Article

When celebrity athletes are 'social movement entrepreneurs': A study of the role of elite runners in run-for-peace events in post-conflict Kenya in 2008

Brian Wilson
University of British Columbia, Canada

Nicolien Van Luijk
University of British Columbia, Canada

Michael K Boit
Kenyatta University, Kenya

Abstract

This paper reports findings from a study of the role played by high-profile Kenyan runners in the organization of Run-for-Peace events that took place in response to election-related violence in Kenya in late 2007 and early 2008. Acknowledging concerns expressed by some sociologists of sport about the role of celebrity athletes in the sport for development and peace movement, we suggest that in the particular contexts we studied, high-profile athletes played a crucial role in the organization of reconciliation events. Informed by interviews with former and current elite Kenyan runners and others involved in the organization of these events, we argue that the apparent effectiveness of the athletes in mobilizing resources, pursuing political opportunities and devising a collective action frame was possible because of the extant positioning of the athletes in the impacted communities, the active involvement in and personal investment of the athletes in the outcome of the peace-promoting activities, and the unique pre-Olympic moment in which the events took place. In doing so, we differentiate between celebrity athletes who are a 'presence' at sport for development and peace events, and those who might be considered 'social movement entrepreneurs'. We conclude the paper by describing how strands of social movement theory

Corresponding author:
Brian Wilson, School of Kinesiology, University of British Columbia, 156F Auditorium Annex, 1924 West Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z2.
Email: brian.wilson@ubc.ca

were helpful in guiding our analysis of high-profile athletes and peace promotion, and with suggestions for future research pertaining to sport-related reconciliation movements.

Introduction

In December of 2007, following a contested election between incumbent President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya's National Alliance Party and Raila Odinga of the opposing Orange Democratic Movement, violence erupted around Nairobi and in parts of Kenya's Rift Valley region. It was widely reported that the post-election strife 'left about 1,200 people dead and forced several hundred thousand to flee' to refugee camps or to go into hiding (Longman, 2008).

The political unrest illuminated historical tensions between prominent ethnic groups in Kenya—tensions commonly traced back to contentious land distribution practices that followed Kenya's break from the colonial rule of Britain in 1963. In this case, hostility was especially pronounced between the Kikuyu (the ethnic group of President Kibaki) and the Kalenjin (known to support Odinga, who is himself of the Luo ethnic group).[1] Although a tentative power-sharing agreement was ultimately reached between Kibaki's and Odinga's parties (aided by former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan), distrust and anxiety remained high in regions of the country.

It is in this context that a number of well-known current and former elite Kenyan runners led the organization of a series of 'Run-for-Peace' events intended to promote reconciliation amongst the rivaling groups. One of the most well-publicized of these events took place on 15 March 2008 in Iten—the Rift Valley town where many of the country's elite runners train and live. The event featured 560 girls from local schools running through the streets in a four-kilometer race. Several prominent runners oversaw the race and associated peace ceremonies, including former world marathon champions Douglas Wakiihuri (a member of the Kikuyu ethnic group) and Luke Kibet (a member of the Kalenjin ethnic group).

In this paper we report findings from a study that examined the role played by high profile former and current elite (i.e. internationally competitive) runners, like Wakiihuri and Kibet, in the successful organization and promotion of these events. We are especially interested in the strategies used by athlete organizers and others to promote the idea that these running events are legitimate peace-building activities—and ways that the involvement of high profile runners practically and/or symbolically enabled (or hindered) these efforts. The data for this study were collected through a set of interviews with those involved in the organization and/or promotion of these events. The sample of interviewees included former and current elite-level Kenyan runners, who would be considered 'celebrities' (meaning, in this case, well known and high profile) within Kenya and in many instances outside of Kenya as well. Research questions addressed in this research include:

- What resources were (effectively) mobilized in the organization/promotion of these events, and how were they mobilized?

- To what extent and in what ways did event organizers take advantage of political opportunities that emerged around these events?
- What role did current and former elite runners appear to play in the successful organization of these events—and to what extent did the successful organization of these events hinge on the work and presence of these runners?
- What 'collective action frames' were devised and utilized to promote involvement in the events?
- How might these findings be helpful for those organizing peace-promoting events in other contexts?

There are several reasons that the Run-for-Peace events and the high status runners who contributed to their organization and promotion deserve sociological attention. First, sociologists of sport are only beginning to examine why some attempts to mobilize support for collective actions (peace-related or otherwise) are more successful than others (Davis-Delano and Crossett, 2008; Wilson, 2012). Perhaps most pertinently for this study, few studies focus on how and the circumstances under which these collective actions/activities are successfully *organized* (to be distinguished from studies examining *outcomes* of collections actions, like Davis-Delano and Crosset's 2008 study)—noting that 'simply' organizing a conflict-free reconciliation event in the aftermath of inter-group violence is itself a major accomplishment (Schulenkorf, 2010). Such arguments are especially pertinent in this case, noting that the Run-for-Peace events organized here took place in some cases as little as two weeks after violent conflict.

Moreover, studies on sport-related reconciliation efforts seldom focus on the role that celebrity athletes (can) play in promoting these events —and the contexts where the work of these athletes is most (or least) effective. This is a notable omission considering the emergence of research outside the sociology of sport field on the benefits of and problems with celebrity involvement in humanitarian work generally (Cooper, 2008b; Dieter and Kumar, 2008).

Our study also differs from most existing research focused on international 'sport for development and peace' (hereafter referred to as 'SDP') work as the celebrity athlete event organizers referred to in this study, in most cases, currently live in and around the Rift Valley city of Eldoret or the town of Iten, and/or grew up in these areas. While the international non-governmental organization (NGO) Shoe4Africa was a presence at and contributed to the event mentioned above, as we indicate later, Shoe4Africa is run out of a small office in Iten by locals and its success was, according to interviewees, enabled by the work of those in the community.[2] So, by focusing on high-profile runners who live or grew up in regions impacted by the violence, our study is distinct from the work of scholars like Darnell (2012) and Giulianotti (2006) who refer to the intervention work of celebrity-driven SDP NGOs originating in countries of the Global North who are critiqued for a range of range of reasons (to be explained later).

With this background, we spend the next section of this paper addressing these topics and gaps through a review of literatures pertaining to sport, celebrity, conflict transformation, and the cultural importance of running in Kenya. In doing so, we specifically consider the relevance of theories designed to explain the reasons why some social movements are successful and others are not, the activities of effective social movement

leaders, and the tactics commonly adopted by these leaders and others who support the movement. In this way, we will begin exploring the theoretical and practical implications of having celebrity athletes take on the role of what social movement scholars call the 'social movement entrepreneur' (i.e. engaged, tactical leader and/or initiator of a social movement —Staggenborg, 1988)—and thus offer a unique bridge between SDP-related research and social movement studies.

Following this, we describe our research methods and sample, report key study findings, and consider how these findings relate to existing work on sport, reconciliation, SDP, and social movements. We conclude with recommendations for future research and comments about practical implications for sport-related reconciliation work.

Literature review and theoretical considerations

Sport for development and peace: a focus on reconciliation

Over the last decade, several scholars have examined the role that sport could play and has played in support of conflict transformation and reconciliation efforts in post-conflict zones (Armstrong, 2002; Dyck, 2011; Gasser and Levinsen, 2004; Giulianotti, 2011; Majaro-Majesty, 2011; Rookwood, 2008; Rookwood and Palmer, 2011; Schulenkorf, 2010; Schulenkorf and Sugden, 2011; Sugden, 2006, 2010; Sugden and Wallis, 2007). While this research is associated with the broader body of scholarly work on SDP, the authors referred to above focus on the complexities and distinct features of sport-related reconciliation efforts in particular. Rookwood and Palmer (2011: 185), for example, note how the goals of some reconciliation efforts are often more specific and short term than other SDP interventions, with reconciliation leaders often attempting to facilitate 'the successful transition from a cycle of violence to a culture of peace' by pursuing social and political objectives like returning refugees to familiar settings, monitoring elections, and 'promoting human rights and proportionate policing' (see also Katano, 2009).

