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*Together Toward a Shared Sense of 'Us': Unlocking the Power of Groups in Youth Sport*

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**BACKGROUND:** In Canada, approximately 75% of youth (12-17 years) report participation in a team sport. As such, sport teams represent a prevalent context to investigate the role of peer interactions on adolescent development. One particular area of interest is how the social identities that youth form through team membership impacts their moral behaviours toward teammates, mental health, and continued sport participation.

**OBJECTIVES:** The proposed research aims to achieve two key objectives.

**O1:** Using a cluster randomized controlled trial, evaluate the effects of an evidence-informed, peer-led social identity intervention on moral behaviour, mental health, and continued sport participation.

**O2:** Adapt, translate, and evaluate the effectiveness of the peer-led social identity intervention across international youth sport contexts.

**METHODS:** The program of research consists of two phases. Phase 1 will experimentally assess a peer-led social identity intervention to improve moral behaviour, mental health, and youth sport participation (Objective 1). This Phase will involve an experimental cluster randomized control study, in which 40 youth sport teams (N = 700 athletes) will be randomly assigned to attend one of two workshops (Social identity Intervention, Attention Control). The intervention workshop is informed by pilot intervention research from the previous SSHRC Insight Grant, past social identity intervention findings, and Social Identity Theory. Initially, social network analysis will be used to identify the peer-nominated leaders on each team. These influential members will then work alongside the researchers during the intervention to lead their team in developing a tangible representation of their teams' social identity (a trademark) and specific strategies to reinforce this identity through their behaviours towards one another. The impact of the intervention will be evaluated using the Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR)—a novel, unobtrusive, observational ambulatory device—and the corresponding Audio Coding System for Social Environments in Sport that was developed in the previous SSHRC Insight Grant. The EAR records 50-second snippets of participants' conversations throughout the day to gain insight into the social environment and real-time prosocial and antisocial behaviour between teammates. Multiple indicators of mental health and sport participation will also be used to measure more novel outcomes associated with increased social identity perceptions from the intervention. Phase 2 will extend the work of Phase 1 to adapt, implement, and evaluate the intervention content internationally (Objective 2). Following previous international intervention

adaptation methods used by the team, Phase 2 will involve two stages. Stage 1 will involve concept testing of intervention components and materials with 12 focus groups (6 per country) with coaches and athletes. Stage 2 will involve the implementation and evaluation of the social identity intervention with 12 teams (6 per country).

**ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH:** The proposed research has the potential to substantively enhance our knowledge of how the social identities formed in youth sport influence the moral behaviours that occur within teams, athlete mental health, and continued sport participation. The findings from this research will serve to inform the practical strategies used by coaches to foster desirable teammate behaviours through social identity development. The research will also offer valuable information for policy makers and sport programmers that will help to develop policies and sport systems specifically designed not only to enhance moral development, but also foster improved mental health and engagement in youth sport.