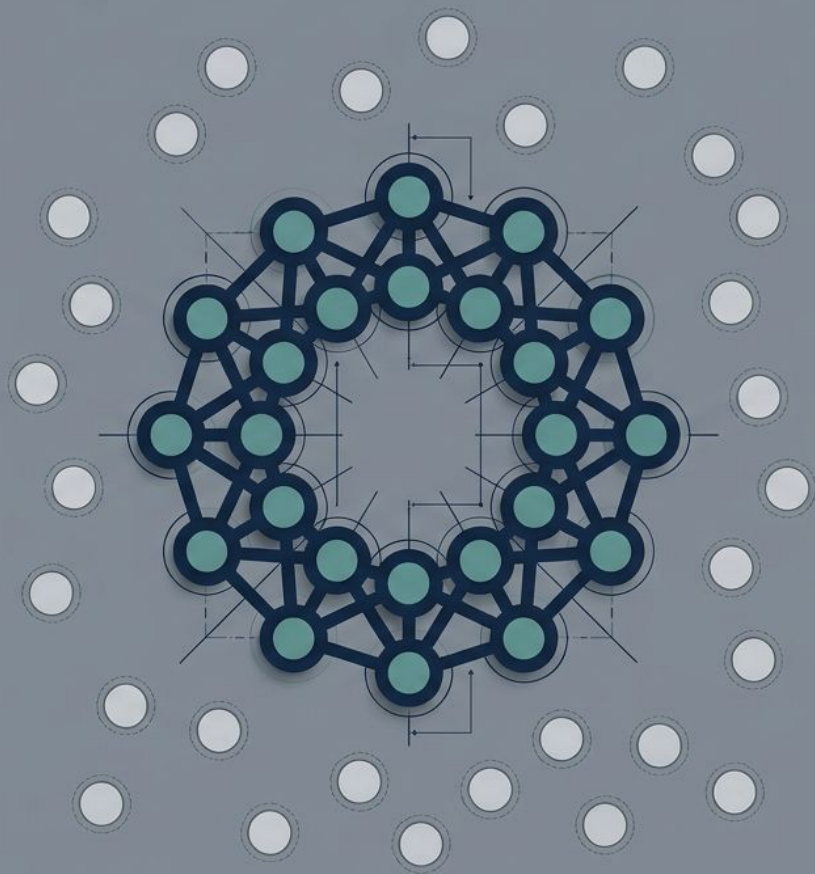


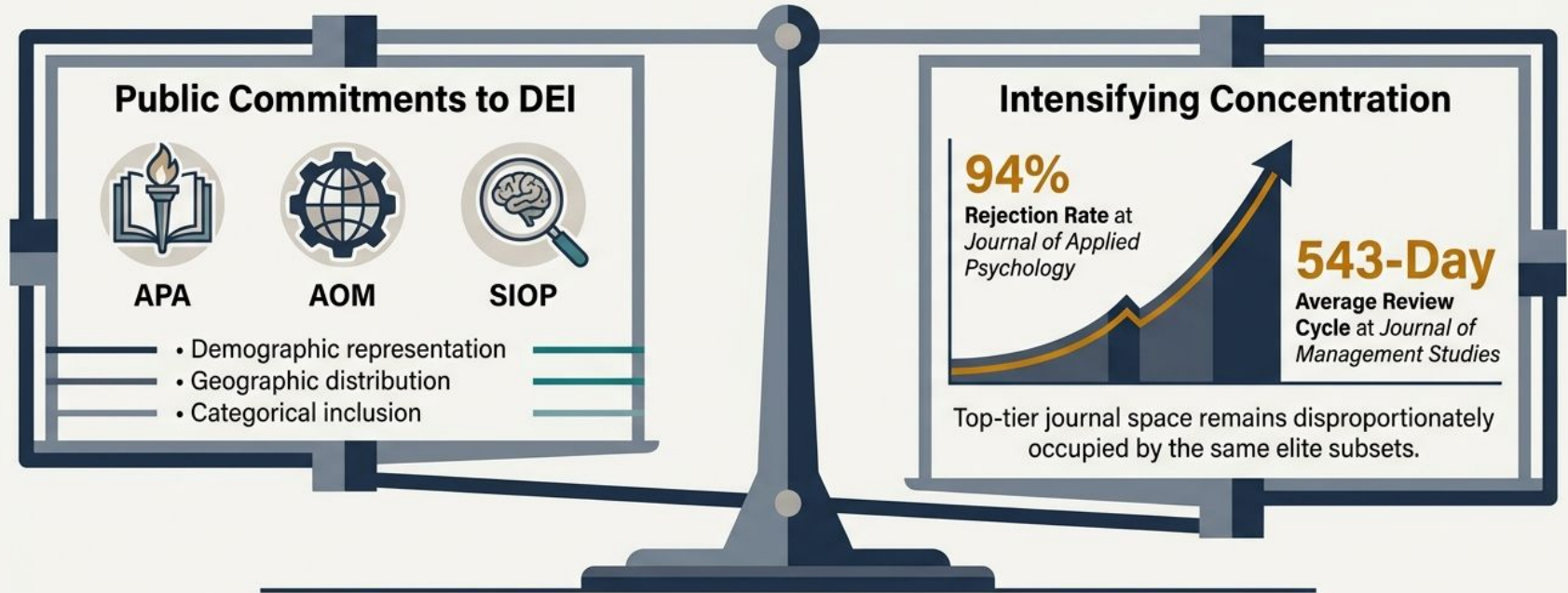
The Ivory Tower's Gatekeepers

Moving beyond representation to dismantle systemic inequality in academic publishing.

Based on the research of Jonathan H. Westover, PhD.



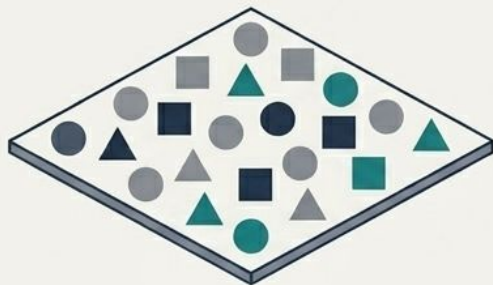
Public diversity commitments mask an intensifying concentration of publishing power



Key Insight: Epistemic Mimicry (Bal et al., 2026) Formal inclusion efforts fail to alter the hierarchy; marginalized scholars who gain entry face intense pressure to conform to dominant methodological norms to survive.