Schulenkorf's (2010) research on reconciliation efforts targeting Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim groups in Sri Lanka is especially pertinent to the study reported in this paper because he examined the use of sporting festivals (akin to Run-for-Peace events) for peace-promotion purposes, with particular attention to the mechanisms through which connections were built at these festivals. Reflecting on his interviews with event participants, Schulenkorf (2010: 291) found that 'positive contact experiences allowed for the establishment of interpersonal friendships and the creation of inclusive social identities along national lines, organizational lines, common interests, and imagined factors'. Ultimately Schulenkorf suggested that such events can act as starting points and catalysts for inclusive social change —while acknowledging that these efforts need to be connected to broader peace-building and diplomatic efforts to make any lasting difference.

A point raised by Schulenkorf as well as Sugden (2010) that has particular pertinence to the current study is that the timing of and broader socio-political context for reconciliation efforts are of fundamental importance—with Schulenkorf (2010: 281) noting that:

> in times of high civil unrest in Sri Lanka, the mere staging of [a peace-building sport event] was considered a great achievement, as the organizing, fund-raising, provision of equipment, recruitment of volunteers, and support by VIPs, parents and spectators proved a great challenge for the organizing team.

In this instance, Schulenkorf is highlighting the need to adopt a flexible understanding of what 'success' means for those involved in sport-related peace-promoting projects —since merely organizing a relatively conflict-free event under some circumstances has to be viewed as one form of 'success'.

To take this a step further, it is important to keep in mind that while sport may optimally contribute to 'maturing peace processes', as Sugden (2006, 2007, 2010) has suggested, this should not be taken to mean that sport cannot act as an effective transformation tool in other circumstances as well. The study reported in this paper, which examines the role of sport (and elite athletes) in reconciliation efforts that took place shortly after a violent conflict, considers one of these 'other' circumstances.

Celebrity athletes and sport for development and peace

Simon Darnell (2012) is one of the few scholars to offer an in-depth examination of celebrity involvement in SDP work. In his 2012 book *Sport for Development and Peace: A Critical Sociology*, Darnell recognizes the obvious fundraising and awareness-raising benefits of having celebrities associated with SDP work—while also noting that celebrity endorsers may, at times, detract from humanitarian efforts. For example, he describes how celebrities who are the centrepiece of promotional campaigns for particular SDP NGOs sometimes draw attention away from the humanitarian issues that are (or should be) the focal point of the NGO's work. He further suggests that when celebrity endorsements become a functional requirement for successful fundraising and awareness-raising by humanitarian groups, some organizations may be disadvantaged because of their inability to secure such an endorsement —not because of the quality of their humanitarian work. Darnell (2012: 126) ultimately points out that democratic principles are undermined when celebrities are overly influential in humanitarian interventionist work, arguing that 'celebrities are poorly positioned, as non-elected officials, to mobilize change and may in fact undermine processes of governance by circumventing such processes'.

While these are well-reasoned arguments, we suggest that Darnell's critiques are not directly relevant to all kinds of SDP work. For example, it would seem that there might be instances when is it crucial for non-politicians (celebrities, athletes, or others willing and able to take leadership) to play a central role in reconciliation work (Lederach, 1997). It is well-known, for example, that the work of non-governmental actors in non-official capacities is key to what is known as Track II diplomacy, a crucial first step towards more formalized reconciliation work (Chataway, 1998). Put simply, 'context matters' when it comes to assessing reconciliation efforts —including those that feature celebrity athletes. We consider this issue further in our own study of celebrity athlete involvement in a reconciliation effort during a particular moment of political unrest in a country where the international successes of distance elite distance runners are valued by many.

Examining peace-promoting reconciliation efforts through the lens of social movement theory

In our pursuit of theoretically-informed understandings of the organization of sport-related reconciliation events and the leadership of celebrity/elite athletes, we were guided by two interrelated strands of social movement theory. The first strand is 'resource mobilization theory', which is based on the idea that movements are more or less successful depending on the ability of movement members to access the necessary resources to support their aims (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). 'Resources' might include expertise in website design to help promote key messages, connections with local journalists and marketers who might help raise the profile of the movement (and portray the movement positively), and funding to support activities like transportation of movement members to key events. The second and related theoretical strand, 'political opportunity theory', is based around the idea that in particular political climates and social circumstances, movements are more or less likely to be successful (Amenta, 2005; McAdam et al., 1996). These two strands of social movement theory are integrally related since movement members, in many cases, need to effectively mobilize resources if they are to take advantage of political opportunities —while in other cases, members must take advantage of political opportunities in order to attain and mobilize resources.

Underlying these perspectives is a flexible and context-specific understanding of what the term 'success' actually means for social movement groups/members. For example, success may refer to raising awareness about an issue, creating a sense of cohesion and community among those involved in the movement, gaining recognition for the movement as a 'representative' for an issue, influencing public policy, and/or inspiring the development of new cultural norms or practices (adapted from Wilson, 2012; cf. Staggenborg, 2008). The successes (and failures) of movements has also been linked with the ability of leaders of social movements to initiate collective actions and propose tactics (Morris and Staggenborg, 2004; Staggenborg, 1988; Wilson and White, 2002). Understanding the activities and role of these leaders 'who initiate movements, organizations, and tactics' (Staggenborg, 1988: 587)—known in this literature as 'social movement entrepreneurs' —is a key part of understanding how resources are mobilized and how political opportunities were approached and engaged.

Assessing the role of these entrepreneurs is especially intriguing when these individuals are also 'celebrities'. In recent years researchers have begun to examine the practice and meaning of 'celebrity activism' and 'celebrity diplomacy' (Cooper, 2008b). As noted in the introduction to this paper, much of this work emphasizes the problems with celebrity involvement —noting, for example, that celebrities may, ironically, distract audiences from the important humanitarian issue they are representing (Dieter and Kumar, 2008). Other commentators, conversely, take issue with those who are overly critical of celebrity activism —suggesting that such critiques often lack nuance, and seldom speak in adequate depth about the particular circumstances where celebrity involvement is (or could be) helpful (Cooper, 2008a, 2008b).

While there has been notable growth in the body of work on celebrity politics in recent years, a rare article that explicitly links social movement theory with research on celebrity activism is Meyer and Gamson's (1995) study of celebrity involvement in

collective actions in the USA—and the particular role that celebrities do play and could play in resource mobilization work. A key argument that emerged in Meyer and Gamson's paper—an argument of particular relevance to the current paper—was that celebrity involvement is most beneficial (i.e. it evades some of the usual critiques aimed at activist-celebrities) when the celebrity has a personal link to the issue of concern for the social movement. As they put it, 'celebrities are almost invariably most visible as participants in movements in which they can legitimately claim standing or stake' (Meyer and Gamson, 1995: 201; cf., Morris and Staggenborg, 2004). Having said this, Meyer and Gamson also warn that celebrity involvement comes with potential problems, noting, for example, that such involvement may compromise a movement's ability to take on contentious (but important) political stances because of the celebrity's potential need to maintain a non-controversial public image. Meier and Saavedra (2009) offered a similarly ambivalent message on a related topic in their research on ways that high-profile female athlete role models have been part of SDP work. On one hand, such athletes were thought to be most effective in their attempts to promote desired pro-social behaviors and cultural shifts when they have a particular affinity with the targeted population. On the other hand, and at the same, Meier and Saavedra recognize that even when the circumstances would seem to be ideal for such athlete-led interventions, it is always difficult to know for sure how role models will be understood over time by target groups, or whether these athletes will always model 'positive' behavior.

