All for us and us for all: Introducing the *5R Shared Leadership Program*

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ABSTRACT

While most leadership programs seek to develop the leadership qualities of the formal team leader, programs that aim to develop the leadership qualities of team members are rare. This article draws on insights from organisational and sport psychology to develop and introduce a new leadership development program — the *5R Shared Leadership Program (5R^S)* — that (1) implements a structure of shared leadership (through *Shared Leadership Mapping*) and (2) further develops participants' leadership potential (through the *5R's of Readying, Reflecting, Representing, Realising, and Reporting*). More specifically, being a close intertwinement of shared leadership theorising and the social identity approach to leadership, *5R^S* helps leaders in the team to create, embody, advance, and embed a collective sense of 'us' in their teams. In this article, we aim to shed light on the underpinning theoretical foundation of *5R^S*, while also sharing insights about how *5R^S* can be delivered in practice. Furthermore, to provide initial insight into the applicability of *5R^S* in both organisational and sport contexts, we conducted a longitudinal qualitative comparison study. This involved collecting qualitative data from two initial implementations: with an organisational team ($N = 16$) and a sport team ($N = 16$). A critical reflection on these initial implementations of *5R^S* leads to recommendations for future efforts to develop shared leadership in organisational and sporting teams. In particular, we highlight the importance of explaining the nature of shared leadership at the start of the program and of having multiple follow-up sessions for participants. In conclusion, by helping leaders in the team to develop and mobilise a sense of 'us-ness', *5R^S* gives leaders and their teams the tools to create the best possible version of 'us'.

1. Introduction

What is it that enables some teams and organisations to outperform others? What makes some sport teams perennial champions and others perpetual runners up? Research suggests that in organisations and sport teams alike, *leadership* is one of the key factors that contributes to competitive advantage (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Haslam et al., 2011; Wagstaff, 2017). However, developing and implementing a leadership structure that delivers the desired competitive advantage is far from straightforward and may require interdisciplinary perspectives that deal with the complexities of the phenomenon (Riggio, 2019). In this paper, we outline a novel theory-based program supported by initial evidence, the *5R Shared Leadership Program* (*5R^S*). *5R^S* seeks to deliver this advantage by drawing on relevant insights from organisational and sport psychology. Importantly, by aiming to develop shared leadership within teams, this program moves beyond traditional vertical leadership approaches that centre solely on developing individual leaders in formal leadership positions. Instead, we argue that a structure of shared leadership in which the strengths of the formal leader and those of the leaders within the team are combined is most likely to promote team effectiveness and team members' well-being.

1.1. The best of both worlds: towards a hybrid leadership approach

Leadership can be defined as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2013, p. 5). Defining leadership in this way makes it clear that this process is not the exclusive preserve of formally designated leaders but rather can be enacted by any member of a group. While vertical leadership focuses on an appointed or formal leader who is hierarchically positioned above the team (e.g., a coach or supervisor), shared leadership is a form of distributed leadership stemming from within the team (Ensley et al., 2006). In what follows, we will outline the strengths and weaknesses of vertical and shared leadership before stressing that the combination of both approaches is likely to be most effective.

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1.1.1. Where traditional vertical leadership falls short

Traditional approaches to leadership development have focused on *vertical* forms of leadership (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). In such leadership structures, the leader is positioned hierarchically above the team they lead and is seen to achieve collective results by virtue of his or her special individual attributes or skills. In reviewing evidence for the effectiveness of this approach, Hogan and Kaiser (2005) concluded that the leadership quality of the formal leader was indeed an important predictor of both team performance and the well-being of team members (followers).

However, there are also some disadvantages associated with the traditional idea of having one single leader atop a given group structure. Most fundamentally, in today's high-performance organisational and sporting environments, the range and volume of demands that are placed on leaders, as well as the complexity of those demands, make this traditional model unrealistic (Yukl, 2010). Relying on the talents of a solitary leader also entails considerable risk. For if that leader retires, leaves, or becomes incapacitated (e.g., an injured athlete), then the group's leadership capacity will be seriously compromised (O'Toole et al., 2003). In line with this point, multiple case studies attest to the fragility of companies led by a single charismatic leader, including General Motors under Alfred Sloan and Coca-Cola under Roberto Goizueta (O'Toole et al., 2003). Similarly, the declining performance of sport teams such as Manchester United and the Chicago Bulls after the departures of their charismatic head coaches Alex Ferguson and Phil Jackson respectively, suggests that the same threat is present in sporting contexts.

1.1.2. The added value of shared leadership

In light of these challenges, researchers have increasingly questioned models that centre on the virtues of individual figures on the top of the hierarchy and suggested that leadership is most likely to be effective when it is *shared* (e.g., Pearce et al., 2008). Shared leadership involves making the most of a group's human resources by empowering team members and giving them the opportunity to take on leadership roles in their area of expertise (Spillane, 2012). While shared leadership has been defined in different ways, Zhu et al. (2018) identified three key communalities across various conceptualisations. These suggest that shared leadership (1) involves lateral influence among peers; (2) is an emergent team phenomenon; and (3) requires leadership roles and influence to be dispersed across team members.

An increasing body of evidence indicates that shared leadership is positively associated with a broad variety of positive outcomes, including team confidence, team cohesion, team trust, goal commitment, reduced conflict, team learning, team proactivity, team resilience, team performance, psychological safety, and team members' health and well-being (for a review in sport, see Cotterill & Fransen, 2016; for an organisational review, see Zhu et al., 2018). Moreover, when compared with vertical leadership, shared leadership appears to be a more powerful determinant of team effectiveness than vertical leadership in both organisational and sport contexts (Cotterill & Fransen, 2016; Nicolaides et al., 2014). Formal leaders can thus maximise a team's potential by empowering team members and encouraging them to take up leadership responsibilities.

As the extended list of the benefits of shared leadership indicates, to date the research literature has focused predominantly on the upside of shared leadership. However, it is possible that shared leadership has a downside as well. Along these lines, Zhu et al. (2018) noted that because shared leadership is a more complex and time-consuming process than traditional vertical leadership, self-managed teams might need a lot more time to come to a consensus around key decisions — time that they may not always have. Moreover, because shared leadership is associated with the distribution of responsibility, this might leave teams vulnerable to free riding and social loafing (see Zhu et al., 2018, for a discussion).

1.1.3. Towards a hybrid leadership approach

The disadvantages of vertical leadership have forced practitioners and theorists to rethink traditional views of leadership. Broadly speaking, this has led them to conclude that rather than vertical leadership being seen as the way of the past, future thinking about leadership should encompass both vertical and shared facets in order to capture, and capitalise upon, a broader array of leadership processes and outcomes (Ensley et al., 2006). Indeed, while previous research has pointed to the added benefit of shared leadership on team performance, it also suggests that vertical leadership (i.e., high-quality leadership on the part of formal leaders) can have an independent and positive impact on team effectiveness (e.g., Nicolaides et al., 2014).

In line with this conclusion, various researchers have also confirmed that, while there are clear benefits to shared leadership, the role of vertical leaders is often critical to the ongoing success of shared leadership structures (Ensley et al., 2006; Fransen, Mertens, et al., 2020; Pearce, 2004; Zhu et al., 2018). For example, an important role of the formal leader is to implement a shared leadership structure by allowing and encouraging team members to take on leadership responsibilities (Zhu et al., 2018). After all, individuals who occupy designated leader roles are often best-placed — by virtue of their expertise and legitimate power and authority — to implement policy and effect change (Seibert et al., 2003). Furthermore, formal leaders have to cultivate the right environment for shared leadership to flourish by building a shared purpose and distributing leadership roles based on team members' personal expertise (Kang & Svensson, 2019). In line with this point, Ensley et al. (2006) noted that vertical leadership often plays a unique role in satisfying the requirement for teams to have well-defined structures and goals. Furthermore, when teams face time pressures or crises, a shift from shared leadership to vertical leadership may allow for more efficient and effective allocation of resources (Zhu et al., 2018). These findings suggest that it is likely to be fruitful to move beyond advocacy for *either* hierarchical or shared leadership structure to instead appreciate the way in which both might operate in tandem (Conger & Pearce, 2003).

