



The Language of Leadership Networks in Multiteam Systems

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Introduction

Collective Pronouns Trigger Identity Formation

Individuals establish their leader/follower relational identities by speaking **group-related language**.

Leaders tend to **speak** on behalf of those they seek to organize. (Stefans & Haslam, 2013)

us we
our

Followers respond to collective language use. (Molenberghs, Prochilo, Steffens, Zacher, & Haslam, 2015)

Leader Emergence is an Identity Construction Process



Claiming & Granting Leadership Across Teams

MTSs are “teams of teams” with both subordinate (team) goals and superordinate (MTS) goals.

Intergroup relations suppress the formation of leadership ties across teams in MTSs; ties that are needed for the MTS to work toward superordinate goals.

Using collective pronouns to reference superordinate goals may trigger the leader-follow identity formation process to build bridges across teams.

Hypothesis 1: Individual’s use of MTS-referencing collective pronouns positively predicts leadership **claiming**.

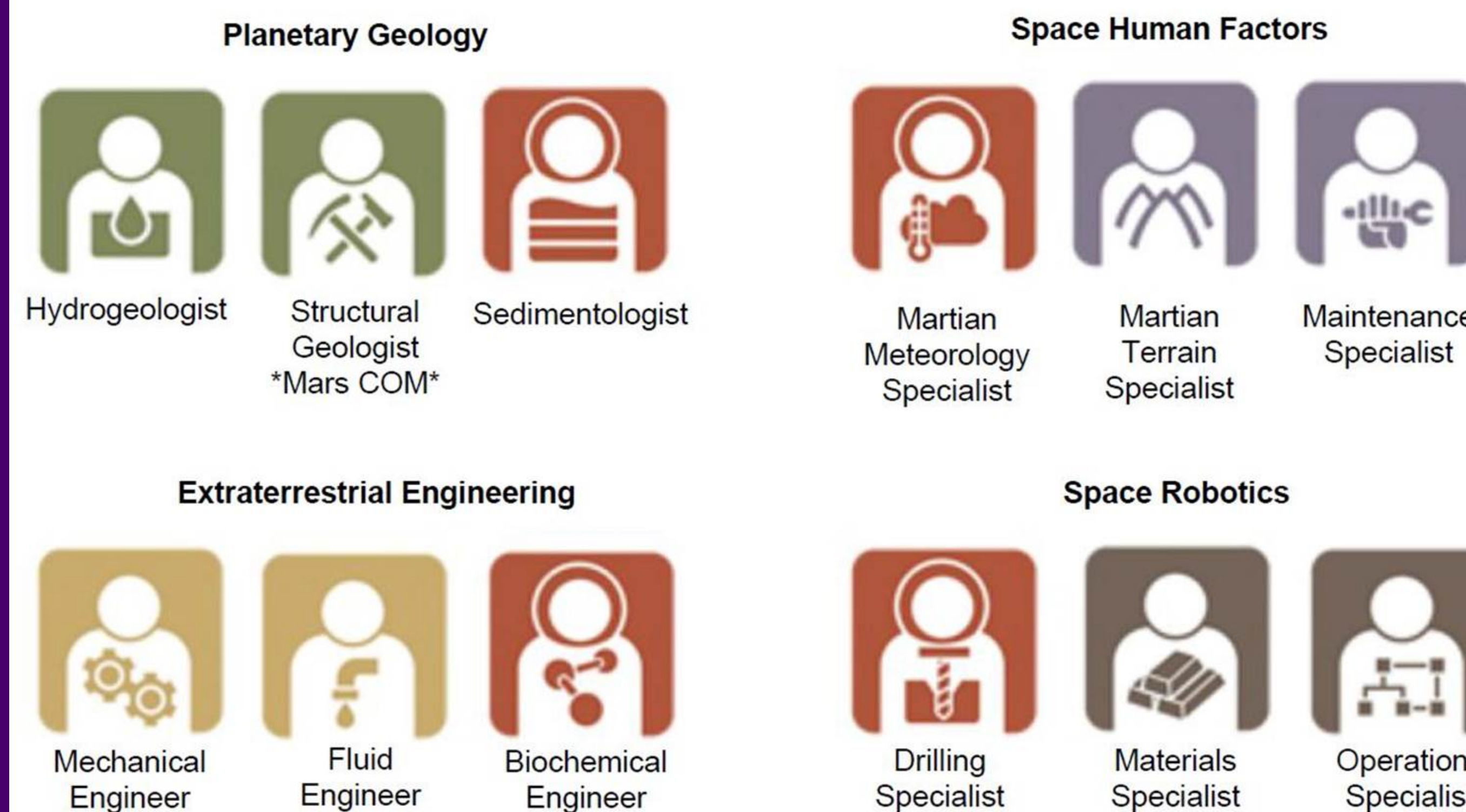
Hypothesis 2: Individual’s use of MTS-referencing collective pronouns positively predicts leadership **granting**.