Ultimately, Meyer and Gamson conclude their argument with an overarching observation about how the apparent need to have celebrity-led movements perhaps reflects problems associated with the emergence and influence of local (i.e. not high profile and international) grassroots movements. They summarize their position in the following way:

> If it is celebrities whom we use to proffer and explain movement claims, perhaps this is because of the atrophy of indigenous political organizations and genuine communities of struggle. If celebrities, manufactured by entertainment industries, must carry the water for the politics of protest, perhaps this reflects more substantial distortions in society (Meyer and Gamson, 1995: 202).

Our study, while sensitive to Meyer and Gamson's assessment, will focus on a case where celebrities were part of a community in need of humanitarian support, where celebrities (as elite athletes) were not members of the entertainment industry per se, and in a context where peacebuilding efforts, in the short term at least, do not require radical challenges to the political structure (although negotiating with politicians and dealing with political issues were essential). In this way, we will consider how Meyer and Gamson's arguments hold up in the context that is particular to the case of Run-for-Peace events in post-conflict Kenya.

In concluding this section, it is important to note that although we were guided in this study by strands of social movement theory that are focused especially on the organizational aspects of social movements, we of course recognize that leaders and participants in the movement that the Run-for-Peace events were designed to support are part of a global network of SDP organizations that follow a mandate to promote peace (and

development) through sport (Hayhurst et al., 2011b). This network is what Kidd (2008) is referring to when he writes about the various ways that SDP organizations can be seen as a 'new social movement'—which in this context refers to (following Harvey and Houle, 1994: 347) a movement that is fluid and diverse in its membership, varies in size and composition, operates at local, national and transnational levels through what are often loose networks of association, and it is not orientated (exclusively) around economic interests. By focusing on the 'meso-level' features of an organization/movement that operates locally—but is part of a transnational network—we hope here to emphasize the very idea that SDP groups commonly operate on multiple levels simultaneously (cf. Wilson, 2007; Wilson and Hayhurst, 2009). Our contribution in this case is to outline social processes that underlie the emergence of a celebrity-led movement/organization —processes not readily seen using a macro-level theoretical lens.

It is similarly important here to acknowledge that a 'peace-promoting social movements' and 'peace-promoting events' are interrelated phenomena, but of course different. A peace-promoting event in this case was used by social movement organizers to mobilize support for the broader movement—which was the 'sport for development peace' movement. In this sense, the event is a strategy to promote the movement's broader peace and reconciliation agenda.

Running and Kenya

Understanding the role of running in peace promotion in Kenya requires some appreciation of the meaning and recent history of running in Kenya more generally. While some of the people interviewed for our study discussed this topic (we report these findings later), it is important to acknowledge that there is a significant body of research focused on running in Kenya, with studies on Kenyan culture and running (Bale and Sang, 1996), the motivations of Kenyan runners (Jarvie and Sikes, 2012), and especially explanations for Kenyan dominance in international running (e.g. Bale and Sang, 1996; Finn, 2012; Onywera et al., 2006; Pitsiladis et al., 2004).

Although we are not concerned in this paper with explaining the success of Kenyan runners, we would be remiss not to offer at least a cursory outline of the extent to which Kenyan runners have dominated distance running in recent years and the meanings these successes are thought to have for many Kenyans. One of the oft-cited illustrations of this success are performances at the Men's World Cross Country Championships, where Kenyans were champions every year from 1986 to 2011 except for 2004 and 2005 (Jarvie and Sikes, 2012; Larson, 2007). Since 2000, nine of 13 female Boston Marathon champions have been Kenyan. Jarvie and Sikes note in their 2012 article that, to date, Kenyan men and women have won 68 Olympic medals in distances ranging from the 400 meters to marathon, far more than any other African nation.

The lore of Kenyan running includes stories about memorable performances by top runners over the years, with Kipchoge Keino's successes at the 1968 Mexico Olympics being a common reference point since it marked the beginning of Kenyan mastery over the sport at an international level. David Rushida's compelling victory in the 800 meters at the 2012 London Olympics is a most recent marker of the country's running supremacy (despite Kenya's disappointments at some other distances in London)—a world

record performance where Rushida led from start to finish in the fastest 800 meter race ever run. Although the success of Kenyan women came later than Kenyan men, they are also dominant internationally. For example, distance specialists and noted women's and girls' rights activists Tegla Loroupe and Lorna Kiplagat (note that Kiplagat is Kenyan-born and lives part-time in Iten, having taken up Dutch citizenship in 2003) are both world champions, world record holders, and multiple marathon winners.

Bale and Sang (1996: 40) discussed the importance of these sorts of performances in the promotion of national pride within Kenya, noting from their own research that 'many people, particularly politicians wary of tribal assertiveness, [felt] that when "Kenya" does well [in international running competitions] … tribal differences temporarily disappear'. In this sense, Bale and Sang (1996: 40) acknowledge how an 'imagined community' emerges 'for a time and for some people' following Kenya's international sport successes, and outline how Kenyan media commonly assists with this narrative of unity around sporting competitions. At the same time, however, Bale and Sang point out that international successes may also lead to celebrations of ethnic group-specific successes —and that such celebrations could be considered divisive. They refer in this case to ethnic group-specific celebrations of the Nandi, who took great pride in the early successes of Nandi member Kipchoge Keino.

From this broad body of literature on Kenyan culture and running, we offer two main summary points. First, and on the one hand, running is an acknowledged part of Kenya's national sporting culture, and the sport's potential as a diplomatic tool both nationally and internationally is commonly recognized. Second, and on the other hand, the idea that running can play a role in 'unifying Kenyans' is not without contradictions and complexities. That is to say, sport's 'power to unite' may be time-specific and limited—a point made starkly in a recent study by Van Hilvoorde et al. (2010), who found that increases in national pride following national athletic successes were only temporary (in the Netherlands at least, where the study took place). Moreover, and under particular circumstances, a running event could be a forum where traditional divisions might be reinforced.

The 2007 post-election violence in Kenya

Finally, and although it is not practical here to offer a nuanced history of Kenya and its politics, some discussion about the recent history of election-related tension/violence and associated inter-ethnic conflicts in Kenya is crucial background for this study of post-election reconciliation efforts. We begin by pointing out that Kenya's post-election violence in 2007–2008 was a surprise to those who had seen an increasing stabilization of democratic processes in the country since the initial implementation of a multi-party electoral system in 1991. The 2002 election was an especially optimistic moment for many because a democratically-induced change in ruling parties took place without notable unrest—as the governing Kenya African National Union party was defeated by the challenging National Rainbow Coalition (Wanyeki, 2008). This uneventful transition of national leadership occurred in the aftermath of elections in 1992 and 1997 that were accompanied by violent conflict (albeit, less intense and widespread than in 2007–2008). As Kanyinga (2009) suggests, in the new millennium, Kenya had come to be 'widely

viewed as a rare bastion of political stability and economic prosperity in Africa', a 'success story' from which 'lessons could be learned' about sustainable capitalism and a (comparatively) smooth transition to democratic governance.

However, and contrary to this optimistic portrayal of Kenya in the 2000s, scholars like Kagwanja (2009) suggested that the historically-based reasons for the violence in 2007–2008 were essentially the same as those used to explain post-election violence in Kenya in 1992 and 1997. Kagwanja (2009) points especially to problems around the redistribution of land following Kenya's independence from Britain in 1963. For example, the 'settlement schemes' that guided the redistribution process were thought to favor political elites, who gained access to land that was historically (i.e. pre-colonization) inhabited by groups who, in the new system, did not have rights to what was previously perceived to be their land. This scheme and the 'land purchase programme' implemented by successive governments ultimately 'ethnicised the land question and established a ground for political conflict' (Kanyinga, 2009: 325). These issues are especially pronounced in the Rift Valley, where a high percentage of the clashes took place on land distributed through the settlement schemes. With this background, Anderson and Lochery (2008: 329) similarly argue that

> the conflicts that followed the poll [in 2007] had little to do with the election itself, but must be viewed as a product of a politics in which violence has become normalized, thereby giving a form of legitimization to the militant majimboist (regionalist) politics in the Rift Valley.

