

# EPISTEMIC EXCLUSION: A FORM OF ACADEMIC GATEKEEPING OF FACULTY OF COLOR

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# Epistemic exclusion of faculty of color (FOC)

The perception of certain scholars and types of research as lacking value and illegitimate



# Epistemic exclusion: a tale of two biases

## Bias #1

Prejudice toward  
marginalized individuals



Norms against prejudice toward  
people, but not scholarship



Devaluation of the  
scholarship of FOC

## Bias #2

Legitimate scholars follow  
disciplinary norms



FOC work outside disciplinary norms  
because of marginalized social position



FOC are not legitimate  
scholars

# Disciplinary

## Center

vs.

## Margin

Single discipline

Theoretical or basic

Quantitative

Biological

Paper archive

Western World

Interdisciplinary

Applied

Qualitative

Behavioral

Digital archive

Eastern World

# How epistemic exclusion works as gate-keeping

- Rejection is done by those in power
  - *Dominant group members who have been successful by engaging in “traditional” or “mainstream” scholarship*
- Those with epistemic power establish and maintain disciplinary norms
- The system is designed to benefit the privileged
- System disparately harms faculty of color



# A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF EPISTEMIC EXCLUSION

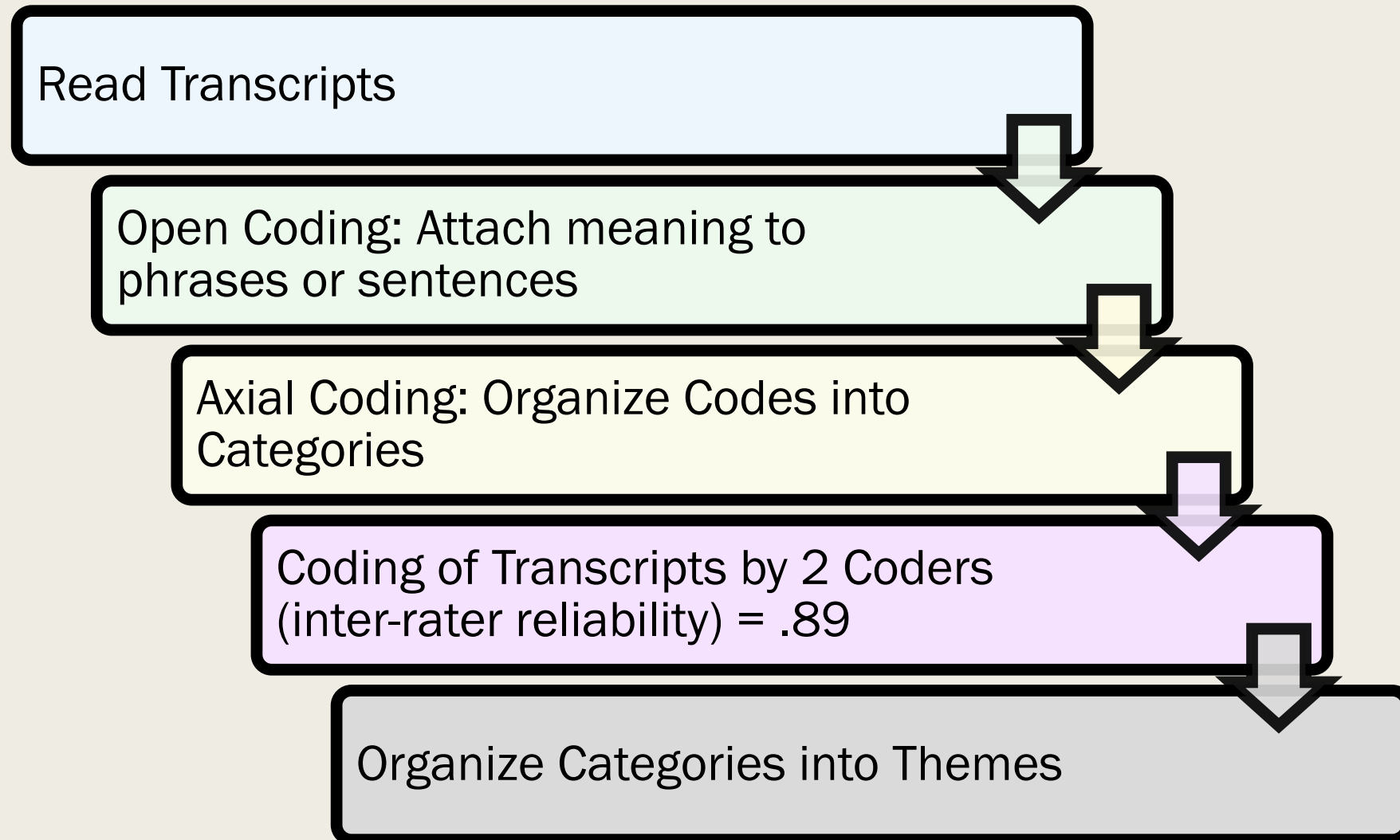
*What is the nature of epistemic exclusion?*

# Method and Sample

- 118 tenure-track faculty members from Research I university
- Qualitative Study: 1-2 hour interviews
- Demographics
  - *Sex:* 56 Females (48%), 62 Males (52%)
  - *Race:* 30 Black (25%), 26 Hispanic (22%), 6 American Indian (5%), 56 Asian (48%)
  - *Nativity:* 53 Born in U.S. (45%), 65 Born outside U.S. (55%)
  - *Rank:* 42 Assistant (36%), 35 Associate (30%), 41 Full (35%)
  - *Field:* 76 STEM\*-related (64%), 42 non-STEM (36%)