Authorship inequality is a structural disparity crisis, not a demographic variety deficit

Variety



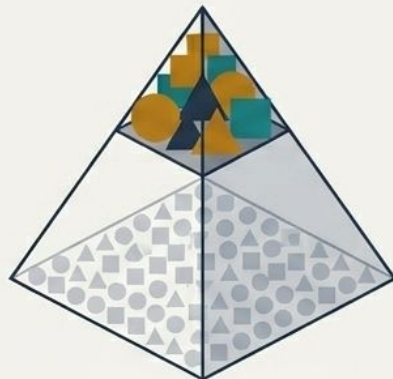
Differences in kind
(demographics, geography).
Current DEI efforts stop here.

Separation



Differences in position
(theoretical commitments,
methodologies).

Disparity



Unequal distribution of valued
resources, prestige, and
gatekeeping power.

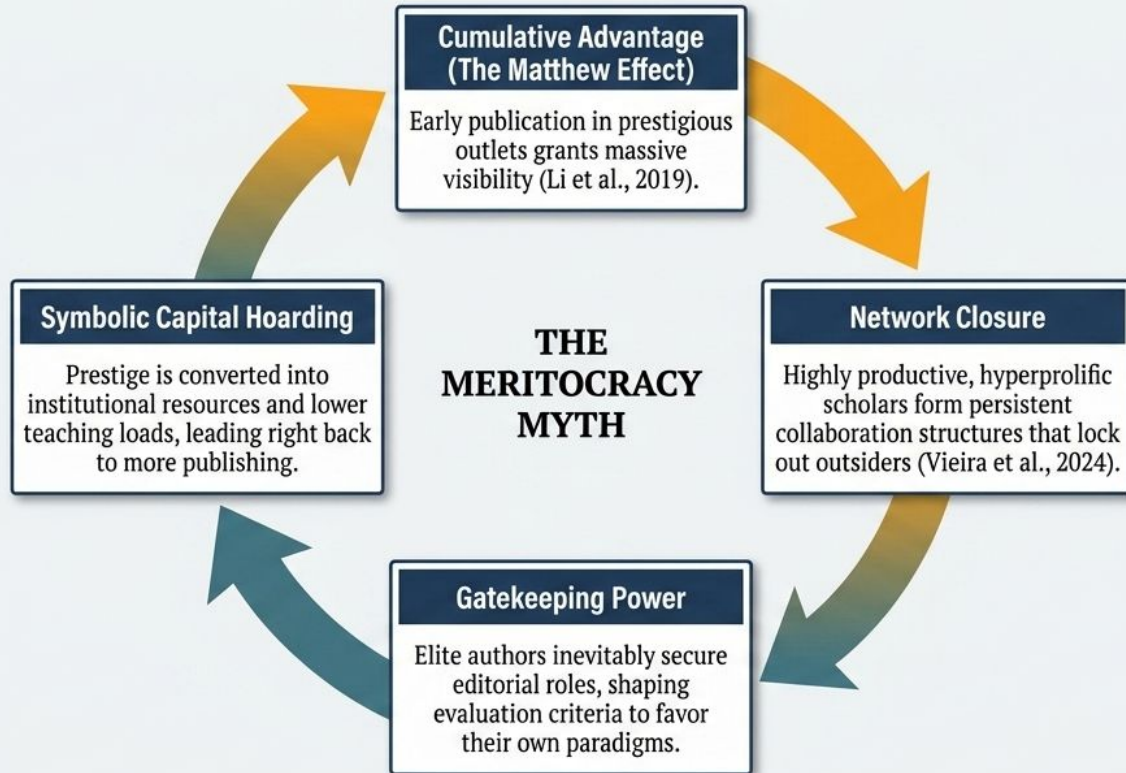
Synthesis: The fundamental problem is not who is in the room, but the systematic concentration of symbolic capital among a narrow scientific elite.