Method

Procedure

- Task: Build a well on Mars using online simulation and collaboration tool
- 3 hour task simulation (training, simulation, and surveys)
- 12-person multi-disciplinary distributed MTS
 - Mars Spaceship Crew in NASA’s Human Exploration Research Analog (HERA): 4-member team
 - Mission Control (in the lab): 8-members
 - Sample size: 10 MTS (N=120)
- Between-team communication through online chat interface; Within-team communication was unmediated

The Project RED Multiteam System



Measures

Collective Pronouns – All forms of “we”, “our”, and “us”
– Collective language coded as MTS, Discipline Team, or Function Team
– Three coders, alpha = .86

Leadership Claiming – Sociometric response: To whom did you provide leadership?

Leadership Granting – Sociometric response: Who did you rely on for leadership?

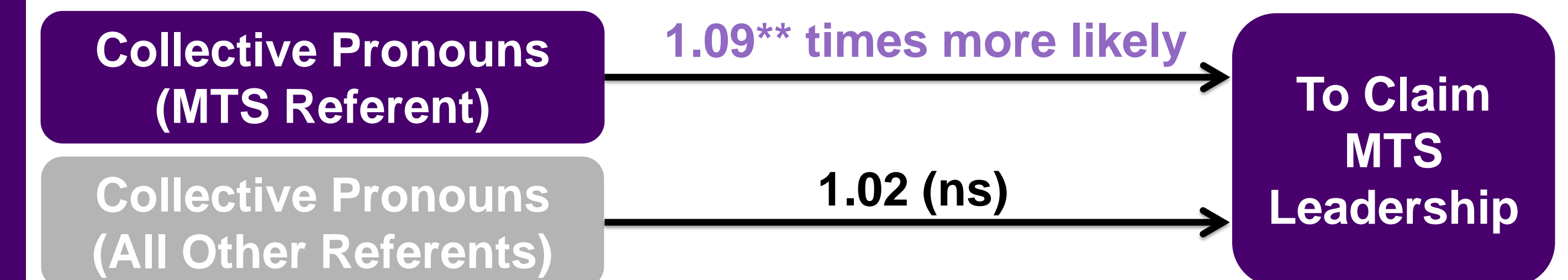
Results

Analytic Approach

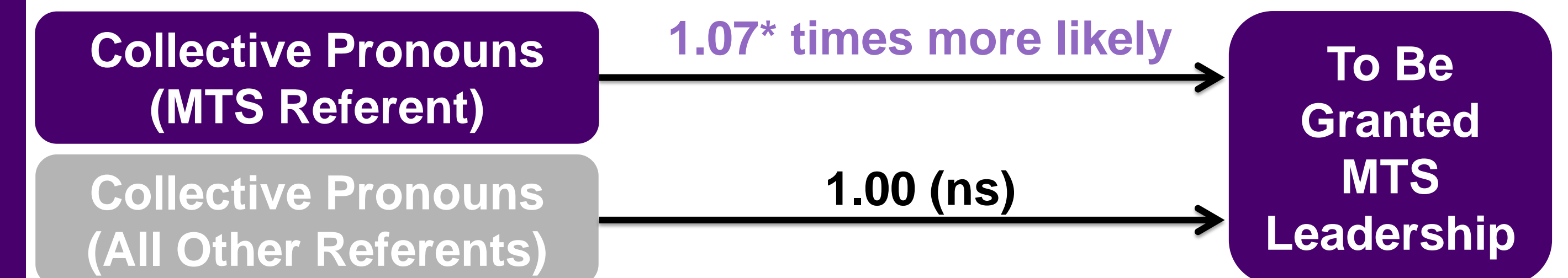
Exponential Random Graph Modeling (ERGM) used to assess how increased use of collective pronouns predicted the formation of an observed leader-follower tie.

- Controlled for edges, reciprocity, GWESP, GWDSP, team membership, HERA membership, and word count

Pronouns Predict Leadership Claiming (H1 Supported)



Pronouns Predict Leadership Granting (H2 Supported)



Key Takeaways

Individuals’ use of **collective pronouns** referring to the “**MTS**” predict leadership emergence in multiteam systems – pronouns affect creation of both leadership and followership identities.

Followers discern collective language **referents** – it is not just what you say, but also what you mean.

Language offers researchers a **noninvasive** method for investigating behavior.