While the background to the violence itself—and its connections to contemporary and historical issues and conflicts —is far more diffuse and complex than described here, the main point to highlight for the current study is that the post-election violence in 2007–2008, while linked to long-standing forms of ethnic nationalism, was thought to derive ultimately from a history of corruption and conflict among political elites. The pertinence of this point will be especially evident when study results are reported.

Although we will show how the Run-for-Peace events contributed to post-conflict reconciliation efforts, we emphasize that many (including respondents in the study) share concerns about the possibility of similarly violent uprisings around upcoming elections. It is worth noting here that a Kenyan national election just took place in March of 2013, without the problems experienced in 2007–2008. Despite this, some commentators point out that responses to the post-election 2007 violence were slow and remain largely unresolved —leading to questions about whether the political and structural conditions have changed enough since 2007 to avoid future incidents reminiscent of 2007–2008 (Phombeah, 2012). For example, as of October 2012, the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission of Kenya—assembled in 2008 to assess the post-election violence—had not yet released findings/recommendations, leading some to speculate that the conditions that led to the 2007 violence are still largely in place (Phombeah, 2012).

Sample and methods

Data for this study were collected through in-depth, open-ended interviews with seven people involved in the organization and/or promotion of Run-for-Peace events. Below

we provide some background on these interviewees. Note that some more easily identifiable interviewees agreed to have their names associated with their quotations, while other respondents are anonymous.

Interviewee 1: Moses Tanui, from the Nandi Distinct in Kenya and a twice Boston marathon champion in the 1990s, is a former world record holder in the half-marathon. He currently works on non-profit causes and business ventures in the Eldoret area.

Interviewee 2: Male, former competitive track runner and scholarship athlete at major university in the USA who is currently employed in Eldoret in the sports department of a local university-college. He was a lead organizer of a peace run in the Eldoret area.

Interviewee 3: Joseph Ngure, current running coach at KipKeino High Performance Training Centre, located just outside Eldoret. Joseph has in-depth knowledge of and was involved in organizing Run-for-Peace events in the Eldoret area following post-election violence.

Interviewee 4: This Kenyan male and former world-class sprinter (in the 1970s) is currently employed at local university-college in the Eldoret area and helped organize peace runs in and around Eldoret. He made particular contributions to events run through the Tegla Laroupe Peace Foundation (discussed below).

Interviewee 5: Philip Boit, best known as a three-time Olympic representative for Kenya in cross-country skiing, although he was also a competitive 800 meter runner before being recruited into a well-publicized Nike-sponsored skiing programme targeting Kenyan runners. He currently lives in the Eldoret area and helped organize Run-for-Peace events in the area following the post-election violence.

Interviewee 6: Japheth Kimutai, gold medalist in the 800 meters at the Commonwealth Games and African Championships in 1998, and Olympian in 2000. He currently lives in the Eldoret area and helped organize Run-for-Peace events in the area following the post-election violence.

Interviewee 7: This Kenyan-born female is a major marathon champion and former Olympian, who has a home in the Rift Valley. She played a major role in the organization of the Iten-based Run-for-Peace event referred to in the introduction of this paper.

It is also notable in this context that one of the authors of this paper, Mike Boit, also played a major role in the organization and promotion of Run-for-Peace events and is himself a former elite runner and Olympic medalist. Put simply then, some interviewees are themselves current or former elite athletes who helped lead the organization of the Run-for-Peace events. Other interviewees are less prominent, but still key figures in event organization and had in-depth knowledge of the role of the elite/celebrity athletes in the events' organization. The relatively small sample size is not something we were concerned about because our goal was to identify the key features of a particular set of

events and the processes that underlay the organization of these events. This focus on process, which was pursued through in-depth interviews with a relatively homogenous set of 'insiders' to the Run-for-Peace events, is distinct from research that is concerned with the perceptions of a range of differently-positioned individuals who may have drastically different relationships with the events and movement being studied and movement leadership (for a more elaborate statement on the sort of process-focused agenda that guided this study, see Wilson, 2002).

Interviews with these individuals could be considered 'expert interviews' (Weiss, 2008) in the sense that respondents were asked a series of questions pertaining to their technical knowledge of the processes and strategies adopted in the organization of the Run-for-Peace events and of the relevant contextual information that informed decision making by event organizers. The respondents' experiences as event organizers and their knowledge of the local social and cultural context were thus crucial for aiding our interpretation of the events and activities of these and other elite athlete leaders.

Having said this, and although this technical and contextual information was key, it is important to emphasize that 'expert knowledge' should not be considered 'neutral'— since experts' perceptions will always, to some extent, be infused with viewpoints that are a reflection of one's social and cultural background and personal experiences and dispositions. For this reason, it is important to remain sensitive to ways that assertions by experts can contribute to privileging particular practices and viewpoints (cf. Flick, 2009: 166). We take this point seriously when reflecting (in the Discussion and Conclusion sections) on how particular 'collective action frames' promoted by Run-for-Peace event organizers were informed by a set of (always partial and particular) understandings of and opinions about the conditions under which a peace run could and should be successful.

Although some interviews were based around a discussion of the organization of the Run-for-Peace event in Iten referred to in the introduction to this paper, other peace events were referred to as well. For example, the well-publicized 'Tegla Loroupe's Peace Race' has for years been organized as part of the anti-poverty and peace-promoting work of renowned female international runner Tegla Laroupe (and her Tegla Loroupe Peace Foundation). The event was historically intended to inspire members of rivalling ethnic groups to 'give up their guns' at these events (cf. Mwaniki, 2012). Other prominent events took place post-election in Nairobi and around Eldoret that featured current and former elite Kenyan runners. Some of these included promotional support from international NGO Shoe4Africa and its Dutch front person Toby Tanser. These events were part of a broader effort to promote reconciliation in the country. These efforts included television and social media campaigns that shared goals around promoting inter-ethnic understanding and creating opportunities for enhanced communication (cf. Tully and Ekdale, 2012).

Data were analyzed for relevance to conceptual themes pertaining to the role of celebrity runners in organizing events, ways that resources were mobilized to enable the organization of the events, and explanations for the success (or failure) of events. Within these broad categories, nuances around these themes were identified and the contexts within which these themes emerged were identified (cf. Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Ethical approval for conducting this study was attained through university ethics boards at The University of British Columbia and Kenyatta University. All interviews were conducted

in either Eldoret or Iten, in locations convenient for respondents. Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and later transcribed for analysis.

Mike Boit, as a former elite runner, a professor at Kenyatta University, and participant in the organization of the Run-for-Peace events, was acquainted with the interviewees for the study and was the point person for recruitment. Brian Wilson conducted the interviews. All interviews were conducted in English. In many cases, the higher-profile interviewees were experienced with interviews because of their positioning as elite level international athletes who dealt frequently with the press.

Results

Below, we discuss research findings as they pertain to: (a) reasons why current or former high profile and/or internationally-competitive runners were thought to be well-positioned to organize and promote the reconciliation events; (b) ways that these athletes were particularly adept at mobilizing resources and taking advantage of political opportunities that led to the successful organization/promotion of these events; and (c) the importance of local knowledge for the athletes who led the peacebuilding efforts — especially in their attempts to promote sustainable forms of peace through running-related events. A more integrative assessment was also undertaken with the goal of identifying the 'collective action frames/narratives' that were used by organizers and others to promote the events.

Pursuing reconciliation: the importance of running and the role of (elite) runners

The idea that Run-for-Peace events can, and in many cases do, support reconciliation efforts in Kenya was conditionally advocated by all interviewees. Interviewee 4 summarized why and how he saw the running events contributing to reconciliation:

> In places like Eldoret they have been organizing road races for peace which can bring all the people together, those who are being involved with the clashes … It has been very successful because it brings all the tribes together and they run together for peace … People, they really enjoy it because they interact with each other. They are just now starting to forget about what happened on that day of 2007 and really we're very grateful. Because the way you have seen I think, you are travelling all over Kenya now, and you'll see people that are now together.