Building upon these various insights, we outline an innovative leadership program below, *5R^S*, that seeks to do exactly this. This program is informed by a hybrid approach that incorporates the strengths of shared leadership, while recognising the need for leaders who are hierarchically positioned above other team members and thereby able to facilitate and coordinate leadership-related processes and activities (Gronn, 2008). More specifically, we argue that designing an optimal leadership structure involves creating *leaderful teams* (Charlesworth, 2001; Raelin, 2003, 2011) in which the formal leader and leaders within the team work together to enhance team effectiveness and promote well-being. When referring to shared leadership in this manuscript, we thus refer specifically to a structure of shared leadership that involves the leadership of one or more formal leaders (in contrast to self-managing leadership structures in which teams do not have a formal leader).

There are two major challenges, however, that need to be overcome to achieve an effective shared leadership structure: (1) identifying legitimate team members for different leadership roles; and (2) ensuring that those team members have the skills to lead within such a structure. *5R^S* contends with these challenges in two key ways. First, by using *Shared Leadership Mapping* that identifies legitimate leaders in a bottom-up manner. Second, by drawing on principles derived from social identity theorising to help leaders create, embody, advance, and embed a collective sense of 'us' in their teams (Haslam et al., 2017). This shared identity not only builds their leadership capacity, but also provides a basis for collective goal achievement. A schematic overview of this program is provided in Fig. 1. In what follows, we will first discuss the content of *5R^S* in more detail, before presenting qualitative data from two implementation case studies designed to explore the viability and utility of the program.
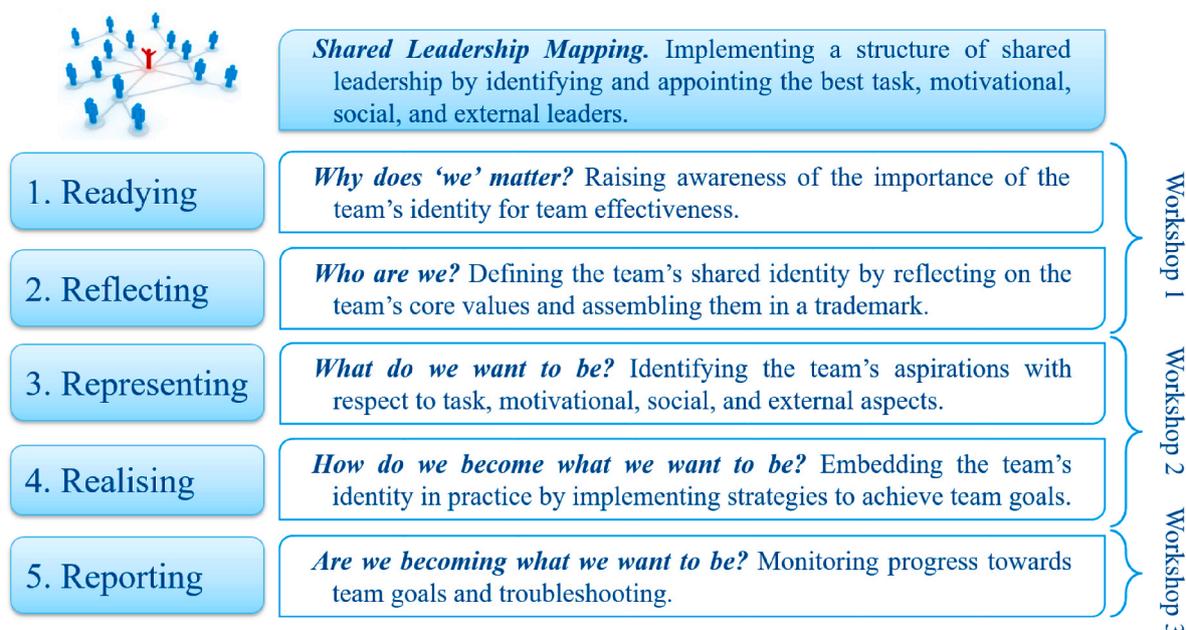
Fig. 1. The *5R Shared Leadership Program*, adapted from the original 5R Program (Haslam et al., 2017).

1.2. 5R^S – Part 1: Shared Leadership Mapping as a basis for leader identification

To identify the team members who are best placed to occupy leadership positions, we use *Shared Leadership Mapping*, an innovative method to visually map the leadership structure in the team (as illustrated in Fig. 1). Before outlining the details of this approach, we first elaborate on the two key principles that underpin this process, namely leader acceptance and role differentiation.

1.2.1. Enabling consensual support for leaders

Managers and coaches often claim that they have profound insight into the leadership structure of their teams and, as a result, are eager to control the appointment of leaders. For those who do not feel they have superior insight, it is often the lack of alternate tools that obliges them to make such decisions themselves. Nevertheless, research indicates that the perceptions of formal leaders do not always accord with those of other members of the team (Fransen, Mertens, et al., 2020). This lack of correspondence between leadership perceptions of formal leaders and those of other team members is problematic: when team members do not recognise or accept the leaders appointed by formal leaders, they are unlikely to follow these leaders' guidance, and may therefore undermine those leaders' capacity to lead (Platow et al., 2015). To increase the likelihood that the identified leaders are accepted by their fellow team members as legitimate, the *Shared Leadership Mapping* process is grounded in the perceptions of team members rather than those of coaches. Coaches can then rely on these insights to appoint leaders on the team who are recognised and accepted by team members, and thus have a legitimate support base that maximises those leaders' effectiveness.

1.2.2. Shared leadership across and within roles

To create an effective structure of shared leadership, it is necessary to clarify the leadership roles that team members need to fulfil. Hitherto, managers and coaches have tended to focus leadership functions on task-oriented responsibilities such as team tactics during sport games or strategic decisions in organisations (Fransen et al., 2014; Morgeson et al., 2010). However, functional leadership theory (e.g., Morgeson et al., 2010) suggests that, in order to succeed, groups generally require multiple leadership functions. Accordingly, a number of researchers

have suggested that effective shared leadership involves assigning team members to leadership roles that encompass a broader set of responsibilities (e.g., Burke et al., 2003; Fransen et al., 2014; Seers et al., 2003). It is important to note here that shared leadership does not necessarily mean that every team member must perform all leadership functions or roles. Instead, team members with different skills or preferences may selectively perform distinct leadership functions in an interdependent way (Zhu et al., 2018).

In the realm of sport teams, Fransen et al. (2014) identified four distinct leadership roles that are essential for effective team functioning: (1) the *task leader* who masters the game plan and provides tactical advice; (2) the *motivational leader* who motivates teammates to perform at their best; (3) the *social leader* who cultivates a positive team atmosphere; and (4) the *external leader* who represents the team in interactions with external agencies and stakeholders (e.g., the media, sponsors). In line with tenets of shared leadership, Fransen et al. (2014) found that teams in which these four leadership roles were occupied by different players were more successful (i.e., finished on a higher position on league tables) than those in which a single person occupied all leadership roles. Importantly too, players in teams with a shared leadership structure identified more strongly with their team and had greater confidence in the team's abilities. These findings suggest that, ideally, *leadership is more likely to be effective if it is shared across the four different leadership roles* so that different people occupy the roles of task, motivational, social, and external leader. This role distinction also allows for role clarity so that leaders can focus on the clearly defined remit of their specific leadership role, rather than attempting to provide leadership in general or around areas about which they have little knowledge. In this regard, evidence suggests that role clarification is one of the cornerstones of successful team development interventions (Shuffler et al., 2011) and leads to greater role efficacy and enhanced role performance in both sporting teams (Bray & Brawley, 2002) and organisations (for a meta-analysis, see Tubre & Collins, 2000).

