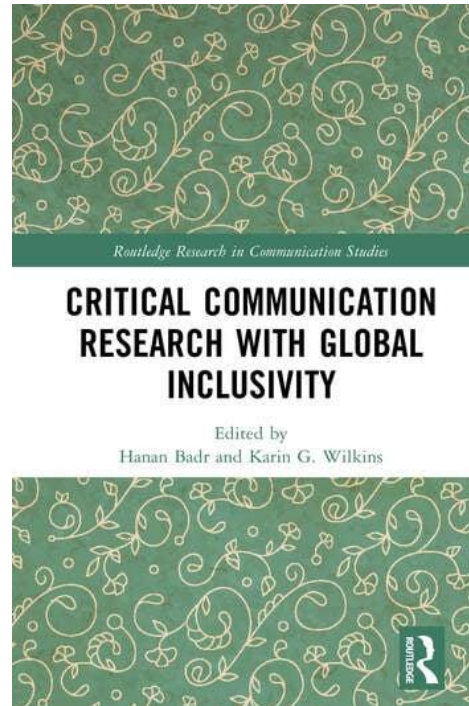


Hanan Badr and Karin G. Wilkins (Eds.), **Critical Communication Research With Global Inclusivity**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2026, 254 pp., \$200 (hardcover), \$55.79 (eBook).

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In the past decade, calls to de-Westernize communication research have become more visible and harder to ignore. Waisbord and Mellado's (2014) thesis framed the problem in structural terms, warning that epistemological colonialism still shapes what counts as legitimate theory and knowledge. Chakravartty et al.'s (2018) “#CommunicationSoWhite” intervention then made those structures easier to see by tracing racialized asymmetries in citation practices, editorial authority, and curricular canons. Yet the conversation has not resolved a basic difficulty. The field often critiques Western-centrism through infrastructures that can also reproduce it, including English-dominant publication systems, journal hierarchies, ranking and impact-factor governance, and taken-for-granted methodological repertoires. Under these conditions, “inclusion” easily becomes either a performative commitment or an additive strategy that inserts Global South cases without changing the standards by which knowledge is authorized. The question, then, is not whether inclusivity is desirable, but whether the ways it is currently pursued disrupt existing power relations or leave them intact.



Hanan Badr and Karin G. Wilkins's edited volume, **Critical Communication Research With Global Inclusivity**, takes up this question by arguing that global inclusivity is not an ethical add-on but a condition of knowledge validity. Across sixteen chapters organized into four parts, the collection can be read as tracking how power enters the research process. It moves through disciplinary boundary-making, epistemic audibility, methods and infrastructures, and institutional governance. Its most distinctive contribution is conceptual rather than purely technical. The book treats inclusivity as a self-reflexive practice that asks not only who is included but also how inclusion is organized, by whom, and at what cost. This framing also sets up a recurring lesson. Inclusivity is undermined not mainly by individual intentions but by ordinary academic mechanisms that turn attempts at repair into new thresholds.

Part I begins with the discipline itself and treats it as an outcome of classificatory struggle rather than neutral intellectual differentiation. Löblich, in chapter 2, drawing on Bourdieusian theory, shows how disciplinary identity work relies on academic rituals and symbolic hierarchies that police what counts as legitimate knowledge, including how area-based expertise is positioned in relation to “orthodox” disciplinary standards. De-bordering initiatives, in this account, can reproduce what they oppose because

they often redraw lines of legitimacy instead of dismantling the conditions that authorize those lines. Banjac, in chapter 3, extends this argument to journalism studies through intersectionality and standpoint epistemology. Inclusivity, she contends, cannot be treated as a numerical issue solvable by increasing representation, because professional norms remain organized around White, heterosexual, middle-class assumptions that define competence, objectivity, and newsworthiness. Attia, in chapter 4, shows how these symbolic hierarchies become procedural inequality in international collaborations. Agenda-setting, methodological decisions, and interpretive authority remain concentrated in Global North core teams, while scholars in the Global South are frequently confined to facilitative labor or reduced to data provision. By the end of Part I, the book has sharpened its central concern. The problem is not simply exclusion from the discipline but the power to set the discipline's terms, including its objects, methods, and legitimate interpretations.

Part II pushes the boundary problem inward from disciplinary demarcations to epistemologies and the politics of audibility. Schwarzenegger et al., in chapter 5, propose historical intervention as a corrective to the technological presentism of much digital communication research. By tracing continuities between contemporary datafication and earlier infrastructures of surveillance and governance, they show how claims of novelty can mask durable distributions of power. Haritos, in chapter 6, develops an allied argument through German–Namibian media memory research on the Herero and Nama genocide. She shifts attention from who can speak to what can be heard, treating listening as a structured relation rather than a personal virtue. Her positional advantages, including archival access, linguistic competence, and institutional resources, become conditions that shape audibility and inaudibility alike. Perreault and Walsh, in chapter 7, complicate geographic shorthand by examining U.S. rural “news deserts,” reminding readers that marginality is not exhausted by a Global South location. Yet this expansion also raises a problem that recurs throughout the collection. A global account of exclusion must avoid reducing inequality to a North–South binary, but it must still specify the historical and institutional forms that marginalization takes in different settings. Taken together, the chapters suggest that audibility is structured and can function as a boundary.

