoing economic transition from subsistence pastoralism to commercial meat farming. The privatization of land has created considerable income disparity in the region because poorer families suddenly had access to fewer communal resources, giving them an incentive to sell their land when in

desperate need.¹ Some Olosho-Oibor families have hundreds of both acres and livestock; some have very little of either.

Moreover, right now, Lonna and Lea live in a dynamic and somewhat contentious cultural setting. On top of the changes in equality caused by the privatization of land, their village society is caught in a three-way half-synthesis and half-competition between traditional Maasai culture, Christianity, and the ideology of human rights. Gendered traditions are a key battleground. At home, gender still nearly always determines a person's economic role. Though teenage girls like Lea generally attend school, their elders expect them to cook, clean, wash dishes, milk cows, and carry firewood. Moreover, as tradition dictates, families circumcise their teenage daughters and marry them off for dowry, posing a barrier to women's education.² Fortunately, in Olosho-Oibor this happens less frequently than in the past, as a younger, more college-educated generation of Maasai has begun advocating for girls' education and freedom from burdensome domestic responsibility. Authority over social institutions is also a point of contention. For example, at the behest of the village pastor, two of Lonna's friends, Simon and Ruth, got married in the church a full nine years after their traditional Maasai wedding ceremony. All of these tensions and more contribute to Olosho-Oibor's rich, complex and evolving social and economic life.

Mombasa, Coast Province, Kenya

Three-hundred miles to the southeast, Stephen, Andrew, and Peter wake up under the eroded structure of Fort Jesus, a military fortress built by the Portuguese in the late 16th century and now a museum. Casting off his mosquito net, Steven wipes the sweat off his face, looks out at the gorgeous sunrise on the Indian Ocean, gets dressed, and then treks down the rocky path leading away from the cave where the three men sleep and into the city of Mombasa, Kenya's only port. Andrew and Peter follow suit. As the three friends enter

¹Campbell, 266-7.

²Anastasia and Teklemariam, 277.

Mombasa's compact, bustling streets, they split up and set off for their work. Dodging motor vehicles and navigating a thick crowd of largely Swahili, Somali, and Indian Kenyans, Steven and Andrew head to two different warehouses where their respective bosses store unsold clothing. Then they carry these clothes to the sites of two informal sidewalk shops for the day's business. Meanwhile, Peter heads north to the nearest dump, where he begins the day, like every day, by collecting recyclable plastics to sell for 10 Shillings (12 cents) per kilogram.

As the country's only port, Mombasa is a major economic hub of Kenya. Yet, in 2006, the Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey defined 37.6% of Mombasa residents as poor,³ and that survey sample didn't include people who live in non-traditional dwelling places, e.g. caves.⁴ Beggars are a common sight along Makadara and Digo Streets, both of which Peter, Andrew, and Steven travel every day for work.

Hamilton College, Clinton, NY, USA

At midnight, seated in the atrium of Kirner-Johnson Building, Hamilton College's social science hub, 21-year-old Xander finishes up an English essay after having worked on it for most of the day. Packing away his laptop, he heads off to Keehn dormitory on the west side of campus (colloquially known as the Dark Side) via along brick walkway running past the music and art buildings. The nation's 16th highest ranked liberal arts college,⁵ Hamilton fills its rural New York campus with students from all over America and the world, though New England and the Mid-Atlantic predominate. Xander passes fellow students studying or relaxing in Opus, the campus's go-to café for late-night snacks, proceeds to Keehn, walks up the stairs to his room, and goes to bed.

³ Kenya Integrated Bureau of Household Statistics

⁴ Kabubo-Mariara and Ndeng'e, 16.

⁵ U.S. News

Berklee College of Music, Boston, MA, USA

Two-hundred and fifty miles east in Boston, Drew, Abbey, Tracy, and a dozen other vocalists gather in Drew's Back Bay apartment, cheap housing allocated for Berklee students, to practice their a capella tunes. Drew conducts, Tracy beat-boxes, and the rest perform the harmonies Drew has composed. Here at one of the nation's premier music schools, these students specialize in both an instrument and a musical discipline, anything ranging from Jazz Composition to Contemporary Writing and Production. After the rehearsal is over and most of the singers have gone home, Drew gets out his computer and gets ready to make a Skype call to Africa.⁶

None of these people knew each other a month before this writing (May 2013). Through this study, some of them met, and the fundamental question of this research is—did that matter? More precisely, this research aims to explore the value of cross-cultural relationship-building—making friends from other countries—in international development. Prevailing Western paradigms of development, as propounded by such giants in the field as Collier and Sachs, focus almost exclusively on improving physical, economic, and political conditions. Most theorists generally limit their proposed solutions to poverty, ill-health, lack of education, political instability, etc. to actions they can claim to justify empirically—e.g. policy changes, targeted investments in physical infrastructure, conditional loans, microcredit schemes, cash transfers, and the like. Apparently, by and large development practitioners have overlooked or dismissed purely emotional or 'spiritual' development, in the sense of personal fulfillment, as a valuable component of a population's well-being. Perhaps they have done so because, on a large scale, those aspects and determinants of well-being are extremely hard to measure. Tracing the effect of an abstract, multi-faceted phenomenon such as

⁶ These narratives are my dramatizations. Though I have depicted these people as accurately as I could in light of my interviews and personal experiences with them, these stories are my portrayals.

friendship on even the quantifiable aspects of development, such as economic livelihood, poses daunting logistical challenges for empirical scholarship. Without meticulous observation, and often even with it, one cannot unambiguously attribute any given improvement in a person's well-being, economic or otherwise, to a positive relationship he or she enjoys. Frankly, the effects of friendship are hard to document.

Yet that does not mean that international relationship-building is not a singularly powerful instrument for 'development,' which I define as the enhancement of a population's fundamental well-being. This definition includes both the physical and the spiritual, again in the sense of personal contentment. Engaging in deliberate, cross-cultural relationship-building may spur development in at least two ways. Firstly, friends are more supportive than strangers. I assert that people who are acquainted with you are more likely to help you out and, in addition, that simply knowing someone has an interest in your welfare enhances your welfare. Secondly, friends know each other's needs. Familiarity with a person's personality, experiences, and values allows you more precisely to determine where their needs and wants lie. This research explored the combination of these potential effects. Are cross-cultural friends more eager and/or able to help each other out than cross-cultural strangers?

Literature Review

There is very small body of literature touching on the benefits of deliberate relationship-building and cultural exchange between groups of people in separate countries. Most relevantly, a 2007 study conducted at both Minnesota State University in Minnesota, USA and University of Fort Hare in East London, South Africa examined the educational benefits of connecting two undergraduate social work programs via email and videoconferences. Largely, according to participants, these interactions were positive and enriching, and, though the experimenters designed the partnership for purely educational purposes, most of their sample pairings quickly became 'personal and communicative'

exchanges, i.e. virtual friendships.⁷ Within the literature, however, I have found no studies examining the benefits of friendship for furthering international development. To my knowledge, this study is fairly original.

Methodology

I couldn't think of a feasible way to study the effects of enduring international friendships within the space of a month. I might have interviewed Kenyans with international friends and attempted to retrace the effect of each relationship on the personal contentment of both parties, but I did not want to rely on subjective accounts and risk interpreting them favor of my pro-friendship bias. Therefore, using both Skype conversations and the written expression of both Kenyans' and Americans' deepest hopes and hardest struggles, I opted instead to simulate relationship-building and study its effect on the perception of others' needs.

Specifically, I broke my research up into three quasi-experiments, devoting roughly a week to each. First, in Ngong Hills, I organized a Skype conversation between seven members of two Olosho-Oibor families and six Hamilton College students. The purpose of the conversation, as I told the Americans via email and the Kenyans in person, was simply for the two sides to get to know each other—to ask about each other's lifestyles, cultural traditions, favorite spare-time activities, personal goals, hopes and hardships. I had given the Americans a short list of suitable potential questions the day before the Skype call.

After gathering the seven Maasai participants into a private room at the Bounty Hotel in Ngong Town at 5:00 PM, I connected them with the American students for a conversation lasting fifty-four minutes. For the most part, I allowed the participants to guide the conversation themselves, only inserting two questions for both sides at the very end. First, I asked about each participant's hardest struggle and second about his or her deepest hope.

⁷Rautenbach and Black-Hughes

Before the Skype conversation, I had gathered information about the Olosho-Oibor participants' living conditions—employment, food and water security, health quality and access, and educational opportunities—through interviews with the families and the main pharmacist at the village health dispensary. So, immediately after conversation, I emailed a comprehensive summary⁸ of these conditions both to the six American participants who had Skype-ed and to a slightly greater number who had not. Attached to it were four survey questions designed to assess the Americans' perceptions of the Maasai participants' needs, along with their own and those of Olosho-Oibor and Hamilton College. I also asked about their perceptions of the Skype conversation (if applicable) and their willingness to give the Maasai families actual financial gifts. (Instead of a language of 'help' or 'donations', I used the language of 'gifts' because it fit nicely with the concept of friendship.) Finally, using this survey I collected information about the American Skype participants' living conditions—health insurance, employment, and financial aid picture. I filled in information gaps via my personal knowledge of Hamilton College, compiled a summary of the American students' living conditions for the Kenyans, and, five days later, asked the Kenyans orally exactly the same survey questions about the Americans that I had asked the Americans about them. Finally, I asked these questions to demographically similar Olosho-Oibor residents who had not Skype-ed.

The purpose behind the second section of my research was broader—to explore the benefit of personal (one-way) communication with outsiders to Olosho-Oibor residents as an entire community. Unfortunately, I couldn't set up another Skype conversation for logistical reasons (just scraping together the first conversation was a headache), and so in lieu of

⁸ In preparing this first living-condition summary, in order to give the Americans the most accurate sense of Olosho-Oibor's economic conditions I could, I used the purchasing power parity exchange rate for the Shilling and the dollar when converting prices and incomes. For the second survey, however, I used the nominal exchange rate, because the point in that case was more to convey the state of the village's infrastructure and the capacity of its community-based organizations. For the third survey, describing the Mombasa participants, I reverted to using the purchasing power parity exchange rate.

arranging a face-to-face interaction, I asked both community leaders and regular village residents what their hardest struggles and deepest hopes were. Recording these, I wrote out another summary of village life, similar to the first but including information about the NGOs active in Olosho-Oibor, more details about the primary school, and miscellaneous other details I had missed in my first week of research. Then, I emailed this information and another survey to twenty different Hamilton College students. To half of these students, I included villagers' articulations of their hopes and struggles; to the other half, I omitted these statements. Like the first survey, this second one assessed these students' perceptions of Olosho-Oibor's needs and their willingness to give the village a gift.