Other interviewees explained the potential of Run-for-Peace events by suggesting that running events have unique potential as platforms to promote peace in Kenya because the sport of running is valued by members of various ethnic groups in Kenya. While the value of running was thought to be derived, in part, from a shared experience among many Kenyans who enjoy or have enjoyed running as a participation sport, the main cultural power of the sport in Kenya was traced to the success of Kenyan runners on an international stage.

This is not a new suggestion of course—scholars have noted for years that the success of Kenyan runners internationally has been a source of pride for many Kenyans, and that

this pride in many cases crosses ethnic boundaries (Bale and Sang, 1996). However, there is some novelty (for sport scholars at least) in the suggestion that the cultural importance of running across Kenya offers unifying potential in post-conflict situations in particular. The most significant idea for the purposes of this paper is that former and current elite runners might be influential in peace-promoting efforts because of their sport successes —and that there are particular contexts where this influence is more pronounced, and context-specific reasons for this influence. The explanations that our respondents offered for the influence of these athletes in reconciliation efforts are, therefore, especially noteworthy as they inform thinking about the social processes that underlie reconciliation efforts. These reasons are outlined below.

First, several respondents suggested that because elite Kenyan runners compete internationally and on behalf of their country (not as members of particular ethnic groups), these athletes are in some respects symbols of a 'united Kenya'. As Moses Tanui put it: 'when we compete in Europe, the whole country is united, we don't say this is from Kalenjin or Kikuyu'. It is similarly relevant here that Kenyans of different ethnic groups often run and train together—and that many athletes from outside Kenya go to the Rift Valley to train with these athletes. Again, many Kenyan runners would appear to have amiable relationships across ethnic and nation lines because of this collegial approach to training, thus giving them credibility in their efforts to lead and promote inter-group reconciliation efforts.

Joseph Ngure described how international events such as the Olympics and major marathons that feature Kenyan runners help unite spectators from different ethnic groups who collectively support their nation's athletes:

> During the Olympics, everybody in the country was proud of what Kenya did, the national flag [and] whoever was running, and it was a very good mixture of who was running [i.e. different tribes were represented]. All the Kenyans were involved and now we are able to find ourselves to be proud to be the Kenyans we are.

Other respondents suggested that because elite runners had experiences travelling to compete in parts of the world where inter-ethnic violence has been rare in recent years, they attained a better understanding of 'what is possible'—a perspective that respondents thought to be helpful in their leadership roles during peace-promotion efforts. As Moses Tanui suggested, 'We feel we can bring that unity [from representing Kenya at international sport events] over [to the communities we work in], unifying the communities in a peace run.'

Interviewee 4 similarly suggested that these experiences motivated him in his efforts to promote unity through Run-for-Peace events, as he urged people in these contexts to think about the consequences of violence for *all* of those involved:

> I've been interested because when these things happened in 2007 people … so many families losing their lives, people losing their properties and people like us who were travelling all over the world, we know how peace very important … When we go there [to the Run-for-Peace events we are leading] we try ourselves to tell these people living in peace is very important, living in peace without problems, without fighting, is very important because when people start fighting, they lose a lot of things. Life, of course, all those things, but peace

is important and people like us believe in those things. We really believe it and we are really trying.

The underlying point here is that the elite athletes had unique experiences that were thought to help motivate and inform their pro-peace work, and also give them legitimacy in the eyes of those they were attempting to influence.

Interviewee 2 made the more straightforward point that current and former elite runners, who are in many cases revered and celebrated in Kenya, will of course have more influence. Implicit here is the suggestion that elite athletes are sometimes looked to for leadership because of their high status as elite runners. He explained:

> Now in most cases the people that have a lot of impact on the ground are the prominent people, the athletes. Athletes, the athletic community here are very influencing if an athlete say something here, you wouldn't take it lightly.

Others were more specific in their suggestion that the qualities that elite Kenyan runners are assumed to possess—the qualities that would have allowed them to succeed at their sport—would translate well to leadership of reconciliation efforts. Interviewee 4 described athletes as 'peaceful people' who were less likely to get involved in violence amongst ethnic groups because of their focused training regiment and lifestyle.

Of course, and as sociologists of sport like Miracle and Rees (1994) and Eitzen (2003) point out, skilled athletes do not *necessarily* possess characteristics that make them good leaders or peaceful people, although many athletes are undoubtedly good leaders and peaceful. However, in our study, the *perception* of athletes as being skilled and appropriate leaders and peaceful people appeared to be most important for enabling the athletes' leadership in the organization of short-term peacebuilding efforts. That is to say, the perception of elite/celebrity athletes as deserving of greater respect and credibility—and the related framing of these athletes as worthy peace-promoters —seemed to help these runners mobilize the resources needed to organize peace-promoting events. We discuss this point in more depth the next section.

Elite athletes and resource mobilization. Interviewees explained that the current and former Kenyan runners were especially effective in mobilizing resources related to event promotion, transportation (using their own vehicles in event-related work), and volunteer recruitment. The high-status identities of these individuals was thought to be key to their oft-successful work in these areas. As Moses Tanui explained: 'I'm an international athlete so whenever I do something they support it, I have no problem with the media, I can make a call, and they say yea.' Interviewee 2 similarly described how a peace run held in Eldoret was facilitated through a meeting of athletes 'with connections':

> Now what we did was we came together just like here in Eldoret. We, most of the athletes … just sat here to take some tea and we just chat around and say what we do best and say, well, let's call somebody and they would come here and then we would say OK, well, what would you do [to help organize the Run-for-Peace event]? Someone would say, well, I'll talk to such and such a bank because I am a member. I will do this and this. So, out of the 10 people, somebody would bring an idea and then we would bring it together.

Other interviewees emphasized that the athletes' work on the events commonly went well beyond 'showing up'—and that this active involvement was important to the success of the events. As we discuss later, this form of *active and present* involvement is a key feature of social movement entrepreneurs and is crucial for attaining legitimacy as a leader. Jaseph Kimutai described this in the following way:

> Athletes themselves are doing a lot because they are mobilizing and they also work as volunteers … You know, they're clearing the road, doing that they are using their vehicles to do everything, even getting some drinking water … They are doing to cooperate or to make the community be one … I can see if everybody was doing the way athletes are doing then it will be very nice.

It was this sort of on-the-ground work —where the athletes actively took on leadership roles and did the sort of background work that helped further their legitimacy as trusted peace-promoters—that allows us to label these athletes 'social movement entrepreneurs', following Staggenborg's (1988) definition offered earlier. That these athletes in many cases live and/or train in the Rift Valley is relevant here for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it meant they were available for and able to attend the Run-for-Peace events. Celebrity-athletes who 'parachute' into locations where SDP work is taking place as representatives of international NGOs, the sort of celebrity intervention work critiqued by Darnell (2012) and Giulianotti (2006), would not have had the same legitimacy or flexibility to support and participate in the events.

In fact, some interviewees, while acknowledging that the success of Run-for-Peace events required support from the whole community, were adamant that the involvement of celebrity athletes was a crucial factor in the successful organization of these events. They explained that to hold an event it is first necessary to (for example) get permission from local government and the athletic association, and to involve local police who will ensure that the roads can be used safely by the runners. It was also noted, importantly, that securing this permission is not straightforward unless one has connections and influence. As Moses Tanui indicated:

> If you want to make a run you need to go through Athletics Kenya to get permission from them [and] to get permission from the local authority, get maybe athletes who know what they must do. Because if you come again alone, and you want to do something without the people, you will end up with problems. So you first go get permission, get friends, like if you want to do athletics, you want to get athletes on board. Then if you have sponsorships, I think you will not have a problem.