Beyond this, there is also evidence that *leadership is more likely to be effective when it is shared, not only across, but also within the different leadership roles* so that more than one person has responsibility for each of the four leadership roles. For example, initial evidence suggests that teams with two task leaders are characterised by higher task and social cohesion than teams with only one or no task leader (Fransen, 2014, p. 332). This finding also held for motivational, social, and external

leadership. Leo et al. (2019) further corroborated these findings in a larger sample of male and female soccer teams and showed that having multiple leaders within each leadership role had a range of benefits, including greater task and social cohesion, higher team confidence, better perceived performance, and reduced role, task and relationship conflict.

Besides this initial research evidence, several reasons underpin our choice to appoint multiple leaders on each leadership role. First, the knowledge and expertise of different leaders in a particular role exceeds the capacity of a single individual (Nicolaides et al., 2014). Second, the presence of multiple leaders allows them to share the burden of leadership, thereby avoiding role overload (i.e., individuals taking on more leadership roles than they have the time, energy, or resources to handle; Charlesworth, 2001). Finally, sharing a given leadership role among different team members also increases the likelihood of being able to ensure leadership continuity (e.g., in the event that a leader is absent or leaves the team; Cotterill & Fransen, 2016). Consequently, it should make a team more resilient to events that have the potential to disrupt the leadership structure (e.g., injury, transfer, or retirement).

1.2.3. Shared Leadership Mapping

Grounded on the above two key principles — leader acceptance and role differentiation — the process of *Shared Leadership Mapping* incorporates the perceptions of team members by mapping the team's leadership structure in terms of the four leadership roles referred to above. While these four roles tend to capture the breadth of common leadership tasks in sport (Fransen et al., 2014), these can also be adapted based on the particular needs and activities of any given group.

By using social network analysis, *Shared Leadership Mapping* places the group at the centre of its analysis, thereby correcting for the tendency of other leadership research to focus only on dyadic relations (i.e., those between a given team member and a given leader). While most previous work has categorically distinguished between leaders and non-leaders by using binary networks (i.e., networks based on dichotomous relations represented by 0 'not a leader' or 1 'a leader'; McIntyre & Foti, 2013; Mehra et al., 2006), being a leader does not necessarily imply that a person is also a *good* leader. From the perspective of leader effectiveness, it is the latter, or in other words, the *quality* of leadership that is essential (e.g., Fransen, Van Puyenbroeck, et al., 2015). Accordingly, *Shared Leadership Mapping* involves all team members rating the leadership quality of every other team member on a scale from 0 (*very poor leadership*) to 10 (*very good leadership*), separately for each of the four leadership roles (i.e., task, motivational, social, and external leadership). By way of example, Fig. 2 presents the resulting task leadership network of the volleyball team that participated in one of the two case studies reported below.

The *Shared Leadership Mapping* process also produces quantitative output in the form of specific social network measures. At the individual level, the measure that is most relevant to leadership is *indegree centrality*. This measure captures the average strength of a node's incoming ties (i.e., the average leadership quality of a person, as rated by the other team members). Indegree centrality has become the standard measure to assess peer leadership quality and will therefore form the basis for leader appointment (Fransen, Van Puyenbroeck, et al., 2015).

At the team level, two network measures characterise a team's leadership structure. While *network density* captures the average leadership quality on the team, *network centralisation* assesses the extent to which this leadership quality is shared amongst team members (for more details on these measures, see Borgatti et al., 2013). Although these team-level measures will not be used directly for leader appointment,
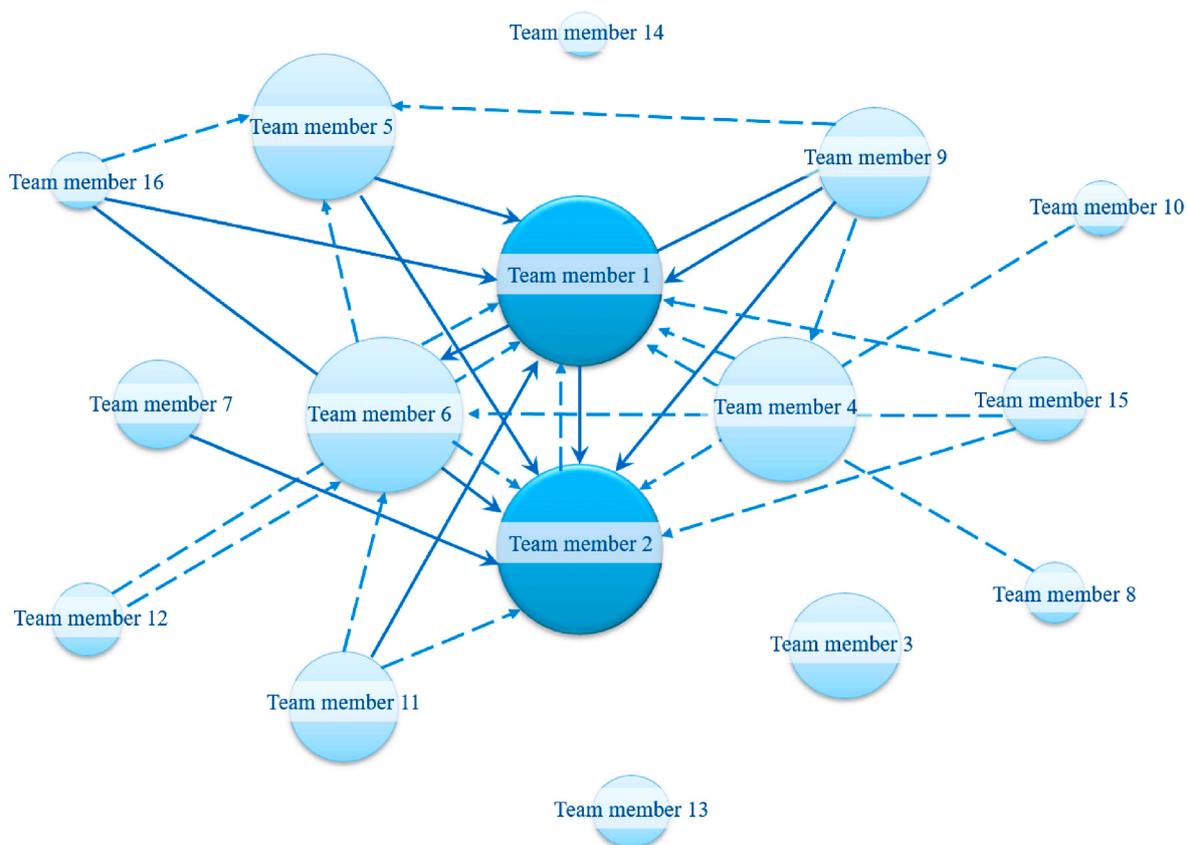

Fig. 2. Task leadership network of the participating volleyball team.
Note. The arrows in dark blue (full line) represent perceptions of very good task leadership (i.e., scores of 9 and 10), while the dashed lines represent perceptions of good task leadership (i.e., scores of 8).

they can be used to compare different teams or to track a team's leadership structure over time.