Finally, I conducted another investigation using Skype, this time connecting two homeless men living in a cave on the eastern shore of Mombasa with six students at Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA. At 7:30 in the morning in Kenya and 12:30 in the morning Eastern Standard Time, I started a 71 minute conversation in the cave, which the participants on both sides again directed. During the last ten minutes, I asked both sides the same two questions about their deepest hopes and hardest struggles that I had included in the other two research segments. Next, after collecting information about the Mombasa men's employment, food and water security, health access, and education level, I sent a third compilation of living conditions both to the Berklee students who had Skype-ed and to Berklee students and Hamilton music students who had not. I hoped that these Hamilton students would prove an adequate demographic substitute for the elite music students at Berklee.

Unlike during the first experiment in Maasailand, I did not ask the Mombasa participants about their perceptions of the Americans' needs. Halfway through finishing that half of the first Olosho-Oibor experiment, explaining to poor Kenyans that American students had unlimited food and water access and secure health insurance came to seem silly and awkward. Even though meaningful friendships and development are necessarily two-way

exchanges, I saw no reason to repeat the exercise with the Mombasa participants.

Logistically, I could not have anyway.

In each of these experiments, I compared the responses of those Americans who had communicated personally with the Kenyans, either through talking over Skype or reading about their hopes and struggles, and attempted to discern any patterned differences between them. In the first experiment, I also compared the responses of Kenyans who had Skyped to Kenyans who had not. Despite knowing that none of my results could be statistically significant, I hoped to glean some insight from my observations of the Skype conversations combined with the survey responses.

Results and Discussion

1. The Maasai Meet the Continentals

The Conversation

Nashi Luni, Simon, and Samson Marona joined Lushate, Rose, David, and Lea Pulei in a private dining room on the 2nd floor of Bounty Hotel in Ngong, where they awaited their imminent conversation with six Hamilton students. At 5 PM, having set up my laptop on the dining table, I called my friend Sarah Mandel on Skype, and soon she and five others—Carrie Cabush, Jacob Taylor, Sarah Goldman, Dylan Thayer, and Alexander Kerman—appeared on the screen in front of us, the library in Hamilton College’s Chapel in the background. Immediately, to avoid an awkward beginning to the conversation, I taught the Americans the Maasai greeting (“Supai.” “Ipa.”) and invited the Maasai to greet them, which they did. After that, each participant introduced him or herself and the questions started flowing. Though I facilitated the conversation by creating time for Simon and Samson to translate for non-English speakers and by inviting those who were shy to contribute more, the participants almost entirely chose the conversation topics themselves.

The Maasai asked the Continentals broad questions generally. “Do you like your school? Is it a good place?” inquired Nashi Luni. “Yes, but it gets very boring,” Dylan said, eliciting chuckles from the Kenyans. “What do you love the most?” Simon asked them later. After a few uncertain seconds and a clarification that the question really was that broad, Carrie said, “People. Meeting new people and being with them.” Most others agreed with her and added learning as well.

That particular question the Americans shot back. “I love milking cows, doing beadwork, and being with my grandchildren,” Lushate replied, a sentiment echoed by Nashi Luni. “I love to read,” Rose added. In answering some of Americans’ other questions, the Maasai surprised them with their knowledge of Western pop culture. The students laughed when Samson said his favorite soccer player was Wayne Rooney and when Simon said he enjoyed Whitney Houston’s music. On the other hand, the Hamiltonians were even more surprised to find out about the Maasai practice of teenage circumcision. Other topics of conversation included food, Maasai weddings, people’s placement in their respective sibling lineups, Nashi Luni’s granddaughter Michelle’s christening after Obama’s first election, and a very cursory explanation on Simon’s part of the current cultural tension between Christianity, Maasai traditions, and Western education.

During the last fifteen minutes of the conversation, I inserted two questions of my own. “What is your hardest struggle?” I asked. The Americans went first. Attempting to discern “what I believe” and “where I belong in the world” were Jake and Xander’s answers, respectively. Sarah Mandel articulated that she struggled to be a good person, as did Dylan, who added that he strove to live out his Christian faith. On the Maasai side, Samson expressed concern about becoming employed, having just finished high school. Nashi Luni said she strove for her children to be happy with her and for the ability to pay for their school fees securely.

“Okay, cool, now what is your deepest hope?” I asked. The Americans led again.

“I hope to be able to travel extensively and the same for my kids,” Xander stated.

“I hope to be a good person, to touch a lot of lives and help a lot of people,” Sarah Goldman said, to cheers and even a little applause from the Olosho-Oibor families.

“I hope for my children to have a better life,” Lushate said. “That we might not have to struggle so much anymore.” One of those children, Rose, hoped to be a pilot. Lushate’s oldest grandchild, Lea, aspired to be a doctor. Simon wanted his children to become highly educated professionals, “more advanced” than him. After everyone had finished answering this question, I taught the Americans the Maasai word for “goodbye” (“sere”), which everyone cheerfully said before I hung up the call.

During the Skype call, I noticed that as time elapsed, the Americans became more and more engaged in the conversation. I had to prod them less and less to think of questions. At times, especially toward the beginning, the conversation was slow and awkward, due to imperfect video and sound quality, time spent translating, and unanticipated questions (e.g. “What do you love the most?”). Overall, however, both sides’ body language and tone strongly suggested that, despite these hindrances to communication, the overwhelming majority of participants were highly interested and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

When I interviewed them later, both the American and the Kenyan participants unanimously claimed to have enjoyed the Skype conversation very much. Their language was extremely positive. According to Sarah Mandel, “It was amazing to be able to talk to people who live in an entirely different and foreign culture and to learn more about their lives. It was just fascinating and amazing to be able to connect with people who live thousands of miles away!” Likewise, Sarah Goldman “enjoyed seeing how joyful they were and how excited they were to talk to us!” Jake called it “wonderful,” and Carrie called it “profound.” When I saw Rose and Lushate a few days afterward, the first thing they each said to me was that they

had been “so happy” to have talked to the Americans. Seeing Dylan’s bright orange hair in a photo I showed her later, Lushate remembered him and laughed. “Oh, the red-haired one. So talkative and direct!” When I asked Lea whether she’d enjoy the conversation, she said, with emphasis, “*Sana*. [A lot.]” David echoed her. Nashi Luni, Simon, and Samson all emphatically claimed to be “so, so, happy” to have people thinking about them thousands of miles away.

More than enjoyable, the conversation seemed to have been very thought-provoking. The Americans reported receiving a dose of perspective. “Hearing from residents of the community and culture is entirely different than reading about them in a book,” Carrie wrote. “It is profound how something like a simply conversation can break down barriers and show the humanity and similarities in two disparate and yet connected parts of the world.” “I was impressed at how upbeat everybody was,” Xander said. “In the US, it is so easy to think that the rest of the world is constantly comparing its lifestyle to ours and to forget that people everywhere are people just like us who settle into routines and take their lifestyles (on some level) for granted. [U]ltimately...people generally tend to experience all of the same emotions. For me that is the human condition. (Sorry to go all English major on that!)” For Jake, “the conversation helped emphasize many of the things that I know in the back of my mind, but aren't always emphasized or ‘made real.’ ... Talking about soccer and girls reminds me that, despite the thousands of miles that separate us, we are all connected, all human, all the same kind.”

The Maasai were somewhat less philosophical, but a few seemed to gain new, personal insights. Samson M. told me he realized that “people in the US are like us in Kenya. They still have to struggle to meet their needs. When you go back to America, tell them I say hi!” “I was so much excited; I would love to talk to them again,” said Nashi Luni. After a long pause, she continued, “Maybe it will be from us that [these students] receive help, or advice.

They can learn from us what is happening on the other side of the world. We can teach them about us.” Similarly, Simon said he was passionate about the two groups challenging each other; he enjoyed giving and getting exposure from people “who have never stepped in this country.”

The Survey for the Americans

Immediately after the conversation ended, I sent the Hamilton Skype participants the following survey via email. At the same time, I sent it to eleven Hamilton students who had not Skype-ed.

Below is some information about two families who live in rural Kenya. Please read through the information and answer the survey questions at the end.

Setting

Both families live in the rural Maasai village of Oloshoibor, which is 20 miles from the southwest corner of Nairobi, Kenya’s capital. To get there from the city, you take a 45-minute, \$1 taxi ride to Ngongtawn, the closest town to Olosho-Oibor, and then you pay just under \$2 to take another taxi to the village. This second leg of the journey can last between 20 and 40 minutes, depending on the time of year. Rainy season, which lasts from March to May, causes the road to erode and creates a 3-in layer of mud on some stretches, delaying and sometimes prohibiting travel. In Olosho-Oibor, as of 2009, 2825 people occupied an area of 40 square miles.

The average monthly temperature is highest in February, at 79F, and lowest in July, August, and September, at 50F.

The Families

Lushate’s husband died in 2010, leaving her and her three daughters with 13 children under their collective care. All three daughters are married, but they each returned home after moving in with their husbands, because, for various reasons, their domestic situations did not work out.

Lushate’s children, in order

Lonna (4 kids, one of which is Lea)

Joseph (4 kids; Joseph’s family lives in a different homestead from his mother’s.)

Samuel (30s)

Raeli (4 kids)

David (23, 10th grade)

Rose (21, 8th grade, 2 kids)

Steven (early high-school age)

Letuanna (middle-school age)

Simon's family is in the middle branch of a polygamous family. His mother Nashi Luni is his father's second wife, of three.

Nashi Luni's children, in order

Simon, married to Ruth, both early 30s. (Four kids—Marias, Sironka, Natasha, and Santa Fe)

Sam (27-8, lives in Nairobi but returns weekly)

Samson (23 years old)

Monica (19, 1 daughter—Michelle)

Two other sisters, one of whose young daughter, Sophia, stays with Nashi Luni, are married and live away from Olosho-Oibor.