As Tanui also mentions here, attaining local investment and sponsorships were similarly important and thought to be one of the major challenges for the event organizers. As Interviewee 4 noted, 'The challenges are enormous, [the event] needs a lot of money that is our biggest problem because we cannot maintain or organize.'

Again, however, and as noted above, it appeared that the high-profile athletes were well-positioned to deal with this issue, and to successfully encourage local businesses to get involved. International support from NGO Shoe4Africa (which is run locally, out of Iten) and corporations like LeppinSport International (a sport nutrition products company) sponsorship also, undoubtedly, appreciated linking their brands with the former

and current elite Kenyan runners. While this is a significant side-benefit of having celebrity athletes involved, the respondents in this study emphasized the importance of *local* investments for these community-focused events. Moses Tanui put it this way:

> We respect Shoe4Africa [the international NGO that had a major presence at the Iten Peace Run—that has itself been sponsored by international corporations like PepsiCo] for doing a lot of things in this country. But we need also our local investors. For example, our local farms, our local organizations that we have … all these to come in and sponsor something for the locals so that all the Kenyans can see that our local organizations can assist. We can also have some international organizations come in.

Event promotion was also considered essential for ensuring excellent attendance at the events. Interviewee 4 described the process of event promotion as follows:

> We put to the radios and the newspapers and those who are learned people in those areas. They pass the message to the warriors in the bush, tell them that there will be some races here for peace.

Several interviewees emphasized in this context that being able to say that celebrity runners will be attending an event gave the Run-for-Peace event legitimacy, and thus facilitated the recruitment of attendees. Having this athlete-enabled legitimacy was helpful in event organization in two ways in particular, according to interviewees. First, it meant that people will be more likely to attend events because they respect the people who are organizing the events and their motives—and will thus be willing to invest their time in the event. Second, and as pertinently, having elite athletes in attendance was thought to ensure a level of safety at the event, as the presence of the athletes was associated with the event being sanctioned and appropriately monitored by local authorities, who would be mandated to deter violent flare-ups. This latter point was a central concern in the aftermath of the post-election violence. Joseph Ngure explains:

> If you tell a community that we are trying to run this for peace, some of them weren't receptive. They didn't think that this was something that could be done. They thought this was just a joke, and they wanted to find out the reaction. But if you tell them now the people that are involved [i.e. the celebrity athletes] they will see the seriousness of it because now there a lot of prominent athletes here and then they will say now, 'Will they be there?'. It is sort of an assurance of safety, so when you give them that assurance and then they would ask, 'does the government know about this?'. And then you tell them 'yes', the provincial administration will be there … It's like these people here were still not really sure if they this was really a friendly place to come because where we live there were some houses that were damaged throughout the communities … and we tell them yea they were affected, but we are trying to bring them together. So convincing them first to take part was a challenge.

Celebrity runners and political opportunities: mobilizing the meaning of the Beijing games and Kofi Annan's visit. One of the challenges associated with peacebuilding through sport of any kind is that sport is only one part of a much broader set of cultural and social-political institutions—and one can never know 'for sure' how interventions like a Run-for-Peace event will turn out, even if attempts to organize would seem to be carried out

strategically and effectively (cf. Sugden, 2010). Moses Tanui spoke about this issue in his reflection on the success of peace runs in Kenya—and reasons to remain realistic about the long-term impacts of these events:

> When there is a fight and you do a [peace] run … you find everybody is coming there. You can see that it is positive because the same people that were fighting the other day, they are all together, cheering their children, speaking the same language. You know, that competition, mingling with the other communities, that's a positive thing. Although … next year Kenya will be in a difficult position because of political [the upcoming election] … I'm worried because you do something and you do a lot of good things, like 99%, but when one person spoils it, it spoils everything. So that is our worry. Because usually we do things up to 99%, and then all of a sudden these political come and spoil everything and then we start again. This has been the way and this has been the biggest problem that we see. I don't know how we can stop it, but it is really a big problem.

Despite these reservations, it was clear from interviewee responses that the athletes were well-positioned to take advantage of political opportunities that did present themselves, even in an unpredictable socio-political context. The most prominent example emerged in discussions about how the post-election violence had inhibited the Kenyan runners' training for the upcoming Beijing Olympic games. Some interviewees noted how this problem was, in some respects, an 'opportunity' since discussions about the Olympics sometimes became forums to remind people of Kenya's (united) identity as a dominant running nation—and to emphasize that the post-election problems needed to be resolved if this positive national identity was to be maintained at and through the upcoming games. Joseph Ngure refers to this when discussing the situations faced by many elite Kenyan athletes following the 2007 election:

> I can say that the sporting people [who were] so much involved in the preparation for the coming events, they were taken by what happened, by surprise. Because like me, I was still at my place of work [as athletics coach], where so many athletes, some even from outside the country, were celebrating Christmas, then waiting to continue the [training] programs. So when the political things [the election] were taking place, for us, in sports, we were not so much [aware of it] … Then all of a sudden we found that we could not train because we could not move from one location to another. The roads were barricaded, we could not move … Then all of a sudden everything came to a standstill.

As Ngure notes, because of the roadblocks and ongoing violence, athletes could not train or travel to 'tune-up' events, potentially having a negative impact on their preparations for and performance at the 2008 Beijing Olympic games. These problems were viewed as political opportunities in the sense that they were thought to motivate both Kenyan runners and others in the country who were concerned about Kenya's performance and sport-related image on the world stage to take a lead in organizing and promoting peace events. Ngure went on to address this issue when talking about the violence occurring in and around the training facilities:

> When we realized that it was taking a toll on them [the athletes] and they were not preparing, it was the year of Olympics 2008 so we wanted to forget it as soon as possible and make us able

to travel. Some of us are moving from here [Eldoret] to Nairobi and … they would not move on the road. The roads were all barricaded. ***So that's why the [athletes] were the first to talk about peace*** [emphasis added]. Through organizing the races, the tension was now removed from the warlike into something else, diverting the attention. We wanted also to use sports for this thing to be forgotten because so much was lost on board the side of athletes. They lost their training mainly because they could not move. Some of them lost their properties. Also, most of the athletes have invested heavily in the local town, they have buildings, they have cows. They have family and when their properties getting destroyed just because of violence, that is why they took the first initiative, to preach peace through organizing the races. Most of all the athletes are involved in a way in organizing these races.

Other interviewees talked about how the arrival of Kofi Annan to aid in post-election negotiations between the rivalling politicians was also an opportunity for those interested in doing something about the violence to intervene, to use Annan's presence as a departure point for discussions about violence reduction and peacebuilding locally. Jaseph Kimutai explained:

We saw all those things, people throwing stones, on the road blocking all the way, there was no movement … When Kofi Annan was going on with his thing in Nairobi, we were also at the crowd ourselves, mobilizing people to talk together, try to talk to him, let's do this, let's have peace, let's come together. I mean, if nothing would have been done, Kenya would actually flop in the wrong direction.

In sum, and underlying these rich descriptions of ways that events like Kofi Annan's visit and the Beijing Olympic Games created opportunities for peace-promotion locally was the idea that celebrity athletes were well-positioned to lead pro-peace mobilizations. Not only were these athletes influential, but they were extremely motivated to support the pro-peace events, for both altruistic and pragmatic reasons. Current athletes stood to gain directly from this peace-promotion (e.g. through safer training as they prepared for the Beijing games) while former and current athletes who live in and/or grew up in the Rift Valley often have a great deal of personal and economic investment in the region. In many cases, these athletes have homes and families in the Rift Valley and/or run businesses in or around Eldoret—and would have been directly impacted by the loss of friends, family, and/or damage of property. This personal investment in the region is one of the reasons that these athletes would have legitimacy in their leadership efforts (cf. Meyer and Gamson, 1995).