Part III turns from diagnosis to the work of research design, where power is often mistaken for a purely technical constraint. Enghel's confessional narrative, in chapter 8, functions as the volume's hinge. She describes designing a complex multi-method study to satisfy European Union funding regimes, only to confront participants' severe time poverty in the field and to abandon planned media diaries. The chapter refuses to moralize extraction as a matter of individual intention and instead locates it in academic incentives. Funding logics, publication pressures, and promotion metrics reward methodological maximalism while penalizing ethical restraint, turning innovation into a practice that can intensify burdens on already constrained participants. Chapters 9 to 11 extend this political economy argument into more explicitly technical domains. Ramasubramanian et al., in chapter 9, outline a critical algorithmic literacy framework that aims to bridge critical theory and quantitative tools, while tacitly presuming access to training and infrastructure. Lind and Volk, in chapter 10, argue that machine translation and multilingual embeddings can lower language barriers, but they can also reproduce dependency on training data, pre-trained models, and computational expertise that are concentrated in the Global North. Breninger et al., in chapter 11, introduce eye tracking and a Chinese polarity-field approach, foregrounding methodological pluralization and insisting on philosophical reflection and cross-context collaboration when

borrowing or building methods. Part III's cumulative point is concrete. Operationalizing inclusivity often shifts where exclusion happens, moving it from language and publication access toward infrastructure, expertise, and methodological prestige.

Part IV situates these dynamics in the governance of scholarly institutions, where questions of feasibility and complicity become unavoidable. The *Digital Journalism* editorial team, in chapter 12, provides an unusually frank account of how journal privilege is produced through publisher infrastructures and founding editors' symbolic capital. Their proposals include review-policy changes, special issues, and language support. They show that editorial practice matters, while also revealing how quickly reforms collide with ranking systems and impact-factor governance beyond any single team's control. Dimitrova and Ekdale, in chapter 13, offer a pragmatic agenda centered on mentorship, translation, editorial board diversification, and inclusive special issues. The measures are workable, but they also demonstrate the limits of change that stay entirely inside existing prestige economies. Noveiri et al., in chapter 14, move closer to a politics of institution-building by recounting SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa) organizing within the National Communication Association and proposing citational conscientious engagement aligned with SWANA liberation. Their intervention treats inclusivity not as procedural compliance but as political commitment, including the creation of space within existing scholarly associations. This also raises a difficult question that the volume does not fully resolve, namely, what autonomy can mean when recognition still runs through English-language journals and Western evaluation regimes. Waisbord's concluding reflection, in chapter 16, frames de-Westernization as a marathon rather than a sprint. The metaphor invites reflection because it can suggest an eventual finish line, whereas the volume's stronger implication is more unsettling. Inclusivity is a recurrent struggle in which each attempt to repair exclusion can generate new exclusions, and critique remains entangled with the infrastructures it criticizes.

Across its four parts, the volume traces a single trajectory. It begins with the making of disciplinary and epistemic boundaries, follows those boundaries into methodological and infrastructural choices, and ends with the institutional incentives that make such choices durable. This trajectory clarifies why inclusion so often gets translated into manageable reforms, performative gestures, or technical solutions, and why those solutions can become fresh barriers rather than lasting repairs.

The volume's limitations warrant explicit acknowledgment. First, it sometimes pulls in two directions, offering radical diagnosis alongside remedies that remain largely inside the systems under critique. While the chapters persuasively show how inequality is reproduced across collaboration, method, publishing, and evaluation regimes, many proposed remedies stop short of specifying structural alternatives beyond incremental reform. Second, despite its global inclusivity commitments, the volume's institutional and empirical anchor points lean heavily toward Europe and North America, even when chapters engage cases and debates from Latin America, Africa, and SWANA contexts. Empirical cases and institutional reference points from Latin America, Africa, and Asia appear less central than the framing might lead readers to expect, and engagement with decolonial and Southern epistemologies is uneven, risking a replay of the asymmetries the book sets out to analyze.

Even with these constraints, *Critical Communication Research With Global Inclusivity* advances de-Westernization debates by shifting attention from programmatic calls to the concrete mechanics of knowledge production. Its most durable provocation is that global inclusivity cannot be reduced to representation, goodwill, or methodological choice in isolation. It is a struggle over the institutional and epistemological conditions under which research becomes askable, doable, and recognizable as knowledge.

References

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