Employment

Both families, like the vast majority of Olosho-Oibor residents, maintain livestock as a source of income and store of wealth. As a business, Simon owns about 50 bulls and cows and 300 sheep and goats. He and Ruth sell cow's milk at just under \$1 a liter. Goats and sheep sell for between \$75-\$150, while the price of cows, depending on their breed, size, and reproductive capability, ranges between \$200 and \$1,000—occasionally more. Because he has so many cattle, his wealth increases as they reproduce. Simon hires two cattle watchers, both for \$64 per month.

Lushate's family owns 4 cows, about 25 sheep and goats, and about 10 chickens. Lushate's two oldest sons are both unemployed. When finances become tight, e.g. when David's high school fees are due, they sell goats. On average, they sell one every two months, but their needs are not that regular. For \$64 a month, they hire a shepherd to look after their sheep and goats when David is off at school.

Because they have so few cattle, Lushate's family's main source of employment is not cattle-raising, but beadwork. In 6 hours, Lushate can produce \$10-11 worth of bead crafts, which her oldest daughter Lonna takes to sell at the Maasai Market in Nairobi. On average, the family earns \$20-\$30 per week, but returns are not regular. One week can bring \$60 while the next three may bring nothing. Rainy season makes it harder to get the crafts to market. Nashi Luni also subsidizes Simon's cattle business through beadwork.

In the village, other income-generating activities include cutting down trees for charcoal (200lb/\$32), transporting villagers in taxis or motorbikes, and running tiny convenience stores for cellphone minutes and snacks.

Neither family has electricity, except for a few dim lights Simon powers with a solar panel. Both cook over an open fire with wood gathered by the women. 20 people sleep in 3 rooms in Lushate's home, and 11 people sleep in 4 rooms in Nashi Luni's.

Food

Olosho-Oibor residents get the vast majority of their food from Ngongtown stores, in addition to harvesting a marginal amount of home-grown corn. They don't eat their livestock because exchanging the meat for other food provides more calories. \$2 of rice feeds 7-10 people for one meal, as does \$1 of cornmeal.

Water

The village's water comes from three sources. First, a pipe system running from a site on the nearby mountain, Ngong Hills, shuttles water to the community center tank, where villagers can obtain it, for charge or for free depending on the community's supply and the need of the people seeking water. A few families have built pipes leading directly to their homes, but people who live between the source and the village break the pipes for free water, disrupting access. Second, people buy water off of a truck ferrying it from Ngongtown. Third, people construct elaborate gutter systems to collect as much rain water as they can. For Lushate's family, purchasing a month's worth of water (enough to drink, cook, wash, and do laundry) costs \$100 or more. Thus, during dry season, through the center and scant purchases, Lushate's family may have enough water for drinking and cooking, but rarely for washing. Nashi Luni's family buys water and collects it during the rain. They always have enough water for all of their needs.

Health

In general, health concerns in Olosho-Oibor are similar to health concerns in the United States, with many more barriers to care access. The village health center only charges \$1 for any consultation but can only treat common, minor illnesses such as colds. Lonna reported having had malaria last week, which is possible, though it is also possible she misdiagnosed herself, as the family wouldn't have had enough money for treatment anyway and malaria is rare in the village. Most villagers need to go to Ngongtown to treat anything more severe than the flu. Though cheap care is available at the public hospital in Ngongtown, private medical practices nearby provide better quality treatment. So, when people are financially able, they typically seek private care. When Santa Fe had a raging fever last week, Simon and Ruth took her directly to a private hospital, where consultation, laboratory tests, and medication combined cost them \$50. At the public hospital, the same would have cost them \$15 or less. Lushate's family states that they often do not have the funds to meet their health needs.

Education

Elementary and middle school tuition is free in Kenya, but uniforms, books, and exams are not. Per child per year, these things cost around \$100-\$130 in Olosho-Oibor and pose a barrier to educating many children. In addition, parents pay \$20 per child per year for teachers who supplement those few provided by the government. Lushate, Lonna, and Raeli claim that all of their school-age kids attend the primary school, but their economic numbers and another informant suggest

otherwise. My guess is that at least half of the 9 school-age kids in that homestead cannot attend school. Simon and Ruth's kids, along with Michelle and Sophia, all attend school and rarely cause their parents financial stress.

High school tuition is not free. Per year, it's about \$600-\$650, added to the costs of uniforms. Simon and Samson attended the same high school that David attends now. To pay David's school fees, Lushate sells her goats.

Community

Like many villages in Africa, Olosho-Oibor has a strong community ethic. According to Simon, "We aren't trying to make everyone have equal resources, but we want everyone to feel secure." Through the one village church and a culture of community support, struggling families receive food and financial support on an ad hoc basis.

Survey questions:

1. Suppose you were asked to give Lushate's and/or Nashi Luni's family a gift. Given what you know about them, what gift or gifts would you give them? If your chosen present involves spending money, your budget is approximately \$1000. You may spend the entire amount on one gift, divide it into several for separate families or individuals, give any combination of gifts and cash, or spend the money for them in any other way. Do not worry about overspending by a relatively small amount. \$1000 is just a ballpark figure. Please have fun with this and be thoughtful!
2. If you had \$1000 to get yourself a gift, what would you get? If you do not want to use that much money, you don't have to. Be thoughtful and honest.
3. Suppose now that you were asked to present a gift to Olosho-Oibor as a community. Your budget is \$10,000. The guidelines are the same as in question 1. What would you give?
4. Finally, suppose that you were to give a gift to Hamilton College. Your budget is \$10,000, if you would like to use it. What would you give?
5. Why did you enjoy and/or not enjoy the Skype conversation? What did you learn?
6. You have the option (not the obligation) to *actually* give a gift to either or both of these families. Simply tell me any dollar amount and what you want it to go towards. I'll make sure they get it, and then you can pay me back whenever you see me.

If you haven't already, please provide a very brief overview of your health care and employment/work study situation so I can ask Lushate's and Nashi Luni's families the same questions about you! (Doesn't need to be as detailed as what you just read. I live in America too!)

[For Hamilton students who did not Skype, I omitted questions 2, 4, and 5 and the request for health care and employment information.]

The Americans' Responses

Overall, participating in the Skype conversation did not seem to impact the substance of participants' proposed gifts to the Olosho-Oibor families. Almost unanimously, respondents devoted all of their hypothetical \$1000 to Lushate's family. The most common gift was to pay for education in one way or another. Three out of six respondents who Skyped and five out of eleven respondents who didn't devoted the bulk of their budget to education.⁹ One notable difference in the choice of gift between Skype group and control group was that latter were much more likely to give livestock. Five out of the eleven non-Skype participant used most of their imaginary money on cows, while none of the Skype group did. Perhaps they didn't because most of the Maasai's professed hopes during the Skype conversation involved education. The one other common gift was straight cash (2/6 and 2.5/11¹⁰). Though three in the Skype group and two in the non-Skype group mentioned health expenses, no one focused primarily on health. Only one gift choice in the Skype group was demonstrably influenced by the conversation. Carrie said that "most of the adults expressed their hopes for their children to be educated and fulfill their dreams," which was why she chose to support Lushate's children's and grandchildren's education.

Similarly, the Skype conversation did not seem to affect drastically the substance of respondents' chosen gifts to the entire community. An improved water system was the most common overall (2/6¹¹ and 4/11). Interestingly, however, 4/6 Skype-group respondents gave the village the full \$10,000 in hypothetical cash, unlike all but 1 of the 11 non-Skype respondents.¹² Three of these four Skype participants mention what they would hope the village would put the money towards—an improved water system (1) and basic needs (2).

⁹ An additional Skype participant said he would give Lushate's family plain cash but encourage them to spend it on education.

¹⁰ One non-Skype respondent said he would give half in cash.

¹¹ One additional Skype participant chose to give cash but would hope they would use it for a new water system.

¹² That one, in addition, gave all cash in both questions and made no attempt to assess the village(r)s' needs.

None of the Skype group funded education or road improvement directly, unlike 4/11 and 2/11 in the control group, respectively. Possibly, interacting with Nashi Luni's and Lushate's families face-to-face convinced or reminded Skype participants of their agency and/or responsibility, prompting them to cede the choice to the Maasai.

Overall, both groups guessed some of the issues the Maasai would like to address and omitted others. The four college-educated Maasai that I interviewed all listed obtaining water and paying for school fees as two of Olosho-Oibor's foremost challenges, and most of the poor, uneducated (eighth grade or less) Olosho-Oibor interviewees mentioned wanting just to have extra cash. In total, the non-Skype group was slightly more accurate in that the Maasai, both educated and uneducated, said that livestock was a highly useful investment. Both groups missed food as a major challenge. In so often choosing to pay for education, they overlooked that for children to learn, they need to be nourished, and that Olosho-Oibor primary school struggles to provide students with lunch. Admittedly, this is probably my fault. I did not have time for my interview with the head teacher at Olosho-Oibor primary school until after having to send out the survey.

The most important difference between the two groups was not that one gained greater insight into the Olosho-Oibor community's needs or even that one allowed Olosho-Oibor more agency than the other. It was that one was more willing and enthusiastic to help. When asked to give an actual gift, the Skype group gave \$130, \$100, \$100, \$20, \$0, and \$0, whereas the control group scraped together \$135 between all 11 of them. Three gave \$20, one gave \$25, and one gave \$50, with the rest offering nothing. Moreover, in the Skype group, there seemed to be a connection between the detail of the responses and the size of the donation. The four donors all wrote long, well thought-out paragraphs for each question, interweaving their personal reflections with their rationale for choosing their gifts. "Having access to proper health care is an incredible gift that I and many Americans have," said one

respondent. “[I] would want these families to have that kind of peace of mind.” The one who gave Lushate (hypothetical) cash said, “Any gift that I chose would primarily be satisfying my needs for giving—that is to say, I would in some way be projecting myself onto their problems. I might know a bit about their lives and needs, but what can that compare to their own knowledge of their own experiences?” In contrast, the two Skype participants who did not donate wrote one- or two-sentence responses to most questions and did not make any reference to not donating. In addition, 2 Skype respondents said they would pay specifically for David’s education with their imaginary gift, and 1 actually gave \$20 specifically to Rose for books (almost certainly a result of the Skype conversation). No one else in either group named a specific person in giving either real or hypothetical gifts.