Extreme concentration persists across diverse methodological landscapes

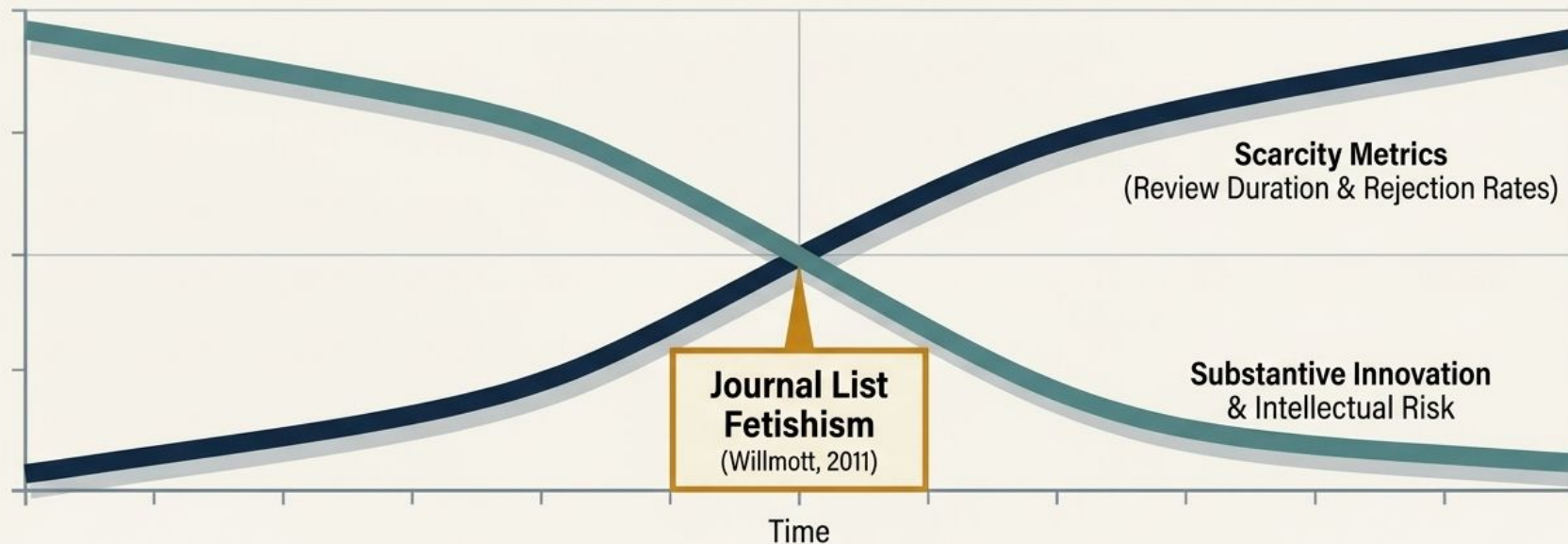
Subfield	Core Focus	Methodological Norms	Epistemological Tradition
Industrial-Organizational Psychology (IOP)	Individual/group behavior	Privileges quantitative methods	Exhibits extreme upper-tail elite dominance and dense collaboration.
Management (MNGT)	General management & strategy	Greater paradigmatic diversity	Still highly stratified by institutional prestige.
Human Resource Management (HRM)	Employment relations	Integrates psych, sociology, economics	Focuses on multi-disciplinary legitimacy.