1.2.4. Leader appointment

In *5R^S* the team members who are consensually perceived to be the best leaders on the team (i.e., as having highest indegree centrality) are then formally appointed as leaders in their leadership role, provided that they also have high personal motivation to fulfil that particular leadership role. This heeds the observation of Hong et al. (2011) that motivation to lead is an important predictor of leaders' effectiveness (for a meta-analysis, see Badura et al., 2020). At the same time, because the appointment procedure is based on the perceptions of other team members, the appointed leaders realise that their leadership is not only accepted but also expected and appreciated by their team. In this way, appointed leaders will generally be more eager and motivated to take on responsibility, especially in difficult times (Cotterill & Fransen, 2016).

Formally appointing leaders in their role (in contrast to relying exclusively on informal leaders) can also further strengthen their motivation to fulfil their role well, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of their leadership. This idea is supported by a longitudinal study in the National Hockey League that examined changes in performance over time as a function of players' leadership responsibilities (Day et al., 2004). The study's findings indicated that the performance of a given player was higher in seasons where that player was formally appointed as a leader (i.e., as team captain) than in seasons where the player had no leadership responsibilities. As the researchers note, at least in part, this is because appointment as a leader can serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy or set in train a Pygmalion effect in which raised expectations of individual capacities (held by the self and others) can enhance performance (Eden, 1990; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

Based on the principles of shared leadership across and within different leadership roles, *Shared Leadership Mapping* thus involves the appointment of multiple leaders to each leadership role, where each of these leaders is recognised and supported as leader in that role by their fellow team members. The exact number of appointed leaders in each role depends on a range of factors, including team size, the number of team members that are perceived as good leaders in a particular role, their motivation to lead, and in sport also the playing position of the leaders (e.g., to assure that task and motivational leadership are spread across the field).

1.3. 5R^S – Part 2: leadership development through building a shared sense of 'us'

Implementing a structure of shared leadership by identifying consensually regarded leaders is an important step towards improving team effectiveness. In the next stage, appointed leaders ideally further develop their leadership potential. This point is illustrated by research with Australian football and rugby league teams, which has shown that the quality of the leadership team is significantly related to team effectiveness (Fransen et al., 2017) as well as to team members' health and well-being (Fransen et al., 2020 in press-a). Yet while consultants offer plenty of leader development programs for formal team leaders (e. g., CEOs, managers, coaches), there are few programs in sport or organisational settings that seek to develop leadership potential *within* the team. Given the benefits of shared leadership to improve team effectiveness and team members' health and well-being, this constitutes a significant gap in the field that *5R^S* seeks to fill.

1.3.1. Developing leaders' capacity to engage in identity leadership

For a long time, researchers have viewed leadership as a dyadic relationship, linking the leader with a follower. However, realising that a group is more than the sum of its constituent members, we need a theory that puts the group at the centre of its analysis in order to truly grasp how leaders can effectively influence the teams they lead. The Social Identity Approach (SIA; Haslam et al., 2020; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987) does just that by focusing on the psychological reality of the group. More specifically, the SIA recognises that people's psychology and behaviour is shaped not only by their capacity to think, feel, and behave as an individual (i.e., in terms of their personal identity as 'I' and 'me'), but also, and often more importantly, by their capacity to think, feel, and behave as a member of a group (i.e., in terms of a shared social identity as 'we' and 'us').

5R^S draws on a growing body of evidence that followers are more likely to be influenced by leaders who are able to cultivate such a shared social identity (i.e., providing identity leadership; Haslam et al., 2011). More specifically, research has shown that organisational leaders who create such a collective sense of 'we' and 'us' positively impact team effectiveness (e.g., Haslam et al., 2011) and promote team members' health and well-being (e.g., Haslam et al., 2019). Similar patterns are also apparent in sporting contexts with research revealing that effective leaders succeed in cultivating a shared team identity that, in turn, feeds into higher team effectiveness and enhanced athlete well-being (Fransen, Haslam, et al., 2020; Fransen et al., 2020 in press-a; Fransen, Haslam, et al., 2015; Fransen et al.,2020 in press-b; Fransen et al., 2016; Slater & Barker, 2019; Slater et al., 2019).

1.3.2. Overview of 5R^S

Despite the importance of leaders representing and advancing a shared social identity, until recently, researchers had offered little insight into the strategies that leaders might employ to develop and manage these group identities in practice. This was a lacuna that the *5R program*, developed by Haslam et al. (2017), sought to address. This program guides formal leaders through a five-stage process in which they learn how to create, embody, advance, and embed a collective sense of 'us' in their teams. In other words, they learn how to engage in identity leadership. Slater and Barker (2019) adapted this program to sport settings and demonstrated its potential to strengthen the identity leadership of the coaching staff.

Building further on this research, *5R^S* incorporates the main elements of *5R*, but refines both the structure and content of the program with a view to integrating this with the benefits of shared leadership, as outlined above. In particular, while *5R* focuses on developing formal leaders, *5R^S* aims to implement a structure of shared leadership and subsequently to develop the identity leadership skills of several key informal leaders within the team. Another distinct characteristic of *5R^S* is that the activities are conducted with the entire team, not just with appointed leaders. While traditional approaches often focus on leaders in isolation and in contexts removed from their normal sphere of activity, *5R^S* (like *5R*) encourages leaders to engage directly with the groups they are leading.

1.3.3. The five phases of 5R^S

5R^S aims to develop the identity leadership skills of appointed leaders by guiding them and their team through five phases. In the current implementations these five phases were combined in three workshops, as presented in Fig. 1.

Readying. The first introductory phase of *5R^S* focuses on the core question "Why does '*we*' matter?" More specifically, all team members are informed about the importance of having a shared team identity (i. e., the shared sense of 'us'). The module points out not only that team effectiveness is contingent upon a strong team identity, but also that the health and well-being of team members is likely to be enhanced if they have a strong sense of belonging in the team.

Reflecting. In the second phase, the team reflects on and works together to define their shared identity, or in other words, "Who are we?" In this phase, leaders clarify people's understanding of what the group stands for by guiding their team through the process of defining its core values. In particular, this involves the completion of a *trademark exercise*. In this exercise, players are encouraged to compare and contrast the core values of their own team with those of teams they are not part of or do not want to be part of. This process is facilitated by asking

questions such as "How would you describe our team to an outsider?", "What is important to us as a team?", and "What do others think of us?". Team members are then challenged to combine these core team values into an overarching team trademark – an image, possibly associated with a slogan or motto, that together reflect their team identity. This image can take a variety of forms, including animals (e.g., a wolf pack, a flock of birds, an anthill), objects (e.g., a tree, a boat), and fictional entities (e.g., Power Rangers, the A-Team). What is important is that this trademark forms the frame of reference relative to which the team will be evaluated and held accountable. In this way, leaders develop a sense of their team's shared identity in ways that ultimately allow them to represent, promote, and embed that identity more effectively.

It should be noted that although the aim of this phase is the same as that of the Reflecting phase in the original *5R Program* (i.e., reflecting on "Who are we?"), the content differs. The *5R* program introduces organisational members to the process of Social Identity Mapping (SIM; Cruwys et al., 2016) – which should not be confused with the *Shared Leadership Mapping* that we use for leader identification. In SIM, people first indicate the group that they identify most strongly with in their organisation (e.g., a work team). After this introductory step, other subgroups within their organisation are identified and the relations between their subgroup and the other relevant subgroups are indicated. In this way the exercise provides leaders with insight into followers' subjective representations of the key identity-based relations that are likely to impinge upon, and structure, their organisational behaviour (Haslam et al., 2017).

Although this mapping exercise is useful for organisations with formalised sub-entities (and organisations might benefit from including this in *5R^S* alongside the trademark exercise), sport teams often do not have such formally structured subgroups. And when they do (e.g., attackers vs. defenders or social cliques), asking athletes to formalise these different subgroups within their team through SIM entails the risk of consolidating intragroup boundaries in ways that interfere with the creation of a shared superordinate team identity (which would work against the main aim of *5R^S*). Accordingly, in the Reflecting phase of *5R^S*, as outlined above, the focus remains on the team as a whole rather than on different (informal) subgroups.