In the control group, there seemed to be a weaker but still present connection between detail and donation size. I classify three participants’ responses as highly detailed, four as moderately detailed, and four as undetailed. Though all three of the high-detail respondents donated \$20 each, one medium-detail respondent contributed \$25, and a low-detail respondent gave the \$50. Moreover, in contrast to the Skype group, 3/6 people in the control group who donated nothing apologized for it, sometimes profusely, and rationalized their decision. Two prominent examples follow. “Oh, I really do not know. It’s easy to talk about these things in a theoretical sense but once it becomes real it is much harder to decide. I don’t think I can be able to choose because as I said before, these questions made me realize what I take for granted being a college student in the U.S. There are so many things available to me, and at this point, I don’t think I can choose one particular thing to offer these families because I will feel guilty because they are still lacking in other resources.” Another respondent said, “I would love to give something to these families, but I unfortunately do not have the funds to do so. I feel like a jerk for having said this because obviously I have much greater funds available to me than do these families and by sending them a gift I would be sacrificing

nothing compared to what these families sacrifice every day, but I still can't do it." Maybe these respondents felt more comfortable telling me they did not want to donate because the Olosho-Oibor families had not become "real" to them through face-to-face interaction. On the other hand, maybe these respondents merely had more time to write, because they only had three questions to answer, not six.

There are several caveats barring me from drawing any conclusions from these results. First of all, the size of these samples is clearly much too small for the results to be statistically significant. Rather than the Skype conversation, a whole host of other factors, ranging from the participants' level of stress when they were answering the survey, to their degree of friendship with me, to their interest in issues of poverty, could have caused the difference in generosity.¹³ Additionally, the Skype participants are not a perfectly random sample. All of them were willing to wake up early on a Saturday and devote an hour and a half to talking to and reading about people halfway around the world. Non-Skype respondents only demonstrated willingness to answer a 20-minute survey. Perhaps people who are more willing actively to engage with people from developing countries are also more willing to give them gifts.

The Survey for the Maasai

Having received responses from the American Skype participants, I compiled the information they gave me about their health insurance and employment situations and combined it with my personal knowledge of Hamilton College to give the Maasai participants a survey symmetrical to the one I had given the American participants. Here it is:

Xander Kerman, 21 years old, Geology and English Major
Sarah Mandel, 20 years old, Psychology Major
Carrie Cabush, 20 years old, Psychology Major
Jacob Taylor, 21 years old, Mathematics and Music Major
Dylan Thayer, 22 years old, Classics Major

¹³ I did compare the respondents' socio-economic backgrounds and have no reason to suspect that the Skype group is richer than the non-Skype group.

Sarah Goldman, 19 years old, Philosophy Major

[Above each name I provided a picture of the student to jog the Maasai's memories, because these interviews took place a full five days after the conversation. I also showed them a map of the United States with a place-marker on Hamilton's location, along with a close-up aerial view of Hamilton's campus.¹⁴]

All of these students study at Hamilton College, a small college located in rural New York State. Approximately 1800 students in total attend Hamilton. At the college, students can choose from more than 40 different fields of study, from Biology, English, and Government to Art, Music, and Women's Studies. They live in dormitories together with their age mates, and attend school from September until mid-May.

Employment

All of these students are full-time learners. They spend most of their time completing school assignments. Occasionally, they have to stay up very late writing papers, completing problems, or reading textbooks.

For one year, attending Hamilton College costs approximately 2,700,000 Shillings.¹⁵ The families of approximately half of Hamilton students cannot afford to pay the entire amount, and so the college administration examines each student's family's income and other factors that affect their financial need (such as family size) and decides to loan them an appropriate amount of money. The US federal government and the college both contribute to these loans. Therefore, in most cases, the student's parents, the student, the college, and the government share the cost of the student's education.

After college, these students will have to repay part of what they were loaned, and some students have to start paying during college. Carrie and Xander do not work while at school. Last summer, Carrie worked at a bakery, and Xander worked as a camp counselor. Sarah has worked as a tour guide and as a researcher, but right now she does not have a job. Jake works as a math tutor and an administrative assistant for the college's Music Department. Dylan and Sarah both work at the Hamilton College library. Most of these students work to assist their parents in paying, but, except for Sarah Goldman, they do not need to. No one works more than 20 hours in a week (not including schoolwork).

Health

All of these students have health insurance. Usually, when a student has a minor illness, he or she goes to the chemist to buy medication or goes to Hamilton College's health center, which costs nothing for consultation. The costs of medication and laboratory tests are added the tuition bill and thus shared between the student and the college.¹⁶ Expenses for more serious medical issues are paid by

¹⁴ I had tried to provide a map of Olosho-Oibor in the first survey, but the images wouldn't load.

¹⁵ "Financial Aid: Tuition and Fees 2013-2013," Hamilton College website.

¹⁶ "Health Center." Hamilton College website.

the student's family's health insurance. Because of health insurance and general financial stability, these students can almost always pay for their medical expenses.

Food and Water

Part of the cost of attending Hamilton College is paying for food, and so the student's parents, the college, and the government also share these costs. All of these students receive as much food and water as they want through the three restaurants at the College. Showers, toilets, and sinks allow students unlimited water use.

Community

Hamilton College has an extraordinary amount of clubs for students to participate in. These include team sports such as football, outdoors clubs, music performing groups, advocacy organizations and many, many other types of groups.

Survey questions:

1. Suppose you were asked to give these students a gift. Given what you know about them, what gift or gifts would you give them? If your chosen present involves spending money, your budget is approximately 50,000Ksh [roughly equivalent to \$1000, PPP]. You may spend the entire amount on one gift, divide it into several for separate individuals, give any combination of gifts and cash, or spend the money for them in any other way. Please be thoughtful!
2. If you had 50,000Ksh to get yourself a gift, what would you get? If you do not want to use that much money, you don't have to. Be thoughtful and honest.
3. Suppose now that you were asked to present a gift to Olosho-Oibor as a community. Your budget is 500,000Ksh [~\$10,000]. The guidelines are the same as in question 1. What would you give?
4. Finally, suppose that you were to give a gift to Hamilton College. Your budget is 500,000Ksh, if you would like to use it. What would you give?
5. Why did you enjoy and/or not enjoy the Skype conversation? What did you learn?
6. You have the option (not the obligation) to *actually* give a gift to any or all of these students. Simply give it to me, and I'll make sure they get it.

The Maasai Responses

Though the Olosho-Oibor families' responses were intriguing, there are so many problems with how I was able to collect them that any attempt at quantitative analysis would be dumb. For one thing, I was relying on Simon and Samson for translation again, and, while I was trying to be very clear and those two are fluent in both English and Maasai, conveying to Lushate and Nashi Luni the economics of financing college in America may have been a challenge. For another, perhaps because for the poor in Olosho-Oibor 500,000Ksh is hard to conceptualize, and perhaps because of an inadequate explanation on my part, some

participants had difficulty understanding the concept of hypothetical money, limiting their hypothetical gifts to things they could actually afford. Finally, I had to gather the responses through four group interviews, and I'm fairly certain that in at least two of these, one person's responses influenced the rest of the group's. These are only the most serious problems with how I collected the data.

That said, qualitatively, the responses were telling. During the first interview, Simon, Lushate, David, Rose, Lea, and Lushate's oldest son, Joseph, gathered in Lushate's tiny dining room. After feeling awkward describing the comfortable living conditions of the American participants while sitting in Lushate's modest home, I asked the group what they would give to the Americans if they had a spare 50,000 Shillings. Quite the talkative fellow, Joseph jumped in immediately to say that he would keep half of the money for food and education for his children, nieces, and nephews and give the rest in cash to the Americans. Lushate then said that she would first and foremost send prayers for health and safety, as well as beaded handicrafts, remarking that she loves to give gifts and had very happy memories of the Skype conversation. Rose, David, and Lea all chose to give nice clothes or accessories as well. When I asked what they would give to Hamilton College with 500,000 Shillings, Joseph again dominated the conversation, saying he would provide land to build a Hamilton College branch campus in Olosho-Oibor. Stymied, Lushate said she didn't know that to give the college because it was such a large and complex institution. Whether they could not think of anything to give or they genuinely supported the idea of a Hamilton-Olosho-Oibor campus, David, Lea, and Rose all agreed with Joseph. Lastly, Lushate offered to actually send them bracelets.

The next interview took place in Simon's house with Nashi Luni, Simon, Simon's wife Ruth, and their middle-aged cowherd Dan Ole Mapi. Like Lushate, Nashi Luni sent the Hamilton students her prayers and blessings and proposed to give them beadwork with the

imaginary gift money. Simon and Ruth both pledged individualized handicrafts as well. Dan gave them a cow. When asked what to give Hamilton as a community, the group had to think a long moment. None of them had a concrete answer; the rather vague consensus was that they would spend the money where it was needed.¹⁷ Nashi Luni, like Lushate, offered to actually send the Hamilton students beadwork.

Back in Lushate's house, I interviewed Samson Marona and Lushate's son Samuel and daughter Raeli. These three were the first to understand that though Xander, Carrie, and Sarah M. did not work, they did not need to, and that Sarah G. was the only Hamilton Skype participant who needed to work to fund personal expenses. Therefore, they directed their hypothetical gifts to her to help her pay for flights, textbooks, etc. All of them also put their gift to Hamilton College into a scholarship fund for needy students. To Sarah G., they sent bracelets.

Finally, I interviewed middle-aged Samson Sakuda and his elderly mother, Seketian, unrelated to both Nashi Luni's and Lushate's families. Both said that they would keep half of the 50,000Ksh and give half to the students, specifically to Sarah Goldman. To Hamilton, they proposed to give scholarships for needy female students.