Insight: Despite different methodological nuances, all three fields share overlapping professional communities and experience the same extreme authorship concentration.

A self-reinforcing flywheel continuously compounds elite advantage



The scarcity trap optimizes for strategic placement over substantive innovation



The False Proxy

Evaluators frame extreme scarcity as a proxy for rigor. However, surviving this gauntlet requires accumulated advantages (time, dense networks, institutional resources), not just pure research quality.

The Consequence

Success incentivizes incremental research, risk-averse methodologies, and conformity to dominant paradigms to ensure publication.

Concentrated evaluative authority stifles individual careers and organizational innovation



Individual Career Impacts

- Cumulative disadvantage for outsiders lacking elite mentorship.
- Barriers deeply intersect with gender, race, and geographic origin (Global South).



Organizational Performance

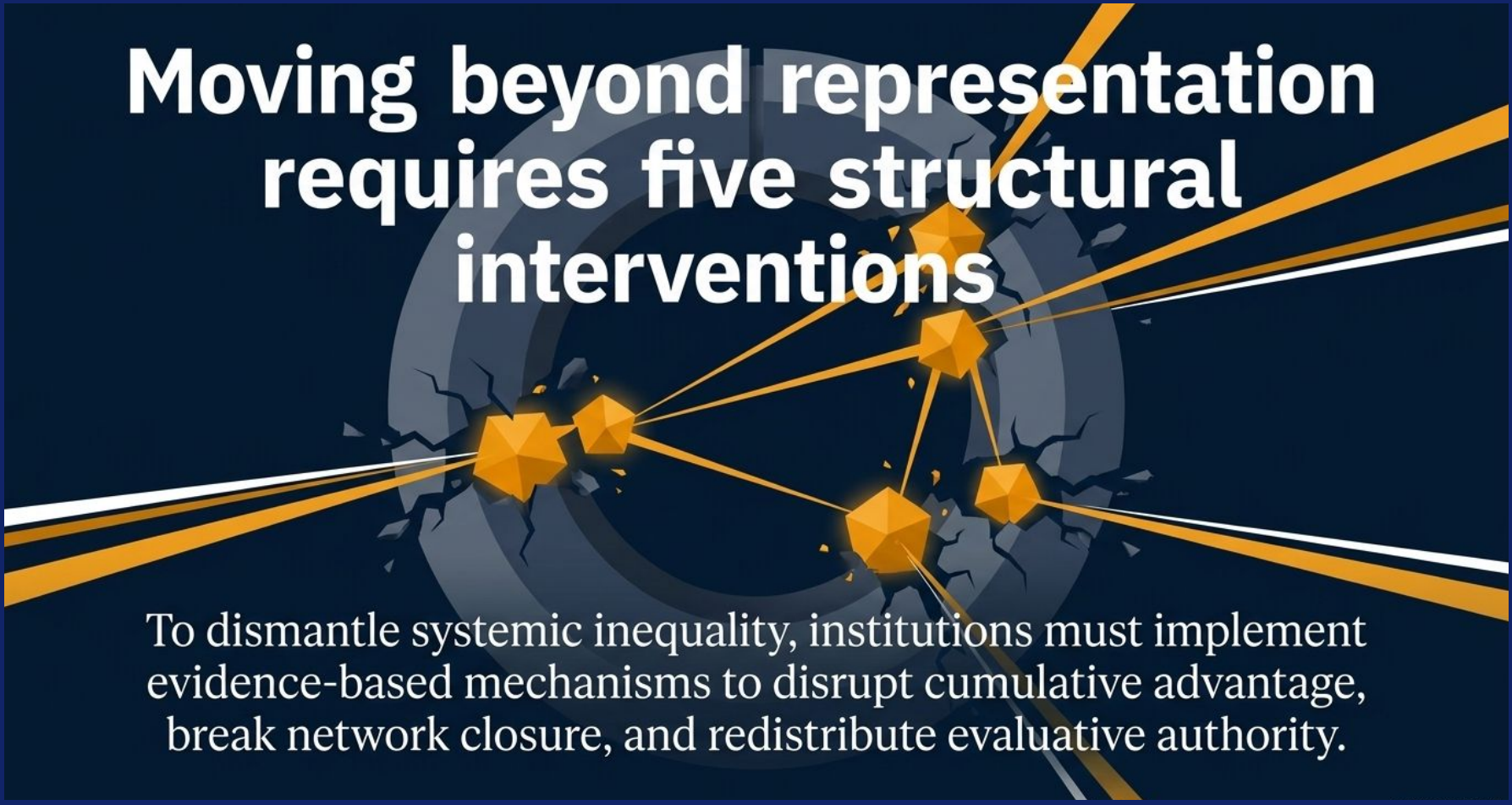
- Superstar-driven distortions (Azoulay et al., 2019) where elites regulate entry into fields.
- Epistemic narrowing: novel methods face immediate rejection.