Context-specific tactics for running successful reconciliation events

Interviewees also described tactics they used in their attempts to organize successful events. The insights offered by respondents are important because they speak to ways that local knowledge informed decision making around the organization of these reconciliation events. Again, it would appear to matter that celebrity athletes were involved in the events—and especially that the athletes (had) lived in and/or had in-depth knowledge of the areas that the events were taking place within because these athletes were well-positioned to make context-appropriate tactical decisions in their leadership roles.

Local knowledge and managing politician involvement. The most striking example of elite athletes drawing on local knowledge emerged in the respondents' descriptions of their strategic attempts to minimize the involvement of politicians in the peace runs. This tactic was adopted in response to the widespread perception that national politics and political corruption were the source of the problems that led to the violence in the first place. As Moses Tanui put it, 'The main problem that is giving this country problems is politics … people fight because of votes … I cannot be involved in politics and I don't like to'.

With this background, interviewees described how Run-for-Peace event organizers commonly asked politicians to make an appearance at the events—since the process of reconciliation requires restoring trust in the political structure and politicians themselves should, to a point, feel included in the reconciliation process (see Ashby, 2004). *However*, such involvements were also strategically managed (and minimized) by event organizers. This usually meant that politicians were invited to make speeches during events—but were instructed to feature messages about the event and about peacebuilding within the local communities and Kenya. Interviewees who spoke to this issue indicated that it was made clear to politicians that the event should not be used as a forum to seek votes. Interviewee 4 explained:

> Unfortunately I have to say that sometimes the politicians are encouraged by the political undertones. Instead of addressing peace they are talking about political part of it. So sometimes we minimize getting the politician there because they've come to talk about the votes … But here we are talking about peace and we want to create a movement for the young ones … So we tend to keep politicians out of most of these things … This is to maintain the political class, but for us [our goal] is to promote sports [and peace].

In these instances, it would also seem that celebrity athletes would be best positioned to negotiate with the also higher-status politicians—and that managing/minimizing the politicians' involvement would simultaneously help establish the 'politics-free' mandate of Run-for-Peace events.

Local knowledge and sustainable peace. It was especially important for these interviewees that the Run-for-Peace events continue after the post-conflict crisis. Joseph Ngure explained:

> It is that hope, to maintain and to continue and make it [the Run-for-Peace event] an annual event. Most of them are annual events and they keep on attracting the sponsors. The number of participants keep on increasing because at first it was just for that particular time [as a response to the post-election violence] and then the sponsors are much more willing to continue making it an annual event.

Interviewee 7 spoke similarly about the importance of keeping all of those involved in the organization of Run-for-Peace events motivated and focused on 'the next event'—which she felt was crucial for building and maintaining trust among community members.

Interviewees also spoke about their desire to organize peacebuilding events shortly before the next election in an attempt to mitigate the sorts of violence that took place in 2007–2008. Philip Boit explained:

> There are some races which have already been organized before the next year [i.e. the next election year]. That will be a continuity of what is coming after the election. You know, we don't want this thing [the violence] to happen again … We want peace and this thing [the Run-for-Peace events and movement] has to continue and whatever we have done, it has really shown that it has helped people. We did it to help people and it has been seen that it has really worked.

Jasepth Kimutai similarly noted:

> If it might even be possible next year that we can arrange even more races because we know one is coming ahead of us. The more we make the more we educate people so that elections we don't get to the same problem we had in 2007/2008. It was so bad, you don't like to go to that situation again. We need peace during the election and everything to be democratic, so which I think we can play a part of it [by organizing Run-for-Peace events].

While this study was not designed to examine the outcomes of the Run-for-Peace events, it is relevant here, as noted earlier, that the violence that characterized the 2007 elections did not take place around the 2013 elections. Although there are many reasons for this, it is at the very least encouraging for Run-for-Peace leaders and movement members that the peace-promotion activities referred to here—some of which were sustained in the years following the post-election violence of 2007/2008—may have contributed to this.

Discussion

Our findings offer a basis for commenting on: (a) the role of high-profile athletes in sport-related reconciliation efforts and; (b) the value of theories that explain the emergence and success of social movements as guides for studies on sport-for-peace movements and interventions. Regarding the first topic, our findings show how, in particular circumstances, high-profile 'celebrity' athletes are extremely well-positioned to lead peace-promoting activities. Our interviewees confirmed that the current and former elite Kenyan runners involved in the Run-for-Peace efforts were able to mobilize resources and take advantage of political opportunities that would only have been available to influential, respected and well-connected individuals. While non-athletes with a similar social positioning may have been able to facilitate change in the same way that some athletes were able to, these runners were especially well-situated to support this running-related form of peace promotion in the Rift Valley, a place where running and elite runners are especially revered.

However, and while the presence of elite athletes at Run-for-Peace events was undoubtedly beneficial for reasons mentioned earlier, it appeared that the success of the runners who led the organization of these events so soon after the post-election violence was attributable to the 'legitimacy' of these athletes in particular. 'Legitimacy'

was associated with the athletes' *active* involvement in the organizational efforts (in additional to 'showing up' for events) and their *local connections and demonstrated investment* in the local context (i.e. growing up in and/or living in the Rift Valley). There were also characteristics ascribed to the most successful international athletes that gave them particular legitimacy. For example, the belief that Kenyan runners are hard-working, focused, and generally non-partisan would seem to be associated with the belief that these athletes were also well-positioned to lead a peacebuilding movement.

These findings inform existing literature on SDP efforts in a number of ways. Most notably, they highlight why it is important to attend the details of and circumstances sur-rounding the involvement of high-profile athletes in peace-promotion work. To offer blanket critiques of (or support for) the idea that celebrity athletes can be useful advo-cates for humanitarian work is, as Cooper (2008b) suggests, to overlook the need to always understand such interventions and the influence of their leaders in context. Having said this, we would also argue that there is immense potential for celebrity ath-letes who embrace a 'social movement entrepreneur' role to make a positive impact in contexts where these athletes have local connections and the local knowledge that allows them to facilitate event organization and make context-sensitive strategic decisions. Such work should be distinguished from the activities of international celebrities/athletes doing SDP work who may still contribute positively to an effort, but would be poorly-positioned to make the sorts of leadership decisions described above. This finding aligns with arguments made by Meyer and Gamson (1995) in their work on features of success-ful celebrity movement leaders, who similarly suggested that local/personal investment (and the legitimacy that is associated with these investments) is key.

This leads to the second topic that is of particular relevance to our findings—the rel-evance of theories explaining the emergence and success of social movements for the study of SDP. As Davis-Delano and Crossett (2008) have argued, scholars in the sociol-ogy of sport field are only beginning to think about how to assess the success of social movements. We contend that while this is true, there has also been limited discussion about *the various ways that the success of movements can be defined*, noting that social movements can have multiple stated and unstated goals—and that these movements can therefore have a variety of more and less visible (but still meaningful) successes.

We make this argument because the study we report here works from the assumption that the successful organization of the Run-for-Peace events shortly after the post-election violence should be considered successful because: (a) the events happened at all; and (b) they happened without major problems and without evidence that existing tensions were exacerbated. In fact, our respondents all indicated the events helped bring together groups that had been in conflict and that the events contributed to the easing of tensions between the groups. However, and to be clear, we cannot make any firm claims about these impacts (or longer-term impacts) from our findings, beyond reporting inter-viewee perceptions. We can, however, confidently assert that well-known athletes played an important role in facilitating the successful organization of events at a moment when holding an event at all would be risky, especially without knowledge of locally-relevant tactics to defuse tensions.