\* STEM = Science, technology, engineering, & mathematics

# Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)







# SEEING EPISTEMIC EXCLUSION

*Formal and Informal*



# Epistemic Exclusion

## Formal Hierarchies

- Shifting Standards
- Grants
- Outlets
- Quality

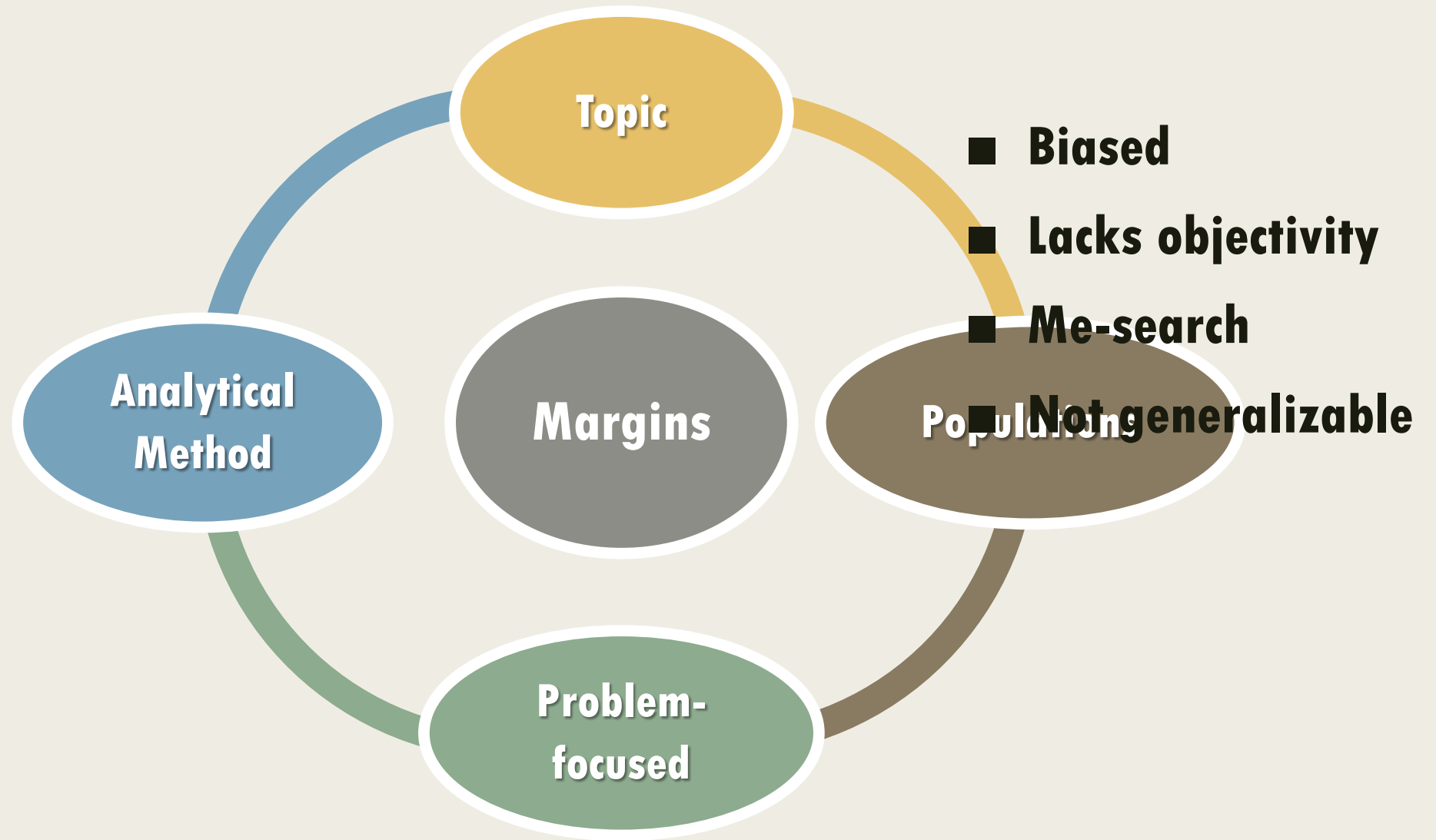
- Evaluation criteria are unclear and changing
- Funding confers value
- Outlets determine value
- What scholarship is valued?

## Informal Processes

- Lack of Recognition
- Lack of Legitimacy
- Lack of Comprehension

- Accomplishments are overlooked and minimized
- Scholar role is questioned, must be proved repeatedly
- Scholarship not understood and not of interest

# Lack of Quality: Work on Disciplinary Margins



# Consequences of Epistemic Exclusion

## Individual Workplace

- **Adjusted scholarship**
- **Productivity**
- **P&T decisions**
- **Pay**

## Individual Psychological

- **Dissatisfaction**
- **Lack of belonging**
- **Uncertainty**
- **“Crazy”**

## Institutional

- **Faculty turnover**
- **Reputational harm**



# COUNTERING EPISTEMIC EXCLUSION

*Institutional policies and practices*



# Where Epistemic Exclusion Plays a Role



# Implications and recommendations

- Gatekeeping creates barriers to faculty diversity
  - *Produces disciplinary inertia*
- Have explicit conversations about disciplinary values and norms
  - *Disciplinary bias trainings*
- Valuing work on the margins
  - *Reconceptualize work at the disciplinary margins as cutting-edge*
  - *Shift policies and practices to reflect these values*
  - *Awareness of appropriate metrics for evaluation of scholars working on the margins*
- Reduce defensiveness of scholars working in the center
  - *Novel approaches do not detract from contributions of such work*

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