Stakeholder Wellbeing

- Precarious early-career conditions resulting in chronic stress.
- Erosion of trust in meritocratic ideals and academic fairness.

Moving beyond representation requires five structural interventions



To dismantle systemic inequality, institutions must implement evidence-based mechanisms to disrupt cumulative advantage, break network closure, and redistribute evaluative authority.

Transparent governance dismantles the hidden biases of editorial authority

The Mechanisms



- Publish disaggregated editorial statistics (acceptance rates by author demographics).



- Enforce strict cooling-off periods for coauthors before they can participate in editorial decisions.



- Implement Triple-Blind review innovations where editors remain unaware of author identities.

Evidence in Action

Case Study: American Psychological Association (APA)



The APA publishes demographic data on authorship, mandates bias training for editorial boards, and utilizes independent oversight committees to ensure procedural fairness.

Disrupting closed networks democratizes collaborative capacity

The Mechanisms

- Mandate CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) transparency to expose honorary authorship in massive teams.
- Deploy targeted grants explicitly for new collaborative formations outside established elite networks.
- Conduct periodic network audits of frequent contributors to prevent author recurrence monopolies.

Evidence in Action

Case Study: Max Planck Society
Their Independent Research Groups program provides funding and absolute autonomy to early-career researchers, specifically enabling them to build networks outside established elite dependencies.

Structured procedural justice neutralizes paradigmatic bias in peer review

The Mechanisms



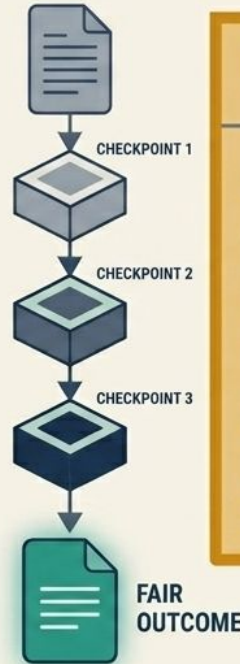
- Implement structured evaluation rubrics to separate personal methodological preference from quality assessment.



- Establish dedicated editorial tracks for underrepresented methodologies (critical, interpretive, qualitative).



- Maintain reviewer accountability databases to identify and remove evaluators exhibiting systemic bias.



Evidence in Action

Case Study: Organization Science

Implemented a Methodological Diversity Initiative, explicitly recruiting reviewers for qualitative/critical research, and publishing referee reports for accepted papers to ensure total

Institutional reform must de-weight journal list fetishism



The Mechanisms

- Radically de-weight elite publication counts in promotion and tenure decisions.
- Reward long-term citation patterns and sustained inquiry over rapid, incremental publishing.
- Adopt narrative-based evaluation systems emphasizing substantive intellectual contribution.

Evidence in Action

Case Study: Utrecht University

Eliminated journal rankings from formal evaluation criteria entirely. Shifted to narrative statements of impact and implemented a Recognition and Rewards model valuing teaching, open science, and diverse contributions.