Representing. The Representing phase centres on the question "Who do we want to be", thereby involving the process of goal setting, which is seen as one of the cornerstones of team development in both organisations and sport teams (Bruner et al., 2013; Shuffler et al., 2011). In their meta-analysis, Martin et al. (2009) found that the most effective team development interventions where those that included goal setting.

In *5R^S*, the leadership team advances and promotes the core interests of the group by guiding it through the process of identifying shared team goals that represent their joint social identity. More specifically, team members identify the goals, behaviours, and aspirations associated with their shared identity as well as the challenges and opportunities that the team faces. In contrast to the original *5R program*, the team completes this process for each of the content areas relating to the four leadership roles. At the end of this stage the team should have identified task-related goals (e.g., organising a weekly team meeting), motivational-related goals (e.g., demonstrating perseverance when losing the game), social-related goals (e.g., integrating new team members, having a joint coffee break), and external-related goals (e.g., ensuring a positive image to external parties). The appointed leaders based on our *Shared Leadership Mapping* are asked to step up and take responsibility to manage this process with respect to their own role content (e.g., task leaders coordinate the process of identifying task-related goals and aspirations). Furthermore, they are responsible for further coordinating the process of working to achieve these goals. By standing up for these shared group goals (and defending them when they are threatened), leaders are then able to advance the shared identity in question.

Realising. In this phase, team members explore how they might become what they want to be, or in other words, how to achieve their identity-related goals and aspirations. Instead of only talking about 'us',

the team now also learns how to 'walk the talk' by embedding their shared identity in practice. To do this, the appointed leaders work together with their teams to develop strategies to help achieve its goals. Furthermore, they develop a plan to overcome potential challenges on the way, before going on to prioritise various strategies. As such, participants engage in a process of problem solving, which is seen as one of the cornerstones of successful team development programs, in addition to role clarification and goal setting (Shuffler et al., 2011).

This phase should result in clear strategies for each of the task-, motivational-, social-, and external-related goals. For example, with respect to the social-related goals of integrating new team members, possible strategies might involve arranging new social activities or appointing a personal 'buddy' (i.e., mentor) for each new team member to assist their transition into the team by promoting integration and a sense of connection. Again, each of the appointed leaders is given full responsibility for the process with a focus on their own role content. By developing structures and activities that serve to translate the shared identity into lived reality, leaders learn hands-on how to provide identity leadership.

Reporting. After the team has had sufficient time to put their strategies into practice and attain their goals (in the case studies, this was five months after the first two phases), the final phase centres on the question "Did we become who we wanted to be?" In other words, here the team, guided by its appointed leaders, assesses progress towards the identified goals and evaluates the effectiveness of the adopted strategies. This last workshop is an important opportunity to reinforce the team trademark and monitor the effectiveness of strategies designed to create and embed a sense of "who we are" and "who we want to be". The insights that are obtained during this last phase can then be fed forward into a new iteration of *5R^S* in which new team goals and new strategies can be identified.

1.3.4. The importance of a bottom-up approach

In *5R^S*, the different phases are managed not only by leaders with formal leadership responsibility (e.g., as manager or coach, as is the case in the original 5R program), but also by the various leaders within the team who are identified and appointed in the process. Relinquishing authority to the leadership group is an important strategy when trying to unite different subgroups into one coherent team (Martin et al., 2015). Indeed, in qualitative interviews conducted with elite-level coaches, the importance of such a bottom-up approach was emphasised: "Athlete leaders are sometimes more influential than coaches. When the coach always steps in, he loses his voice and players stop listening, so that's why your leaders are so important" (Martin et al., 2015, p. 11). Encouraging the leadership team to take up responsibility is therefore important, not only to improve the effectiveness of the intervention (i.e., by creating a shared sense of 'us'), but also to strengthen the leadership potential of the leaders within the team.

As noted previously, a distinct characteristic of *5R^S* is that the activities it contains are conducted with the entire team, not just with the appointed leaders. Sherf et al. (2018) already emphasised that it is important to distribute voice over all team members, instead of centralising voice in the leadership team. In organisational contexts it has also been shown that employees who can voice their opinion enjoy their work more and report improved psychological health and well-being (Moreau & Mageau, 2012). In sporting contexts too, research shows that encouraging and supporting players to express their opinions nurtures their basic psychological needs in ways that in turn foster their intrinsic motivation (e.g., Jõesaar et al., 2012). In the same vein, providing team members with voice should enlarge the support base for the group's core values, goals, and strategies, thereby increasing the likelihood that they become committed and intrinsically motivated to achieve the goals that they articulate (e.g., Jõesaar et al., 2012). To ensure that team members' voices are heard and to encourage members to become engaged, we therefore embrace a bottom-up approach throughout the process.

2. Qualitative insights on the implementation of $5R^S$

Given that the focus of this study was to gain insight into participants' experiences of $5R^S$, we used a case study design (Thomas, 2011) informed by post-positivist or critical realist sensibilities to examine our research questions (Campbell, 1999). This involved gathering data from multiple sources (i.e., both formal leaders and team members) and then examining the resultant data using thematic content analysis. More specifically, we used a longitudinal qualitative comparison design to gain initial insight into the applicability of $5R^S$ to both organisational and sport team settings (Gerring & McDermott, 2007). As Poucher et al. (2019) observed on the basis of a focused mapping review of 30 years of qualitative research, this constitutes a useful strategy that has been adopted in majority of qualitative studies in the field of sport psychology.

2.1. Participants

The participating organisational team belonged to a Belgian university college and included administrative staff responsible for educational development and internationalisation. This team ($N = 16$) encompassed three subteams consisting of four, five, and six team members, respectively, and was headed by a team manager. The team consisted of nine female team members and seven male team members. On average, they were 38.73 years old ($SD = 5.80$) and had worked for 5.97 years in the team ($SD = 5.13$). The female team manager was 45 years old, had 17 years of supervising experience, and had headed the current team for the third year in a row.

In addition, we implemented $5R^S$ in a female volleyball team, active in the second highest league in Belgium. The team consisted of 16 players, who were on average 19.81 years old ($SD = 3.92$). Participants had an average of 11.63 years of experience in their sport ($SD = 3.93$) and had been active in their current club for an average of 5.31 years ($SD = 3.77$). The male coach was 52 years old, had 35 years of volleyball experience, and had been coaching his current team for the past two years.

2.2. Procedure

APA ethical standards were followed in the conduct of the study and full confidentiality was guaranteed to participants. Both studies were approved by the ethics committee of the first author's academic institution.

The $5R^S$ program was delivered for the entire team (i.e., the formal leader and all team members) in three 3-hour workshops at the main location of the two teams. We delivered the $5R^S$ program to the organisational team in September and evaluated participants' experiences with the program six months later. For the volleyball team, the workshops were delivered during the first half of the season (October) and were evaluated at the end of the season (April). The specific timing of the workshops was tailored to team preferences (i.e., after a training session for the sport team and during working hours for the organisational team). To minimise reactivity and response bias, the researcher who conducted the intervention was not personally acquainted with either the formal leader or with team members (Levitt et al., 2018).

When evaluating the program, qualitative data were collected from all participants (i.e., manager/coach and team members). Following the guidelines set out by Anderson et al. (2002), this data collection had a three-fold aim: (1) to judge (i.e., ascertaining the effectiveness of the program); (2) to improve (i.e., evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the program); and (3) to understand (i.e., using the results to gain insight into how the program achieved its effects).