Moreover, if sensitive to the other ways that the success of movements can be assessed—with goals like raising awareness about an issue, promoting dialogue about an

issue, becoming a key representative for an issue, influencing political decision making, and aiding personal healing by offering a sense of belonging to a group intent on promoting peace —then we can begin to see how pro-peace movements like the one that led to the Run-for-Peace events referred to here were successful on a variety of levels (cf. Staggenborg, 2008; Wilson, 2012). Put another way, successfully *organizing* a peaceful, peace-promotion event in the recent aftermath of conflict is different from *successfully resolving/transforming* the conflict through the organization of the event. This should not be taken to mean that successfully organizing a peace-promotion event is (or is not) linked to the successful resolution/transformation of the conflict. It is to suggest, however, that the factors that led to the successful organization of an event should be recognized in their own right (Schulenkorf, 2010)—and not simply dismissed if the conflict were to flare up again. In the end, and as Sugden (2007, 2010) has noted, knowing that social and political contexts may or may not allow for sustained peace should not mean that attempts to resolve conflict are not worthwhile.

Finally, by offering compelling explanations for why running events are excellent spaces for peace promoting activities and why high profile runners are well-positioned to lead these events, our respondents were offering what are referred to in social movement literature as 'collective action frames' (Staggenborg, 2008). Collective action frames refers here to 'persuasive communication during mobilization campaigns by movement organizations, their opponents and countermovement organizations; and consciousness-raising during episodes of collective action' (Klandermans, 1997: 45). Berlet (2008: 674) explains the power and need for these frames in the organization of movements and movement-related activities:

> In order to be effective, a social movement needs to construct coherent and compelling ideological arguments; frames of reference to portray a grievance as justified and needing resolution; and narrative stories that mobilize listeners into recruits, and recruits into active and loyal participants. All of these elements—ideology, frames, and narratives—are employed in the text circulated in serials and other movement literature.

In some respects, this finding is unique from others presented in this paper in the sense that we came to this finding from piecing together the various arguments our respondents made about why running events are excellent places for peace-promotion in Kenya and why elite athletes are trusted leaders of these sorts of events. In fact, we might think of the narratives offered to the interviewer in this study—narratives that reflected the arguments offered to those being recruited to attend the Run-for-Peace events—as 'collective action framings' in the sense that they were 'coherent and compelling ideological arguments' for why elite runners are well-positioned to be legitimate and non-partisan leaders. By describing the symbolic importance of running for Kenya and Kenyans on a national and international stage—and what would be lost if Kenyan runners were to perform poorly in Beijing, the athletes were using persuasive communication techniques and tapping into affective and logical connections between running, Kenya's reputation, and the need for reconciliation. Moreover, by succinctly identifying 'problems' (e.g. the violence, politicians) and the potential consequences of not dealing with these problems (continued tension and violence; diminished reputation for Kenya

on the world stage) with practical solutions (e.g. supporting pro-peace efforts and the relatively non-partisan elite athlete leaders) and emotion (e.g. nationalistic feelings; desire for peace; admiration of athletes and distrust of politicians)—those leading the Run-for-Peace movement were effectively creating a powerful collective action frame. Undoubtedly, the ability of the athlete-'entrepreneur' to construct and promote a compelling narrative would have been associated with their ability to mobilize resources and take advantage of political opportunities.

Conclusion

Important questions remain about what findings from this study can tell us about 'best practices' for those interested in ways that sport can be an effective tool in conflict transformation and reconciliation work. Given the context-specific nature of this kind of work, it is of course difficult to offer concrete suggestions. However, there are some processual features of our findings that we think could be useful for those thinking about organizing a sport-related peacebuilding event in the aftermath of violent conflict. Furthermore, and while the recommendations offered here pertain especially to sport-related forms of peacebuilding, these points should also be understood for their relevance to non-sport forms—such as peace-promoting cultural events that feature non-athlete celebrities.

Most notably, our finding that when celebrity athletes are presented and accepted as sufficiently non-partisan and 'legitimately' invested in an issue (e.g. because of their own investment in the issue and their pre-existing high status in the local community) they are well-positioned to help lead the organization of peacebuilding activities —would seem to be an important consideration when assessing leadership for similar movements (sport-related or otherwise) in other contexts.

In a related way, we suggest that attending to the 'collective action frame' that social movement entrepreneurs construct and promote to target audiences is itself crucial for those intent on establishing the legitimacy of athletes as leaders of a peacebuilding activity —and for effectively promoting the idea that a (sport-related) event can be a legitimate peacebuilding activity. In this sense, we are emphasizing that effectively organizing peacebuilding events requires a locally-relevant public relations campaign—and that effective social movement entrepreneurs of various background must be cognizant of and attentive to this part of their work. Although this argument is not particularly new for those who study framing activities of activist groups more generally (cf. Greenberg et al., 2011; Staggenborg, 2008), this point would seem to be somewhat novel for understanding how to optimize and promote SDP's role and potential in reconciliation work.

Our study also highlighted several areas requiring further study. Perhaps most notably, we think that further research focused around the gendered aspects of SDP event organization is warranted. While not a focus of our research, one of our interviewees highlighted the crucial role that women play in the organizational work associated with peace runs as well as other community-building activities. In light of the wealth of research in a variety of academic fields supporting the idea that labor of all kinds is extremely gendered, it would of course make sense to examine this issue in more depth for its relationship to SDP-related labor and labor within sport-related social movement

organizations more generally, following the work of Hayhurst et al. (2011a), Saavedra (2009) and others who have studied SDP with a particular focus on gender-related issues (cf. Caudwell, 2007; Chawansky, 2011).

Furthermore, and following the work of scholars mentioned throughout this paper who have examined the role of international NGOs doing SDP-related work in regions of the Global South (e.g., Darnell, 2012; Giulianotti, 2006), we think our study's preliminary finding that the international NGO Shoe4Africa was considered a 'locally-controlled, international project' is intriguing, and speaks to the range of relationships that international NGOs may have with local communities. With this in mind, we think that this finding could inform Giulianotti's (2011) existing model for understanding the various types of SDP reconciliation-focused interventions.

Our final recommendation is for scholars studying the role of celebrity athletes in SDP work—especially those who critique the role of these 'unelected' but influential and prominent figures in humanitarian work—to remain cognizant of when such athletes might be *best* positioned to lead humanitarian efforts *precisely because they are outside the formal political system*. To be clear, in making this point we are not intending to undermine the well-founded critiques of uncritical and functionalist SDP work. In fact, we are attempting to do the opposite by suggesting that those who are responding to problems associated with SDP work—work that is often insensitive to the local context—remain sensitive also to the *context-specific potential* that sport and (elite) athletes have in peace-promotion efforts, and how this potential is best realized when it is effectively constructed and promoted (i.e. 'framed') as a solution.

Of course, there is a conundrum here for sociologists of sport who recognize that for particular SDP strategies and leaders to be effective, people must *believe* they are effective —even if this means that the contradictions and problems with an overly-optimistic understanding of sport are intentionally de-emphasized in order to convince potential recruits of sport's potential. For sociologists of sport and SDP leaders, an ongoing challenge will be deciding when and how to promote the 'power of sport' (and the power of legitimate athlete leaders in SDP) without ignoring well-founded critiques of SDP efforts. We hope that our modest contribution to this problem—to offer information about how, in a particular context, celebrity athletes were able to make a positive difference in the organization of peacebuilding events —is informative for scholars and practitioners considering how to deal with their own context-specific challenges.

Notes

1. Although the terms 'ethnic group' and 'tribe' are commonly used interchangeably when referring to groups known to share cultural and in some cases geographically-defined identities, the term 'ethnic group' or 'ethnic identity group', is a term that best reflects our discussion of 'politically-relevant social divisions [between groups] based on a shared sense of cultural distinctiveness' (Ambrosio, 2002: 1). It is not uncommon to refer to 'tribes' and 'tribal affiliation' in Kenya, which is why some of our respondents used these terms.

2. Of course, organizers and participants in Run-for-Peace events that are associated with Shoe4Africa are undoubtedly impacted by the NGOs ties to international celebrities (like actors Anthony Edwards and Natalie Portman) and the donations received through the NGO. To be sure, further research on ties between Shoe4Africa and local activists and communities is needed.

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