Equitable resource distribution closes the institutional capacity gap

The Mechanisms

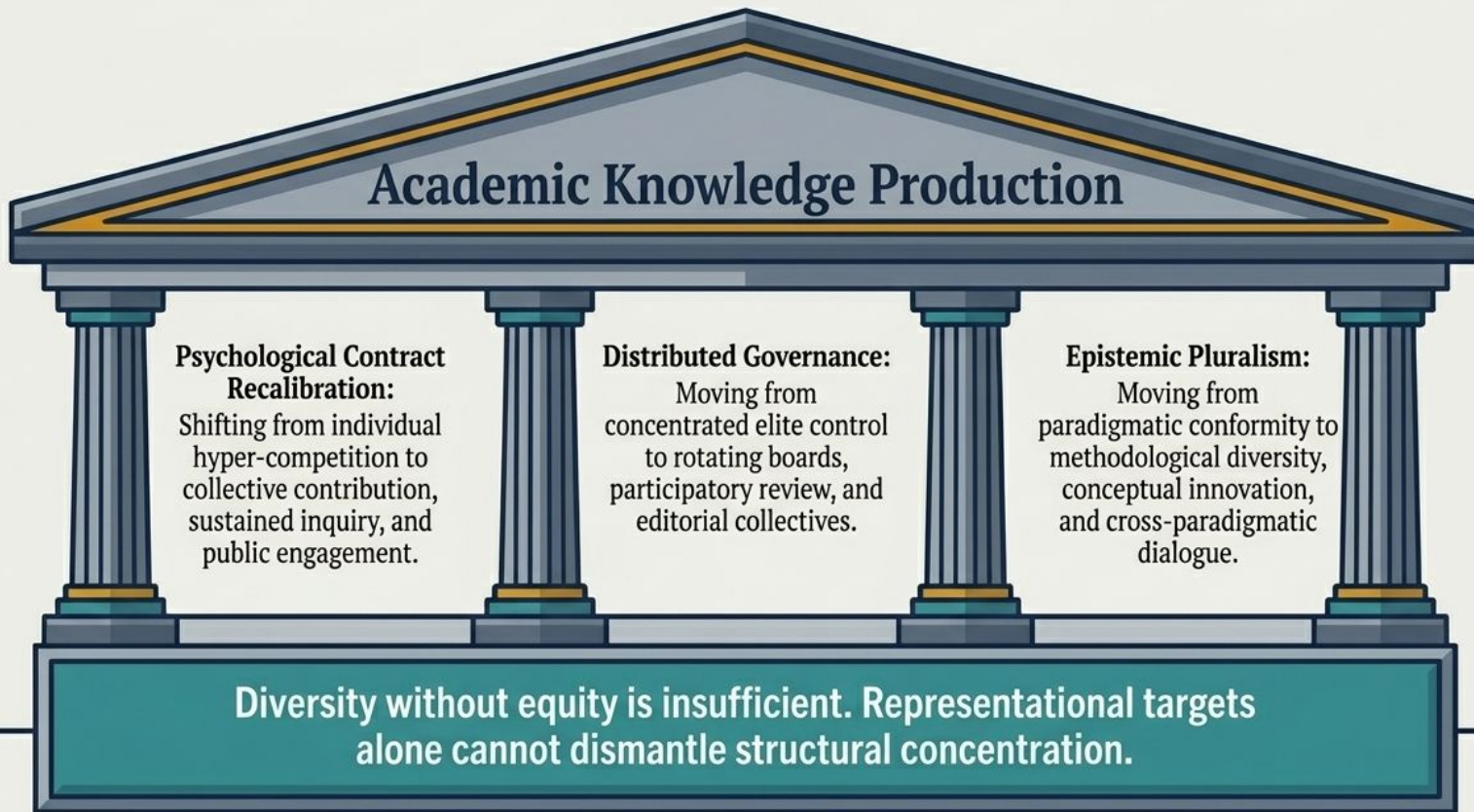
- ☑ • Build competitive, cross-institutional shared research infrastructures (datasets, computing).
- ☑ • Negotiate teaching load equity and research-semester programs for faculty at teaching-intensive institutions.
- ☑ • Create virtual research assistantships granting non-elite faculty access to graduate student labor.

Evidence in Action

Case Study: National Science Foundation (NSF)

The REU (Research Experiences for Undergraduates) program effectively distributes research funding and labor to faculty at institutions with limited graduate programs, simultaneously building capacity and reducing elite resource monopolies.

Structural equity requires an entirely new foundation for knowledge production



Immediate actions required to distribute opportunities based on ideas, not advantages

For Journals



- ✓ Publish transparent demographic governance data.
- ✓ Track and throttle author recurrence to prevent space monopolies.
- ✓ Deploy structured rubrics to mitigate paradigmatic bias.

For Scholarly Associations



- ✓ Pivot grant funding explicitly to disrupt network closure.
- ✓ Establish strict best-practice guidelines for editorial cooling-off periods.
- ✓ Support systemic research into publication inequality.

For Academic Institutions



- ✓ Eliminate journal ranking metrics from formal promotion evaluations.
- ✓ Fund shared research infrastructure for non-elite faculty.
- ✓ Equally value teaching, long-term impact, and public engagement.

The ultimate goal: A publishing system rewarding intellectual contribution over network position.