In general, the more socially removed from the Americans the Maasai participants were, the less enthusiastic they became about answering the questions. Nashi Luni, Lushate and Rose in particular paid rapt attention when Simon was translating information. Raeli, Sam, and Ruth were likewise interested, probably because some of their closest family members, whom they lived with, had met these Americans. Three of out the four most socially distant, Samson S, Seketian, and Joseph (who does not live with his mother), kept half of the hypothetical 50,000Ksh for themselves. Moreover, when I was interviewing Samson and Seketian, their facial expressions betrayed confusion for most of the time. I

¹⁷ Ruth offered to employ herself in the Women's Studies department so she could teach students how to cook, milk cows, and gather firewood.

suspect they were wondering why I was there.¹⁸ This makes sense. If the how ‘real’ the Americans were in the minds of the Maasai determined how enthusiastic the Maasai were to participate, then those who had Skype-ed would be most eager, those who had family members who had Skype-ed would be less so, and those who had no connection whatsoever to the Hamilton students would be disinterested. With the exceptions of Dan Ole Mapi, who displayed interest, and David, who did not, this is what happened.

An alternative explanation, however, compatible with that one, is that their enthusiasm stemmed not only from familiarity with the Hamilton Skype participants but from familiarity with me. I had been living with Simon, Ruth, Samson, Dan, and Nashi Luni for two weeks, and I had visited Lushate’s family several times to gather information. They knew me. While I had met Samson and Seketian Sakuda once for a few hours one afternoon, I was not nearly as familiar to them as with the other participants. However, one small piece of evidence against this second explanation is that I had already developed a friendship with Joseph, but Joseph, who does not live with his mother and would not have heard much about the Skype conversation, was generally disinterested and kept half of his hypothetical gift money for his own family.

2. Do Struggles and Hopes Matter?

The Survey

Unable to pull together another Skype conversation in Ngong Hills, I instead decided to test whether reading about a community’s articulated hope and struggles affects how and how much a person wants to assist that community. First, I gathered more information about the village through interviews with the head teacher, the manager of the power center, and coordinator of Beloved Daughters of the Maasai, an NGO that runs a girls’ rescue center in the village. I also asked these people and others what their deepest hopes and hardest

¹⁸It was an uncomfortable interview—I made sure to explain the reasons behind it afterwards.

struggles were. Then, with this new information, I composed the following information sheet and survey, sending it out to more Hamilton students. Importantly, for half of these students, I included the last section of the survey, “Community Hopes and Struggles,” and for the other half, I omitted it.

Below is some information about the rural village of Olosho-Oibor. Thanks for answering the two survey questions at the end after reading through it.

Geography

Olosho-Oibor is 20 miles from the southwest corner of Nairobi, Kenya’s capital. To get there from the city, you take a 45-minute, 55 cent taxi ride to Ngongtown, the closest town to Olosho-Oibor, and then you pay just over \$1 to take another taxi to the village. This second leg of the journey can last between 20 and 40 minutes, depending on the time of year. Rainy season, which lasts from March to May, causes the road to erode and creates a 3-in layer of mud on some stretches, delaying and sometimes prohibiting travel. In Olosho-Oibor, as of 2009, 2825 people occupied an area of 40 square miles.

Employment

The vast majority of Olosho-Oibor residents maintain livestock as a source of income and store of wealth. Virtually all families own goats and cows, but wealth varies dramatically from household to household. Perhaps a third of families have vast landholdings, dozens of cows, and hundreds of sheep, while another third have less than 5 cows and 30 goats. Goats and sheep sell for between \$40-\$80, while the price of cows, depending on their breed, size, and reproductive capability, ranges between \$110 and \$550—occasionally more. People sell cow’s milk at 50 cents a liter, and they also sell manure. Many people also hire cattle watchers for around \$35 per month.

Families who have very few cattle cannot make a living with them. Usually, their main source of employment is not cattle-raising, but beadwork. In an hour, a woman can produce roughly \$1 worth of bead crafts, a week’s worth of which she then shuttles into Nairobi to sell at the Maasai Market (beadwork is an almost exclusively female enterprise). Returns are not regular. For some families, one week can bring \$30 while the next three may bring nothing. Rainy season makes it harder to get the crafts to market.

Other income-generating activities in the village include cutting down trees for charcoal (200lb/\$18), transporting villagers in taxis or motorbikes, and running tiny convenience stores for cellphone minutes and snacks.

Food

Olosho-Oibor residents get the vast majority of their food from Ngongtown stores, in addition to harvesting a marginal amount of home-grown corn. They don’t eat

their livestock because exchanging the meat for other food provides more calories. \$1 of rice feeds 7-9 people for one meal, as does 50-60 cents of cornmeal.

Water

The village's water comes from three sources. First, a pipe system running from a site on the nearby mountain, Ngong Hills, shuttles water to the community center tank, where villagers can obtain it, for charge or for free depending on the community's supply and the need of the people seeking water. A few families have built pipes leading directly to their homes, but people who live between the source and the village break the pipes for free water, disrupting access. Second, people buy water off of a truck ferrying it from Ngongtown. Third, people construct elaborate gutter systems to collect as much rain water as they can. During dry season, an adequate supply of water costs more than \$50 per month. Thus, many families don't have nearly enough water to meet their needs, forgoing showering and doing laundry in favor of drinking and cooking.

Power

Ignoring the dim, solar-powered lighting in many homes, very few families have electricity. Women cook over an open fire with wood that they have to gather. There are no power lines. In 2010, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in cooperation with Olosho-Oibor community members and the Kenya Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources installed a power generation station at the village center, producing a combination of solar-, wind-, and diesel-powered electricity. The village health center, elementary school, and church operate using this power. Because the power infrastructure will have deteriorated by 2016, the manager of the village power center wrote a UNDP proposal, approved for \$70,000, through which the center is to receive more solar panels, a replacement battery for the generator, and a second wind turbine this year.

Health

In general, health concerns in Olosho-Oibor are similar to health concerns in the United States, with many more barriers to care access. The village health dispensary only charges 55 cents for any consultation but only has two qualified staff (both pharmacists, neither doctors) and can only treat common, minor illnesses such as colds. Though the dispensary offers maternal health and delivery services, free HIV/AIDS testing, immunizations and daily health lectures for the day's patients, most villagers need to go to Ngongtown to treat anything more severe than the flu. Though cheap care is available at the public hospital in Ngongtown, private medical practices nearby provide better quality treatment. So, when people are financially able, they typically seek private care. A typical, combined fee for consultation, laboratory tests, and medication for a child at a quality, private hospital is \$28. At the public hospital, the same costs \$8.50 or less. Simply put, many families in Olosho-Oibor do not have the funds to meet their health needs.

Education

Elementary and middle school tuition is free in Kenya, but uniforms, books, and exams are not. Per child per year, these things cost around \$55-\$75 in Olosho-Oibor and pose a barrier to educating many children. In addition, parents pay \$11 per child per year for teachers who supplement those few provided by the government. High school and college tuitions are not free. For a medium-caliber high school, attending high school costs about \$600-\$650 per year, added to the costs of uniforms. College generally costs three to four times that rate.

Olosho-Oibor's joint elementary and middle school has approximately 350 students. Because the school welcomes children from more than 3 miles away, many students have to wake up before sunrise and run to school by 7:00 AM. Often, the school does not have resources to feed the children lunch and calls on the community to donate food, to fluctuating degrees of success. Because the school has power from the village center, students studying for the eighth-grade national examination—which determines the quality of the high schools they may attend—have lighting and can study longer. Thus, Olosho-Oibor has routinely beaten out the surrounding schools in test performance since the installation of the generator. Yet, the poverty of students' parents stops many bright teenagers from attending school past the eighth grade.

NGOScene

SIMOO (Simba Maasai Outreach Organization) has been the most important organization in Olosho-Oibor for 40 years, but their levels of activity and funding have dwindled within the last 5. A holistic, community-based development organization, they are responsible for the 2003 installation of the community water tank among other infrastructure and social projects.

Around 2009, the village chiefs (simply meaning the government liaisons) started receiving visits from adolescent girls who needed a place to stay. These 10- to 18-year-olds had been married off early to help their family financially (dowry is expensive), but they had run away from that fate. Seeing this burden on both the girls and the chiefs, community leaders enlisted both SIMOO and a Spanish NGO called Jambo and to fund the construction of a rescue center for the girls. The Spaniards were the first sponsors of the new organization, Beloved Daughters of the Maasai, that was created to run the center. The only village church donated the land. Having grown from 5 girls to 14 to 26 to 29 every year since 2010, respectively, BDM's rescue center has a maximum sleeping capacity of 35, with a tiny office space and kitchen attached. They hire a matron, cook and watchman.

Jambo and SIMOO have done a lot for these girls. Besides constructing the center and giving them a place to live free from time-consuming domestic responsibility, they've sent 4 to a nearby high school. However, they've both made it clear to the rescue center's coordinator, Samson Sakuda, that they do not have enough funds to support all of the girls' needs. Securing funding for food, water, tampons, uniforms, school fees, and workers' salaries poses a major challenge to the BDM staff.

ChildFund, an international NGO, sponsors orphans and children of single parents in Olosho-Oibor, helping with basic needs through donations from abroad.

Community Hopes and Struggles

I've asked some Olosho-Oibor residents what their biggest hope and their hardest struggle are. Here are a few of their responses, paraphrased:

Samson M, 23: I need to struggle so I can become a responsible father for my future children, and so the community can see me as a good person. I hope to be at the forefront of the community.

Lushate, ~70, single mother of 10 children: I hope for a better life for my children. I hope we don't have to struggle to meet our needs any longer.

Raeli, late 20s, mother of 4: I hope my children eventually have a responsible father to look up to, and that they can complete their education. These have been my struggles.

Lea, mid-teens: I want to be a doctor.

Rose, 21: I want to be a pilot.

Simon M, early 30s: I want my children to be healthy and more advanced in school than I am (Simon is college-educated). I want them to be doctors, professionals of some kind.

Samson S, early 30s, coordinator of Beloved Daughters of the Maasai: I want these girls to have 8 years of education, graduate from college, come back, and be self-reliant leaders in the community. I want them to stand up and fight for their rights, free from involuntary domestic labor. Eventually, I envision Beloved Daughters of the Maasai becoming a boarding school or even a university and a starting point for women's empowerment. We need to change prevailing attitudes about traditional practices like early marriage and forced female circumcision, which undercut their rights. I would like to keep the wonderful aspects of our culture, like reconciliation and respect for elders, while dissolving away the parts that don't respect these girls. But, our biggest struggle right now is finding money for their basic needs. I don't know how to get from where we are to where we want to be with the resources we currently have.