To obtain these qualitative data, all members of both the organisational team ($N = 16$) and the sport team ($N = 16$) were provided with an online questionnaire including a range of open-ended questions (e.g., "Did you experience any negative aspects of the first workshop or do you

have points for improvement? Then please elaborate here."). This format allowed respondents to give full and unconstrained feedback about their experiences of the program, while also limiting the influence of the researcher (who also conducted the program) on the data collection (also termed *perspective management*; Levitt et al., 2018). More specifically, we asked participants to identify (1) the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the first workshop; (2) the strengths and weaknesses of the second workshop; and (3) the benefits and disadvantages of implementing a shared leadership structure.

To obtain more in-depth information, the researchers also conducted face-to-face structured interviews with both formal leaders, which focused on the same questions. These interviews lasted about 30 minutes and were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The qualitative data from the interviews were then analysed using a process of deductive-inductive thematic content analysis to generate subthemes underpinning the main categories associated with the questions (Haslam & McGarty, 2018). More specifically, the questions asked shaped the initial deductive process, after which within those broad questions the data were analysed inductively (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). For example, within a category pertaining to the structure of shared leadership, we distinguished between subthemes of leader appointment, leader acceptance, and role diversity.

The qualitative data that we obtained will be used as illustrative evidence of participants' experiences in the $5R^S$ program. We will first highlight how participants experienced the two components of the *5R Shared Leadership Program ($5R^S$)*, namely (1) the implementation of a structure of shared leadership (through *Shared Leadership Mapping*) and (2) the further development of leaders' identity leadership skills through the *5R phases*. Next, the obtained qualitative data will underpin a critical reflection on the program and suggests ways in which it might be improved.

2.3. $5R^S$ – Part 1: Shared Leadership Mapping

2.3.1. Leader appointment

Based on the results of the *Shared Leadership Mapping*, that were only discussed in detail with the manager and coach, we identified the best leaders for each of the four leadership roles and formally appointed two leaders to each of these roles. In the organisational team, this process was conducted for each of the three subteams. As illustrated in the quotes below, participants highlighted the advantages they experienced from formally appointing leaders in their role:

> "The formal appointment of the leaders has a boosting role; some players would otherwise never take up any leadership roles themselves." [Head coach sport team]

> "I am convinced that people will be more inclined to take up their responsibility if they are formally appointed as a leader. If all goes well, it is less necessary, but in critical situations formally appointed leaders will intervene more quickly and by doing so avoid conflicts." [Organisational team member 16]

As outlined previously, the leader appointment through *Shared Leadership Mapping* was informed by two key principles: (1) ensuring *leader acceptance* by relying on the perceptions of team members; and (2) achieving *role differentiation* by identifying and appointing the leaders in four different leadership roles (i.e., task, motivational, social, and external leader). In the next sections, we will explore participants' reflections with respect to both principles.

2.3.2. Leader acceptance

Because the formal appointment of leaders is based on the perceptions of team members, appointed leaders are more likely to be accepted and respected by the team. One of the appointed social leaders in the organisational team elaborated on her own experience of being formally appointed as a leader, thereby also highlighting the importance of

experiencing the support of other team members by virtue of this process:

> "Previously, I already acted as a social leader in the team, but only in an informal way. However, after being formally appointed, I hesitated less to realise my ideas. For example, I created a friends book, in which colleagues could write nice anecdotes or memories about each other. Previously, I wouldn't have dared to pitch the idea, but now this was part of my role as social leader. Realising that my colleagues perceived me to be a good social leader provided me with the necessary confidence and self-esteem to follow through on my ideas." [Organisational team member 9, Social leader]

As a consequence of experiencing this support base in the team, leaders are more likely to realise that their leadership is not only accepted but also expected and appreciated by their team. In this way, as two members of the organisational team observed, appointed leaders will be more eager and motivated to take on responsibility, especially in difficult times (Cotterill & Fransen, 2016):

> *"I found it of utmost importance that the appointment was based on the perceptions of the entire team. The support of my team motivated me to fulfil my role better than if the role had been imposed by the team manager."* [Organisational team member 5, Social leader]

> *"The fact that my formal appointment as leader was based on the perceptions of my team members confirmed and strengthened me in the role that I (unconsciously) already fulfilled."* [Organisational team member 3, Task and external leader]

2.3.3. Role diversity

A second key principle of the *Shared Leadership Mapping* process is role diversity. Accordingly, in both teams we appointed leaders in four different roles (i.e., task, motivational, social, and external leaders), rather than appointing leaders in general. Participants in both the sport and the organisational team recognised several benefits associated with this role diversity in the leadership team:

> *"By recognising the motivational, social, and external leadership roles, the narrow view of task aspects is extended to other aspects of team functioning. Opportunities are created to work on these other facets as well. People can grow and improve on these roles even more because they realise now that these facets are very important for the team."* [Organisational team member 8]

> *"It was important that, besides the task aspects, we also considered the motivational, social, and external facets. Previous organisations I have worked for never paid attention to these aspects. In this team, there was room for it and I believe that this really strengthened the people and the team."* [Organisational team member 5, Social leader]

> *"It is definitely an added value to work with other functions besides task leadership. You cannot be good in everything. If players focus on too many things simultaneously, their leadership weakens and their contribution to the team diminishes."* [Head coach sport team]

2.4. 5R^S – Part 2: leadership development through building a shared sense of 'us'

2.4.1. The first workshop – Readying and reflecting

In the first part of the workshop, the teams were informed about the importance of having a shared team identity (i.e., a shared sense of 'us'). The head coach of the sport team highlighted the importance of this process:

> *"It was positive that by following this workshop, every team member actively ruminated over the fact that a team will act at a higher level when*

> *the social picture fits. When you only focus on the sport technical aspects, your group falls short."* [Head coach sport team]

In the second part of this workshop, teams reflected on their shared social identity and identified the core values that characterised this identity. By way of illustration, the organisational team outlined the core values of their team as being dynamic and innovative, having autonomy, humour, and confidence in each other, and feeling safe, respected, and part of a family. Next, the team members assembled these values and visualised them in the trademark of *the Power Rangers*. Important is that this image was supported by the following slogan that further reflected their shared identity: "We don't have one hero, we don't have one star. The whole team is a star built from heroes." Two quotes explicitly illustrated the way in which this trademark contributed to the team's development:

> *"Besides our positive developmental trend, forming the trademark has definitely contributed to further improving our team functioning. Also our team identity and cohesion within the team has improved by doing so, both at work and informally (e.g., by setting up a joint WhatsApp group)."* [Organisational team member 9, Social leader]

> *"The trademark strengthened our team feeling. The trademark has been used to encourage team members for important performances, such as for presentations (by sending a Power Ranger to the colleague in the WhatsApp group) or to celebrate successes of the team (by picturing the group of Power Rangers in the WhatsApp group or by projecting it on a joint screen in our open-plan office)."* [Manager organisational team]

The manager of the organisational team also emphasised how this reflection phase contributed to team development:

> *"The fact that they had to reflect about the team's core values has undeniably a strong added value. Thinking about the norms and values, about where they stand for as a team definitely helped in improving the team functioning. The image of the Power Rangers has certainly contributed to improving our feeling of 'us'. The image often reappears and everyone knows what it stands for. Team members would sometimes dress as a Power Ranger for fun, which was pretty amusing, but then again, everyone knows what it stands for."* [Manager organisational team]

The sport team identified one of the core values for their team to be the fact that older and younger players worked together without any age differentiation. Furthermore, they identified their core values to be encouraging each other, being open and accessible, being ambitious, valuing humour, seeing the team as a second home, being confident, and having good relations. The team members brought these values together in the trademark of a *wolf pack*; the idea of being one family, protecting each other but fighting together against common enemies. One of the team members also emphasised how they embraced this trademark:

> *"Our trademark became integrated in the team by naming our WhatsApp group Wolf Pack. Also, our team yell, which we yelled after every time-out during the game, turned into the captain yelling: "Wolf", followed by the team members responding: "Pack, whoo whoo whoo"."* [Sport team member 3]