Simon P, 30s, manager of the power center: I hope to start a new NGO called MENAP [Maasai Education and Needs Assistance Program]. I want to supply goats to needy families and let them reproduce to provide livestock capital to more and more families. I also want to be able to fund education for orphans, children of HIV+ parents, children of single parents, and otherwise impoverished children. As Simon, I can't do it, but maybe as MENAP, we all can.

Survey questions

1. Suppose you were given \$10,000 and asked to give Olosho-Oibor residents a gift. Given what you know about the village, what gift or gifts would you give? You may

spend the entire amount on one gift, divide it into several for separate causes, or spend the money for them in any other way. Do not worry about overspending by a relatively small amount. \$10,000 is just a ballpark figure. Likewise, if you don't want to use the money, you don't have to. Please have fun with this and be thoughtful!

2. You have the option (not the obligation) to *actually* give a gift to Olosho-Oibor residents. Simply tell me any dollar amount and what you want it to go towards. I'll make sure they get it, and then you can pay me back whenever you see me."

The Responses

In this case, the responses of the two groups, those who had read the "Community Hopes and Struggles" section (H&S group) and those who had not (control group), did differ in terms of their hypothetical gifts, though not dramatically. Since most respondents divided their \$10,000 between multiple causes, creating a chart that recorded the average percentage allotted to each given sector was useful.¹⁹ Here it is:

	H&S	Control
Education	57.5	39.6
Transport	0	13
Water	6.9	7.6
Food	5.6	7.6
Cash	0.6	8.3
Livestock	6.3	8.3
NGOs	1.8	7.2
Health	8.8	8.3
Power	12.5	0

With only 8 and 9 respondents in the H&S and control groups, respectively, we have to take these percentages with a grain of salt. For example, both groups' expenditures on cash are each the result of one person. However, on average, the H&S group contributed 45% more imaginary money than the control group to education. 7/8 H&S respondents allocated

¹⁹ When a respondent failed to divide his or her money up numerically or when he or she came up with an idea that helped two or more sectors, I divided their money equally between all the sectors involved in calculating the survey. This only happened in three total cases.

some of their gift budget to education, compared to 6/9 control respondents. The vast majority of my Maasai interviewees stated that they hoped for their children to attain an education. That I wrote out these hopes possibly explains the difference. One respondent even said that the “Community Hopes and Struggles” section decisively influenced her decision to contribute to education. Moreover, no one in the H&S group contributed to improved transport, while no one in the control group contributed to power. Though I strongly suspect this particular difference is merely a fluke, another, small possibility is that, because the last entry in the “Community Hopes and Struggles” section of the survey features “Simon Parkesian, 30s, manager of the *power* center,” H&S respondents who were inclined to contribute to infrastructure opted to build the power sector rather than the transport sector.

Though it seems as though reading the “Community Hopes and Struggles” section did sway H&S respondents to contribute more to education, perhaps that’s not such a good thing. Many of the most educated Maasai in the village, including Samson Sakuda, Simon Marona, and Simon Parkesian, list obtaining food and water as a crucial prerequisite to effective education. They agree with the survey respondents’ consensus that education is supremely important, but they say that basic needs are equally important, if not more. Of course, in any case, were families to receive help paying for school fees, they would be able to more easily afford food and water, such that contributing money towards either education or food would support both causes.

Between these groups, there was no noticeable difference in donation size. The H&S group gave \$75, \$20, \$10, \$10, and four times \$0, while the control group donated \$50, \$25, \$11, \$11, \$10, and four times 0\$. Of those in the control group who did not donate, two apologized and one said he would “let me know,” which he hasn’t as of two weeks later. In the H&S group, only one person who did not donate rationalized the decision, explaining she

had met her charity budget for the month. Additionally, there was no perceivable difference in response detail between groups.

Again, the sample sizes are not large enough for me to draw any definite conclusions from the results. The data weakly suggest that reading a community's articulations of their hopes and struggles affects one's perceptions of the community's needs but does not make one more willing or enthusiastic to fulfill them. I can't, however, make that claim with anything close to certainty.

3. The Musicians Meet the Cave Men

The Conversation

"Well," I thought as I woke up early in the morning on May 1st. "I hope this works." Though my friend Drew Krasner and I had been in communication for weeks, I had no idea whether he had been able to solicit enough of his classmates at Berklee College of Music for a Skype conversation with Peter Mwendwa and Steven Miku Marunda, two of three homeless men I had met living in a cave behind Fort Jesus in Mombasa. On top of that, I had found out from Peter the day before that Steven had to work during the only feasible Skype time—7:30 in the morning in Kenya and 12:30 in the morning EST. To my knowledge, Peter was the only one who would be in their hideout. Leaving it up to hope, I left my hostel, trekked down the street towards Fort Jesus, and went around the back of it and along the rocky shoreline until I reached the men's hideout.

I found Peter standing shirtless next to his bed, ready to talk to the Americans, and a third cave resident, Andrew Kitonga Kinywa, whom I had not yet met, washing up in their shower area. At 7:30 I phoned Drew to see if he was ready, whipped out my laptop on Peter's bed, stuck in my Safaricom internet modem, opened Skype, and initiated the call.

The blurred outlines of five Berklee students—Drew, Maxwell Abbushi, Abbey Hickman, Luke McGinnis, and Tracy Robertson—appeared on the screen in front of Peter

and me (Allegra Cramer joined those on the Boston side halfway through). After verifying that the video and sound qualities were adequate, I explained to both sides that the point of the conversation was to get to know each other's way of life. As during the Maasai-Hamilton conversation, I facilitated this conversation by inviting each side to ask questions and clarifying when the Kenyans' accent proved a problem or when either side made a reference unfamiliar to the other. Largely, however, I left the conversation's subject matter up to the participants.

First, Peter gave a lengthy introduction, summarizing much of his life story, including his parents' divorce in 1997 and his father's death the next year. I stopped him in the interests of allowing the Americans to introduce themselves, which they briefly did. By this point, Andrew had joined us, and he took his turn providing us with a long introduction, stating that his parents were from different tribes, Kamba and Meru, and that he had grown up an outcast. The Berklee students then inquired further about tribes in Kenya. After the two Kenyans explained briefly about the social segregation between Kenya's forty-plus tribes, Abbey asked whether Andrew had been rejected socially because he was of mixed tribal heritage. He told her she was right.

"How do we get out of this life?" Andrew then asked them. "This life is so hard." After a few uncomfortable seconds of silence, I encouraged Andrew to ask a question pertaining to the Berklee students' lives, which he did. "How do you get to go to the school you're in?" he said. Tracy responded with an explanation of the traditional college admissions process in the US and added that Berklee applicants had to audition. Curious, the Mombasa men asked whether musicians in the United States needed money to be successful. Often, Luke responded, in America the internet can provide a venue for self-promotion. Some artists are discovered through viral videos, or, in rare cases, talent-search television shows. Peter and Andrew explained that accessing a computer was difficult for them. At this point,

knowing that Steven, the absent cave resident, was an aspiring singer-songwriter, I asked Peter and Andrew to talk about him. They told the Americans that Steven, who generally goes by his stage name Mr. Yagayagayo, had managed to produce one album but couldn't sell it because he had no money to make copies.

In general, as the conversation went on, it revolved around living conditions much more than the conversation in Ngong did. The Berklee students asked about the Kenyans' employment, methods of obtaining food, and city setting, and Andrew and Peter both actively discussed their struggles with poverty, explaining the barriers preventing them from seeking better employment. Specifically, they bemoaned losing their government-issued identification cards and being unable to secure replacements. Other topics of conversation included the ways in which the cave men met each other, the age of the Berklee students ("But you look so old!" said Andrew), and the clothes the cave men wore (which are similar to American business casual). Finally, Andrew wanted to make very clear that, despite many people's prejudices against the homeless, Peter, Steven and he were not criminals.²⁰

Before I asked my final question about participants' deepest hopes, Abbey asked what the Kenyans thought about conversing with Americans. "We are *very* pleased!" said Peter. "This is my first time to ever Skype." Andrew concurred. "I am amazed. You guys can see us, right? Some people here will die without ever doing this, and I'll probably die before doing it again. I'm very happy. How about you guys?"

"Awesome! Great!" was the immediate chorus response. "How about a date for next week?" asked Abbey. Everyone laughed.

When I asked, Peter and Andrew said that their most significant hope was to start an informal business, perhaps selling second-hand clothes. "I'm not learned enough to start a big business, but I'm smart." Peter asserted. "All I need is some start-up capital." Drew

²⁰ To my knowledge, they are certainly not.

summarized the Berklee crew's collective hopes. "We want to use music to create positive change in the world, to spread love." Abbey and Tracy both added that they wanted to keep learning about people. Lastly, Drew said, "Sometimes here at school we feel disconnected. Just to be talking to people living completely different lives halfway around the world gives me inspiration."

Before hanging up, I picked up the computer to allow the Berklee students a quick scan of Peter and Andrew's hideout, including their three beds, fire pit, and exercise equipment, and then I gave them a glimpse of the Indian Ocean. Finally, the Berklee students sang approximately five minutes of gorgeous, improvised a capella music for us. After giving time for applause and goodbyes, I hung up the call.

Even more than the Hamilton students talking to the Maasai, the Berklee students became more engaged as the conversation proceeded. After twenty minutes or so, I seldom had to prompt either side into asking a question. Qualitatively, all participants seemed to be enjoying the conversation. On the other hand, I strongly suspect that Drew's video quality was much worse than mine, perhaps because of my weaker connection. I often had to repeat what Peter and Andrew said, and the facial expressions of the Berklee students suggested they were straining to hear us, interested but perhaps frustrated that they couldn't understand everything.