2.4.2. The second workshop – representing and realising

The next 3-hour workshop, which was delivered to the teams one week after the first workshop, included both the Representing and the Realising phase. In this workshop, the leadership team advanced and promoted the core interests of their team by guiding them through the process of identifying shared team goals that represented their joint social identity. Furthermore, the team was challenged to identify and implement specific strategies for achieving these identity-related goals and aspirations. One of the organisational team members spoke of the added value of this workshop:

"The strength of the workshop is that we reflected on our team, on our core values, and on where we want to go as team. It was great that we had to formulate very specific goals and strategies within each of the aspects (task, motivational, social, and external). In this way, the image of where we want to go as a team became much clearer. It was very satisfying to notice that all team members were on the same page with respect to our goals, that we wanted to attain the same things." [Organisational team member 16]

Furthermore, as outlined earlier, we embraced a bottom-up approach throughout the process with a twofold aim. First, we wanted to encourage the leadership team to take responsibility for coordinating the process as this enabled them to have hands-on experience of providing identity leadership. Second, we encouraged all team members to voice their opinion as this would enlarge the support base for the postulated core values, goals, and strategies, thereby increasing the likelihood that team members became committed and intrinsically motivated to achieve the goals that they articulated. Participants highlighted the importance of this approach as follows:

"It was very positive that together we could further specify and share ideas on how to optimise the potential of this team and of its shared leadership structure." [Organisational team member 9, Task leader]

"All members of our team felt a feeling of ownership with respect to leadership and our team's identity." [Head coach of sport team]

2.5. A critical reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the 5R^S program

The qualitative feedback that we retrieved from the interviews with team members and formal leaders provided some insights in the strengths and weaknesses of the 5R^S program. In general, as illustrated below, participants were positive about the program and highlighted the positive contribution that it made to their team's functioning. However, based on initial experiences, we can also identify a few key areas for future improvement.

2.5.1. Perceived strengths of 5R^S

Implementing a Shared Leadership Structure. In 5R^S, multiple players in the team were formally appointed to leadership roles and together with their coach or team manager then went on to lead their team. One of the team members of the sport team highlighted the value of this hybrid approach, which combined strengths of vertical and shared leadership:

"I am convinced that shared leadership is very good, given that all the pressure does not end up on the shoulders of one person. I do believe, though, that someone should take the lead here, but I see that more as a responsibility of the coach." [Sport team member 6, Motivational leader]

The head coach corroborated the previous point but also added that engaging athletes to take the lead had nurtured important life skills:

"By working with multiple leaders, you have several persons who share the responsibility for something, which is an important asset. Furthermore, I think this program is essential in the development of young athletes. It is a responsibility within sports not to focus only on the sport-specific performance in the season, but also to care about what these people will do later in their lives. How will they solve problems in the future? The benefits of this program exceed the sport-specific aspects and cover a wide variety of benefits." [Head coach sport team]

In the organisational team too, team members indicated that, when confronted with problems, they were now able to turn to colleagues instead of only to the team manager. Moreover, the team manager also emphasised the importance of sharing the lead with employees:

"I think it would be very good to apply this program in other teams, I do strongly believe in its potential. I am convinced that this is the leadership approach of the future. As you provide more autonomy to the team, members will identify more strongly with their team." [Manager organisational team]

Creation of a Shared Team Identity. The qualitative data we collected suggested that both teams experienced a strengthened team identity as a result of their participation in the 5R^S program. This is illustrated by the following quotes:

"As a team, we have become much more aware of our team identity. Even though our 'we'-feeling was already strong, identifying our team as being the power rangers caused us to recognise and realise the value and the power of this 'we'-feeling." [Organisational team member 5, Social leader]

"An important difference is that we do everything together now, not with our subteam separately. Every colleague matters. While we tended to cooperate to a lesser extent previously, this program has brought us more closely together. We share our knowledge and expertise now." [Organisational team member 6, Motivational leader]

"Our 'we'-feeling has increased since. Often players would refer to this identity during competitive games. I was also able to refer to it at moments when this was necessary, it was a reference point to say; we are in this together, let's go for it." [Head coach sport team]

Team Functioning. Both teams indicated that 5R^S had important benefits for team functioning. The head coach of the volleyball team, for example, highlighted its impact on the group's self-regulation abilities:

"By following this program, a group becomes able to organise itself, with players' own norms and values. This process strengthens players' motivation and the extent to which they take their responsibility. They realise; I am not doing this for the coach, but for 'us'." [Head coach sport team]

In a similar vein, a member of the organisational team commented:

"In the course of this process, the cooperation between the subteams has greatly improved. The team's functioning has certainly further improved since the start of the program. Also the newcomers have become much more integrated than they used to be, which definitely enhances our team effectiveness. The tipping point that inspired this gain in team performance is the feeling that we could strengthen each other, that we could count on one another." [Organisational team member 8]

2.5.2. Key points for improvement

Notwithstanding the observed benefits of 5R^S, interviews with participants as well as our own experiences delivering the program served to illuminate three key aspects of the program that might be improved upon.

Setting the Stage. The first important point is that each team needs a clear framework for understanding the nature and benefits of shared leadership before leaders are appointed. This needs to centre on information about what shared leadership is and, more importantly, what it is not. In particular, this needs to include information which explains (a) that leaders do not act on their own, but instead function as a central point of contact for capturing and coordinating the group's ideas; (b) that the assignment of individuals to different leadership roles is not fixed but can be changed at a later time point; and (c) that not having a leadership role does not mean that one cannot take initiative and develop one's leadership skills. If these aspects are not clarified in advance, the process of appointing leaders can generate unnecessary fear and frustration amongst those who are not appointed as leaders. However, with the correct framing, team members can be encouraged to adopt a growth mind set in which they see non-appointments as opportunities to grow. Data from the *Shared Leadership Mapping* can also be

used to initiate a conversation with team members about changes in leadership scores over time in ways that promote reflection and growth. As the manager of the organisational team observed:

"One of my team members has realised that, in contrast to her expectations and her high motivation to take the lead, she was not yet seen as a good leader by the other team members. However, after having a chat with her, she was able to redirect her motivation to further grow in her leadership qualities." [Manager organisational team]

Holding the Reins. In the present delivery of the $5R^S$ program, researchers had no contact with the teams in the five months between the actual intervention (i.e., Readying, Reflecting, Representing, and Realising) and the final Reporting phase. Participants made it clear, however, that follow-up contact in between would have helped to provide guidance to leaders and to keep the team on track. As one of the team members of the volleyball team and the head coach noted:

"It would have been good if the leaders had been monitored more closely in the weeks after the initiation of the program so that they could be reminded of their responsibilities." [Sport team member 3]

"I liked the goals that the team proposed, as well as the variety in them, ranging from on-field to off-field aspects. Some of these goals, however, might have been somewhat too ambitious. Unfortunately, the team has put these goals in the 'too hard basket', which I think is a great pity as they could have shown more perseverance to attain them. Having a follow-up to clarify the action plan to attain these goals with clear deadlines would have been an important plus. To understand the picture, you have to step out of the picture. Being the head coach, you are often still too much in the picture." [Head coach sport team].

While we encouraged the coach to closely monitor the leadership behaviours of the athlete leaders throughout the program and asked him to adjust them when necessary, a regular follow-up by someone external to the team might help both the team and their coach to implement the program more effectively.

Considering the Initial Leadership Structure in the Team. It is possible that the effectiveness of $5R^S$ hinges on the initial leadership structure in the team. The participating organisational team, for example, already had a high degree of shared leadership at the start of the program. While team members previously acknowledged the benefits that they experienced of formally appointing leaders, the team's manager suggested that $5R^S$ might be even more effective in teams that initially have a hierarchical structure.