When asked later whether or not they enjoyed the Skype conversation and why, the American participants gave me answers that were ambivalent. "It was certainly a reminder and eye-opener about just how different my life is from the lives of others around the world." Luke wrote. "I really enjoyed the different perspective, but it did make me feel very weird and slightly uncomfortable to notice the differences in our lives." Abbey echoed his sentiment. In addition, many participants did express frustration with the poor quality of the video and sound. "So I don't know that I can say the conversation was enjoyable, but much of

that would be due to the means of communication,” Tracy claimed. “I want to see their facial expressions, hear the tone in their voices, and start to learn the nuances of all that and their body language, and therefore their true meaning when they speak. I just want to actually get to know them.” Allegra, who joined the conversation halfway through, agreed. “[T]he visual and audio quality was pretty poor and the thickly-accented English of the three men was hard to decipher, [which] made the Skype conversation itself a little tedious and in the end, *less compelling* [emphasis added]. Those are very superficial issues though – the content and people themselves were fascinating, and I was bummed that I’d not really been able to fully grasp it all.”

Despite these frustrations, the conversation clearly challenged and inspired the Berklee students. Drew, who was sitting closest to his computer’s speakers, was extremely positive. “I thoroughly enjoyed the conversation; it was the dose of perspective I needed. I am conscious of the poverty that is happening worldwide, but it hits on a new level when you are speaking to these people and seeing their faces. The two men were wonderful spirits and the questions asked and answered were very relevant and enlightening. I learned that I know almost nothing about Africa besides the stock American clichés and facts.” Additionally, scarcely twenty minutes after the conversation ended, at close to 2:00 AM EST, Tracy posted the following on Facebook. “One of many thoughts stemming from a conversation I ‘honestly don’t have time for’ that I just had... relating to a global issue I will call ‘the imbalance of privilege’: We overhear all the things that those [before] us have learned, so we know those things, [though] from a FACTUAL (not experiential) standpoint. By now even some relatively profound and heavy statements have found themselves among the tiresome ranks of clichés.” When asked to elaborate on the “imbalance of privilege,” Tracy explained that “the only reason why I’m not in a situation where since a very young age I have been scavenging for food, have never seen a computer before [this is not true about Peter and Andrew], and

have to worry about violent crime on a regular basis is that I was born into the place and economic status that I was.” Luke’s simultaneous post was, “Perspective. Community. Awareness. Positivity. Belief. Love. Intention.”

For the Kenyans’ part, both expressed gratitude for the Berklee students’ interest in them. “So many people automatically think we’re untrustworthy just because we’re survivors,” said Peter. “These people understand, they appreciate, [and] they’re not judgmental. We have been lonely for a long time. It gives you hope to talk to nice people who are interested in you.” “You realize you’re not alone, and you feel better,” Andrew assented.

The Survey

It took a full two days after the Skype call until I was able to gather sufficient information about Andrew, Peter, and Steven’s living conditions, write a summary of it, and send it off along with a survey to the Berklee Skype group. I sent the same information and survey to other Berklee students and to music students at Hamilton. This is what I sent:

Below is some information about three men who live in a cave in Mombasa, Kenya. Please answer the three survey questions at the end after reading through it.

Setting

Mombasa is Kenya’s only port city, located along the southern coast on an island half-surrounded by mainland—an island in a bay. It’s a compact city bustling with economic activity both formal and informal, from restaurants and banks to sidewalk markets where people sell everything from dress clothes to pirated movies to plastic bags. In 2006, 37.6% of Mombasa residents earned less than \$60 per month.*

As a coastal city lying on the Equator, Mombasa is almost always hot and humid. The average temperature is 79F, with February as the hottest month at 91F on average and July and August tied for coolest at 68F. Rainy season lasts from March to May, during which time the humidity averages higher than 80%.²¹

A group of three friends, Steven, Andrew, and Peter, live in a cave on the shoreline of the western edge of Mombasa. Here’s a link to their exact location—follow the place-marker directly northeast to the ocean and you’re at their cave.

<http://goo.gl/maps/r7QQM>

²¹ www.climatemps.com

Peter has lived in the cave since 2000, longer than both Steven, who arrived in 2003, and Andrew, who joined them in 2005.

Employment

Steven works as a porter. Every day around 6:00 AM, he carries clothes from a micro-retailers' warehouse to the sidewalk market at the intersection of Digo and Haile Selassie Streets, where these retailers sell them until evening. At 6 PM, Steven then returns the clothes to storage, returning home (to the cave) around 9 PM. Claiming to earn \$20-25 per week, he pays approximately half of that income to his girlfriend, the mother of his 1 ½ -year-old son, who both live across town in a one-room apartment barely big enough to fit one twin-sized bed.

According to Peter, Andrew is a porter for a different informal clothing business. Though his work hours are similar to Steven's, Andrew earns slightly less than him, perhaps \$17-20 per week.

Peter employs himself by walking to a nearby dump every morning at 6 AM to collect recyclable plastics and other materials until 10 AM. He then sells them at 10cents/pound, accumulating about \$9-11 per week. He has been unable to find a job during the afternoon because, until this past April, he had no government-issued identity card, which any formal job—even merely sweeping in a restaurant—requires. Steven's ID card is one reason he receives higher pay than Andrew and Peter.

As a rent of sorts for allowing them to live in the cave, the local police station expects Peter, Steven, and Andrew to chase away other homeless folks from living there for fear of criminals making the area a hideout.

Living Conditions

Food

These three live off of a combination of buying cheap market food and scavenging. Pooling their resources, they look for food thrown away from homes, restaurants and markets. They eat whatever they can, but rice, cabbage, and cornmeal are typical meals. "Sometimes we don't have to buy food," Peter says. "For us, expired food from restaurants is not expired." Though their per-day food expenditure is variable, they never spend more than \$1.50 on food per day.

Water

10 liters of drinking water costs just over \$2. The local fish market allows them access to salt water for bathing purposes every day.

Health

Over-the-counter drugs are cheap. Two weeks' worth of generic painkillers costs less than 20 cents. Prescription medicine, such as malaria medication, is harder to

afford. A week's worth of treatment costs approximately \$30/week—more than any of their salaries.

A public hospital visit only costs just under \$4, including consultation, lab tests, and medication. However, public hospitals are generally poorer in quality—e.g. able to treat a narrower range of illnesses—than private hospitals, which are much more expensive. Peter claims that Mombasa Hospital, located very close to the cave and reputed to be the best private hospital in Mombasa, has once allowed him cheap care (under \$1) because of his connection with the police station. None of them has health insurance.

Education

Steven never attended school. He's not quite fluent in spoken English and cannot read it. Peter and Andrew both stopped attending school after 8th grade and are fluent in spoken and written English.

Please be advised that I gathered the majority of the information above directly from Peter, Andrew, and Steven themselves. I can't ensure it's 100% accurate.

Survey questions

1. Suppose you were asked to give these three men a gift. Given what you know about them, from both the Skype conversation and the information above, what gift or gifts would you give them? If your chosen present involves spending money, your budget is approximately \$1000. You may spend the entire amount on one gift, divide it into several for separate individuals, give any combination of gifts and cash, or spend the money for them in any other way. Do not worry about overspending by a relatively small amount. \$1000 is just a ballpark figure. Please have fun with this and be thoughtful!
2. Why did you enjoy or not enjoy the Skype conversation? What did you learn?
3. You have the option (not the obligation) to *actually* give a gift to either or both of these families. Simply tell me any dollar amount and what you want it to go towards. I'll make sure they get it, and then you can pay me back whenever you see me.

[I omitted question #2 when I sent the survey to participants who had not Skype-ed.]

*All of my dollar figures are probably overestimates. To change these prices and incomes from Kenya shillings to dollars, I used the purchasing power parity exchange rate between the entire countries of Kenya and the US. I was unable to find an exchange rate for Mombasa specifically. So, for example, when I say Steven has an income of \$20-25, it means he makes enough to be able to buy the same amount of goods that you would be able to buy with \$20-25 in the United States, on average. Prices in Mombasa, as an urban center, are more expensive than the average prices in Kenya, which is a rural country. So saying Steven has "\$20-25" may overestimate how much he can purchase in Mombasa."

The Responses

This Skype call, unlike the one in Ngong Hills, did seem to affect the Americans' choice of hypothetical gift. 4 of the 6 in the Skype group spent some of their money on a laptop for Peter, Andrew, and Steven to share, unlike all 9 of the control respondents. Hearing Andrew and Peter celebrate the ability to talk on Skype and lament not having access to computers probably influenced the decisions of these 4 students. In addition, in direct response to Andrew's question "How do we get out of this life?" 2 respondents in the Skype group (and 0 respondents in the control group) offered to pay for the Kenyans' plane tickets to the United States and help them become citizens.

Though a laptop actually might have been useful for these men, overall the control group was somewhat more practical in their giving, at least given the information they had read before answering the survey. Cooking pots, mosquito nets, water purification systems, a first aid kit, food, and cash were among their chosen gifts. On the other hand, the only respondents who pledged to supply any of the three men with exactly what they wanted were in the Skype group. Drew said he would give some studio money for Steven, and he, Abbey, and Allegra all pledged some capital for a business ventures for Peter and Andrew. Two gifts common to both groups included identity cards and nice clothing for job interviews. In general, the Skype group was more vague and indecisive in their answers (two never completely decided) but no less engaged in the process of answering. Multiple respondents in each group remarked that the survey was very difficult.²²

In terms of donation size, there was no significant difference between the two groups. The Skype group gave \$30, \$30, a soccer ball, and three times \$0, while the control group gave \$40, three times \$20, and four times \$0. However, unlike every single other respondent in this entire study, half of the Berklee Skype group does not know me personally. That half

²² Sorry guys.

was the half that gave nothing. Conceivably, these three individuals were less eager to donate because, first, they were understandably unsure whether I was trustworthy enough to follow through responsibly, and, second, they did not feel as connected to Peter and Andrew because they did not feel as connected to me.

In this vein, it is very difficult to put meaning to the results because these samples have the worst statistical problems of all three experiments. Unfortunately, I could only find one Berklee student for the control group; the rest were Hamilton students who either pursue a major in music or participate in some extracurricular activity requiring musical talent. Berklee is an elite music school; Hamilton is a highly ranked liberal arts school. To speculate, these two schools probably claim student bodies with different personality types and economic backgrounds on average, even if, within Hamilton, one isolates students who are musically talented. Certainly, as well, Hamilton students have chosen a broader education than Berklee students²³, perhaps affecting their respective answers.

Conclusions

Despite all of the problems with the three sample set-ups, there are several tentative conclusions that I can draw from their combined results. First, provided there are few barriers to communication, using Skype to connect people cross-culturally can be an extremely enjoyable and thought-provoking exercise for both parties. Every single Skype participant, Kenyan and American, claimed to have benefited from the conversation, and the vast majority strongly suggested or stated outright that getting to know foreigners either delighted or inspired them, or both. Second, and similarly, even Americans who did not Skype seemed to enjoy learning about the Olosho-Oibor residents. Many a survey entered my email inbox containing the words “very interesting read” or something similar. In short, people like learning about and interacting with people from different walks of life. Probably as a result,

²³Probably because most Hamilton students couldn’t have gotten into Berklee. This comment is not relevant at all to the study.

presenting potential donors with information their beneficiaries' living conditions is a highly effective fundraising technique. From only 32 college students, I fundraised \$660 for Olosho-Oibor, and from 15 other students, I raised \$160 for Peter, Andrew, and Mr. Yagayagayo.

Another conclusion I can make is that even with fairly detailed, written information about a community's living conditions, smart people can suggest theoretically sensible but highly impractical ways to improve those conditions. Both control and non-control participants demonstrated this. For example, one respondent in the second control group allocated her hypothetical money towards bicycles for Olosho-Oibor children who currently need to run to school. While this would have helped those children who live along the road, many other children need to cross a river or climb a steep, rocky pathway to get to school. Similarly, another respondent allocated money for a community farm, but the land in Olosho-Oibor is not fertile enough for agriculture. That's why the Maasai are pastoral in the first place. There are other examples, some very funny. Of course, given the information I had provided, these gifts *were* sensible. I didn't send the information that would have shown them to be unfeasible, but that's the point. In a reasonable amount of page space, I can't provide nearly enough detail to adequately convey my research subjects' living conditions or needs, and neither can any practitioner of development.

Given the divergent results of the two Skype experiments, I can't conclude that face-to-face interaction affects people's perceptions of others' needs, though I can say with near certainty that in the Berklee students' case it did. I definitely can't say that Skype-ing with a group of people enhances one's effectiveness in improve their material welfare. Similarly, as tempting as it is for me to point to the \$350 gathered from the Hamilton Skype group and claim that their conversation with the Maasai made them more generous, that is not a certainty either.

On the other hand, no one can say that, qualitatively, these results were not intriguing. Quite possibly, the two most important factors affecting all participants' willingness and enthusiasm to give actual gifts were, first, the degree to which they perceived the subjects of their surveys to be psychologically 'real' and, second, how close a relationship they had with me. This would explain all three experiments' results. All of the Hamilton Skype participants are my friends (though not necessarily closer friends than the first control group), and the video quality was much better during their Skype conversation than during the second one. Perhaps that's partially why the second Skype group was less generous as a whole relative to their control group. Furthermore, the Maasai who both knew me well and had Skype-ed, except for David, were the most enthusiastic to answer my survey questions about Hamilton students. The converse is also true. Finally, reading about Olosho-Oibor residents' hopes and struggles probably has little effect on how 'real' they become to survey respondents, which is why the two groups in the second experiment, all of whom are my friends, showed virtually no difference in donation size or response detail.

To attempt to determine the relative importance of these two factors, if they are even as salient as I suspect, would be pure speculation. The salience of either, however, would validate the idea that friendship matters in development. Whether participants showed more generosity and/or enthusiasm because they had developed ties directly with each other or indirectly through me, they did so because of a positive relationship they had developed. In spite of all aforementioned barriers to definitive conclusions, I strongly suspect that building positive relationships across international borders enhances the welfare of those who engage in them. In other words, friendship furthers development.

Recommendations

First and foremost, I would recommend helping the poor! I learned nothing from this research if not that there are too many people in this world for whom fulfilling material needs

is a daily, stressful struggle. More importantly, however, I would recommend going beyond 'helping' and befriending the poor. While conducting this study, I have benefited invaluablely from building relationships with residents of Olosho-Oibor (NOT that all or even most of them are poor) and Peter, Andrew, and Mr. Yagayagayo. To anyone interested in learning about Kenya or exploring the meaning of development, especially on a visceral level, I would recommend making such friendships. They are just so wonderful to have.

From a more academic standpoint, if one were interested in further testing the value of cross-cultural relationship-building in development, I would recommend conducting the following study. Find or organize two demographically similar groups of foreigners traveling in a so-called developing country. Let both groups passively observe a given community, but only allow one to participate in intentional group-building activities with community members. After a few days of observing and making friends, ask these two groups how they would assist the community with a spare \$1000, and compare their responses.

Truthfully, with more time, energy, and planning, there are many ways in which I could have done this research better. I could have increased my sample sizes, asked Kenyan participants which of the Americans' gifts they would have liked to receive the most, more aggressively pursued Berkeley respondents who had not Skype-ed, given more time to collect information from the Mombasa participants, and/or written a more precise summary of their living conditions. I could even have diversified my study further by adding a third Skype experiment, probably by connecting a third group of Americans with residents of Kibera slums in Nairobi. I would encourage anyone interested in studying development to pursue this research topic further.

Appendix: The Stories of the Peter, Andrew, and Mr. Yagayagayo

I had hoped to add a third group of respondents to the second Skype experiment. I wanted people who had not who had not Skype-ed with the Fort Jesus residents but who had read about their life stories to complete the survey. I gathered the following information from Peter, Andrew, and Steven about their pasts, and, though these stories didn't fit in the study, I'd like to include them here.

Peter

Born in Kitui in the Eastern province of Kenya, Peter moved to Ukundu on the southern coast (close to Mombasa) as a child. In 1997, when he was 15 and in 8th grade, his parents divorced. His mother moved back to Kitui while Peter stayed with his father on the coast. His father's death the next year extinguished his chances of attending high school and left Peter in Ukundu alone. He moved into Mombasa with his uncle for three years, after which his uncle left, and he has been a self-described 'survivor' ever since. He dreams of starting a business selling second-hand clothes.

Andrew

Unlike the vast majority of Kenyans, Andrew's parents are of different tribes. His mother defied the wishes of his maternal grandparents (Kamba tribe) by moving to the town of Meru to live with his father (Meru tribe). Ostracized as an outsider, one who was not circumcised, his mother became depressed in Meru, quit her job as a teacher, and moved back home to Ukambani region in northeastern Kenya, taking Andrew with her. There, Andrew finished his 8th grade education, but the Kambas rejected Andrew as a half-caste. This rejection, along with the instability created by land conflict (growing the drug miraa is a very lucrative enterprise, evidently one worth harming others for), drove Andrew to run away to Nairobi. He ran a cheap kiosk until a government developer evicted him to build higher-quality store buildings, demanding too much rent thereafter for Andrew to continue his

business. After 9 months in an informal packing job, he moved to Mombasa in 2000, where he has been variously employed running a kiosk, doing construction, and working as a porter. He moved into the cave in 2005.

Mr. Yagayagayo

Steven was born in Moshi, Tanzania, near Mt. Kilimanjaro, to a mother with a mental disability. Early in his childhood, she abandoned him and left him to the care of a children's center in Moshi, where he spent four years. As a preteen, he escaped the center and lived as a street kid in Moshi for 3 months, thereafter deciding to leave for Arusha, Tanzania, where he spent the next 6. Next, he traveled to Namanga, a town on the Kenya/Tanzania border. Still unable to find enough food there after a year, Steven decided to leave again after the police jailed him for having nowhere to live. After three days in jail, he set off on the month-and-a-half long journey to Nairobi, following Maasai trading routes and restocking on food as able when he encountered towns along the way. Once in Nairobi, he found informal employment for 9 months selling alcohol until he was jailed again for a week. His next destination, after getting out, was Nakuru (a two-hour drive from Nairobi), where he was chased out as well. Eventually, he found his way back to Moshi, where he searched for his parents. He found his father through a contact the children's center staff gave to him—a visitor from his childhood. After having something of a self-discovery experience meeting his father, he set out to find the brothers he had just found out about, two of which lived in Mombasa.

Since coming to Mombasa in 2003, at around the age of 20, Steven's been living in the cave. An aspiring musician, he adopted the stage name Mr. Yagayagayo and has produced one album entitled *Mkono*, or *Hand* in English, but has no way to make enough copies to sell profitably. He hopes to be able to produce more music in the future.

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Interviewees

Andrew Kitonga Kinywa, Steven Miku Marunda, and Peter Mwenda, Fort Jesus, Mombasa
Marona family, Olosho-Oibor
Masi, pharmacist at Olosho-Oibor dispensary, Olosho-Oibor (opted to omit surname)
Simon Parkesian, manager of UNIDO Power Center, Olosho-Oibor
Pulei family, Olosho-Oibor
Paul Sakuda, Head Teacher at Olosho-Oibor Primary School, Olosho-Oibor
Samson Sakuda, Coordinator for Beloved Daughters of the Maasai, Olosho-Oibor
Seketian Sakuda, Olosho-Oibor

Survey Respondents

Berklee College of Music

Maxwell Abbushi
Erin Bentlage
Allegra Cramer
Abbey Hickman
Drew Krasner
Luke McGinnis
Tracy Robertson

Hamilton College

Jane Barnard
Anna Bastidas
Summer Bottini
Emma Bowman
Nicholas Brewer
Justin Brown
Carrie Cabush
Sarah Cauthen
Chris Delacruz
McKayla Dunfey
Felipe Garcia
Sarah Gamble
Liza Gergenti
Alexandra Huss
Alexander Kerman

Newton Hunter Green

Charlotte Hough
Gina Goldberg
Sarah Goldman
Hannah Lifset
Eric Lintala
Sarah Mandel
Morgan Markman
Ryan Melone
Nicole Mion
Bismar Montano
David Morgan
Andrew Nichols
Emily Palen
Kathleen Puccio
Alexandra Rudow
Laura Russell
Michelle Shafer
Elaine Tam
Jacob Taylor
Dylan Thayer
Katharine Tomalonis
Shannon Towle
Anderson Tuggle
Dominic Veconi
Ricardo Welch
Colyer Woolston