"In our team, there was already a certain degree of shared leadership. For people who already provided leadership in an informal way, the formal appointment can cause them to become fixed to that particular role and lose their authenticity. I can imagine that in other teams the formal appointment could provide structure and clarity. If you would implement this program in teams with a strong hierarchical structure, the impact on the team's functioning would be greater." [Manager organisational team]

3. General discussion

In contrast to prevailing models and interventions that focus primarily on developing the qualities of leaders *as individuals*, $5R^S$ embraces the power of the collective that arises from a sense of shared identity that brings people together *as team members* (Steffens et al., 2020). This shared sense of 'we' and 'us' motivates people to grow and flourish to a much greater extent than when they would think and act as lone entities. Furthermore, in contrast to previous identity leadership interventions (such as 5R by Haslam et al., 2017; and 3R by Slater & Barker, 2019), the present $5R^S$ intervention combines the strengths of cultivating a collective identity with the benefits of shared leadership.

Participants generally reported positive experiences with $5R^S$. With respect to the implementation of a shared leadership structure, participants recognised the added value of combining the strengths of vertical and shared leadership. In particular, the formal appointment of the leaders within the team on the basis of *Shared Leadership Mapping* was seen as a significant motivation for them to take on, and take responsibility for, their identified leadership role — not least because they realised that they had a broad support base in their team. In addition, team members valued the diversity of the adopted leadership roles, seeing this as having benefits for team functioning, while also providing opportunities for individuals to grow and flourish. Participants also experienced a strengthened team identity as a result of taking part in $5R^S$, as well as an improved team functioning.

Besides these observed benefits, our initial experiences with the program also highlighted areas for improvement. Based on the critical reflections of the program outlined above, it appears that future developments and implementations of the program might benefit from (a) setting the scene at the start by providing participants with a clear framework for understanding the meaning and implications of shared leadership; (b) conducting regular follow-up sessions to check the team's progress and make adjustments where necessary; and (c) conducting further research to establish whether the effectiveness of $5R^S$ depends on the initial degree of shared leadership in the team.

3.1. Limitations of the qualitative research design inspiring future research

3.1.1. Considering the Study's Methodological Integrity
The rigor of a qualitative methodology is evaluated with reference to its methodological integrity, which can be evaluated in relation to two composite processes, namely, the *fidelity* of the research process, and its *utility* for achieving research goals (Levitt et al., 2017).

First, the fidelity of research is defined as the intimate connection that researchers make to the phenomenon under investigation (Levitt et al., 2017). When critically examining the fidelity of our qualitative data collection, we should note that there is certainly room for improvement. Given time constraints and our desire to limit the influence of the researcher, we opted for online questionnaires to obtain qualitative feedback from the team members. However, future research could enhance research fidelity by adopting different methods that are better suited to capturing the lived experience of participants. More specifically, along the lines of our face-to-face interviews with formal leaders, researchers could also conduct in-depth interviews with the team members, paying attention to internal experiences that may be difficult to access (e.g., via observation alone). Furthermore, observational data, texts, or dialogical exchanges could be used to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the program and of the processes which underpin its efficacy.

The second core process, utility, refers to the effectiveness of the research design and methods in achieving the study goals (Levitt et al., 2017). We should highlight that it was never our intention to establish the effectiveness of the $5R^S$ program in the present work. Rather, we aimed to capture participants' experiences of taking part in the program with a view to identifying its strengths and limitations while also identifying ways in which it might be improved. Our sense is that the methodology we adopted was well-suited to attain these goals, and therefore had utility in the context of our research.

3.1.2. Generalisability of our Findings across Contexts
The qualitative data that were collected in the present study relied on a very specific sample (i.e., one organisational team and one sport team), which limits the transferability of our findings (Levitt et al., 2018). As a result, there is a clear need for further research to test the effectiveness of the $5R^S$ intervention in a broader variety of teams and contexts (e.g., different types of organisations, teams at different levels in a hierarchy, male and female sport teams within different sports, who are active at

high and low competitive levels). Furthermore, given that both participating teams consisted of team members of Flemish origin, an important avenue for future research would be to test the effectiveness of 5R^S across different cultures.

3.1.3. Effectiveness of 5R^S

As noted earlier, the aim of our qualitative data collection was to capture participants' experiences within the 5R^S program and identify points for improvement, rather than to provide causal evidence of its efficacy. Moreover, the fact that the study did not have an experimental design or a control group, means that we are unable to make causal inferences. Nevertheless, as Page and Thelwell (2013) note, while single-case designs often have these limitations, they can also provide important insights into the efficacy of an intervention by shedding light on its viability and value under 'real-world' conditions. To capitalise on this potential, researchers therefore recommend using a social validation approach to assess whether participants (a) perceive the intended outcomes of an intervention to be important; (b) perceive the procedures of the intervention to be appropriate; and (c) are satisfied with the results (Wolf, 1978). While these aspects were a focus for much of the qualitative data we obtained, future studies could improve upon this design by focusing explicitly on these issues in participant interviews. Moreover, in line with the suggestions of Page and Thelwell (2013), this research could capture such responses throughout the intervention and not only at its end. This intermittent feedback could then be used to further tailor the program to the team's needs.

Furthermore, researchers could build on the present qualitative data by conducting quantitative research with a view to generating causal evidence of the effectiveness of 5R^S (e.g., by conducting randomised controlled trial interventions). Along these lines, within sport settings, Mertens et al. (2020) conducted an initial intervention study with eight national-level basketball teams with four teams receiving 5R^S and four teams functioning as a control group. Quantitative data revealed that 5R^S was successful in improving athlete leaders' identity leadership skills and, as a result, also team members' identification with their team. Moreover, athletes who participated in the intervention were able to maintain their levels of intrinsic motivation and commitment to team goals over time, in contrast to a trend for motivation and commitment to decline in the control group. Athletes in the 5R^S condition also reported an increase in their well-being. These findings thus provide encouraging quantitative evidence that, by implementing a structure of shared leadership and cultivating athlete leaders' identity leadership skills, the 5R^S program is able to improve team functioning and to nurture the well-being of its members. Nevertheless, future research in the sporting domain should look to build on this preliminary evidence by examining other outcomes as well as testing the generalisability of these findings in other contexts (e.g., in both male and female teams, at different levels of competition, and in other sports).

Unlike in sport settings, similar quantitative evidence does not yet exist in organisational contexts. Here, then, researchers should look to conduct randomised controlled trials to further test the effectiveness of 5R^S. These should build on the qualitative evidence presented in the current study while taking stock of the areas for improvement that it has identified.

4. Conclusion

The 5R Shared Leadership Program – 5R^S – that we described in this paper draws on research in psychology and sport science to implement a structure of shared leadership (through Shared Leadership Mapping) and develop identity leadership skills. By drawing on both organisational and sport research, 5R^S offers unique benefits that result from the combination of two important streams of contemporary leadership research. On the one hand, a body of evidence in both organisations and sport teams shows that a shared (rather than a vertical) leadership structure has unique advantages for team effectiveness and team members' health and well-being. On the other hand, research in both contexts has also shown that leaders are only able to generate this impact to the extent that they can cultivate a shared social identity within the teams they lead.

Being a close intertwinement of shared leadership theorising and the social identity approach to leadership, 5R^S helps leaders in the team to create a collective sense of 'we' and 'us' and to advance and embed this sense of shared social identity in their teams. Moreover, by developing and applying skills of identity leadership, formal and informal leaders are subsequently much more likely to be in a position to transform the teams they lead. In short, by providing means to develop and mobilise a sense of 'us-ness', 5R^S gives leaders and their teams the tools to create the best possible version of 'us'.

Author statement

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