

SAKSHI BHALLA

Institute of Communications Research (ICR), University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

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EDUCATION	Ph.D. in Media & Communications University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Honors: <i>Phi Kappa Phi</i>	2021 onwards Champaign, IL
	Master of Science in Statistics University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	Summer 2025 Champaign, IL
	Master of Arts in Linguistics Jawaharlal Nehru University JNU Entrance Test: <i>All India Rank 1</i> Thesis: <i>Sociolinguistic Profile of Ahirani</i> (a rare language spoken in Maharashtra, India)	2018-2020 New Delhi, India
	Bachelor of Arts, with Honors in Journalism Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi	2012-2015 New Delhi, India

PUBLICATIONS *Peer-reviewed articles*

1. Ray, R., **S. Bhalla** & H. Taneja. (2025). Fact checkers are seldom used by news users on either side of the partisan divide. *Journal of Communication*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqaf018>
2. **Bhalla, S.**, R. Ray & H. Taneja. (2024). When news is entertainment: Explaining the persistence of misinformation through the information environment. *Information, Communication & Society*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2024.2406819>
3. Khan, A., S. Natarajan, & **S. Bhalla**. (2021). Climate Strikes in Millennial India: Social Capital and “On-Ground” Networks in Digital-First Movements. *Communication, Culture & Critique*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcab035>

Forthcoming

1. **Bhalla, S.** & H. Taneja. (2025). User-defined Repertoires. In Nai, A., Grömping, M., & Wirz, D. (Eds). *Elgar Encyclopedia of Political Communication*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
2. **Bhalla, S.**, M. Nelson & M. Spikes. (forthcoming). Classroom Contexts: Teachers Talk Teaching Media Literacy. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*.

IN PROGRESS **News(paper) Flows: A spatial examination of local newspaper circulation** *Under review*

Following the News: Polarization and the Networked Structure of Attention
In preparation

Complements or competitors? Examining human-AI interactions on Sina Weibo

In preparation; with Maggie Zhang

**AWARDS/
FELLOWSHIPS**

<i>Illinois Distinguished Fellowship</i> (\$75,000)	2021-25
Political Networks Graduate Student Fellowship	2025
ICA Political Communication Section Travel Grant	2025
<i>Methodology Center Summer Institute Scholarship</i> , Purdue University/ National Institute on Drug Addiction	2025
<i>SPARK Award</i> for Promising Graduate Students, American Political Science Association (Political Communication Section)	2024
<i>Local Journalism Researchers Workshop Travel Grant</i> , Duke University	2024
<i>National Center for Supercomputing Applications</i> (750,000 core hours)	2023
<i>Institute of Communications Research Graduate Travel Grant</i>	2022-2025
<i>Prime Minister's Scholarship</i> , Government of India	2012

**CONFERENCE
TALKS**

Bhalla, S. & Harsh Taneja (2024). Dissecting Selectivity in a fragmented media environment: A novel approach. *APSA Political Communication Preconference*.

Bhalla, S. & Harsh Taneja (2024). Entwined Realms: Media Contexts and Information Choice. *American Political Science Association*. [iPoster]

Bhalla, S., Rik Ray & Harsh Taneja (2024). When News is Entertainment. *International Communication Division: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)*, Philadelphia, PA. [Poster]

Bhalla, S. & Harsh Taneja (2024). Beyond Preferences: Contextual Influences on News Diets in High-Choice Environments. *Political Communication Division: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)*, Philadelphia, PA. [Poster]

Bhalla, S. & Harsh Taneja (2024). Entwined Realms: Examining Media Contexts and News Choice. *A Computational Turn in Journalism: Opportunities and Challenges in a Cross-Disciplinary Field: ICA 2024 Preconference*, Singapore/Virtual.

Bhalla, S., JungHwan Yang, Harsh Taneja, Pablo Barbera, Andy Guess & Simon Munzert (2023). Measuring the consumption of political news: Patterns of selectivity and avoidance. *News avoidance, resistance, and related audience practices: definitions, predictors, and consequences: ICA 2023 Preconference*, Toronto, Canada.

Bhalla, S., Michelle Nelson & Michael Spikes (2023). Context Matters: Teachers Talk Media Literacy in the Classroom. *Mass Communication Division: International Communication Association*, Toronto, Canada. [Full paper]

Bhalla, S., Rik Ray & Harsh Taneja (2022). Foregrounding contexts in disinfor-

mation studies: A study on the failure of fact-checking in India. *What Comes After Disinformation Studies?* International Communication Association Preconference, Paris, France.

Ray, R., **Sakshi Bhalla** & Harsh Taneja (2022). Fact checkers fail to overcome partisan divides in two of the world's largest democracies. *Political Communication Division: International Communication Association*, Paris, France. [Full Paper]

Bhalla, S. (2021). Foregrounding Space and context: A discursive study of fact-checking in India. *South Asia Communication Association: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)*, Virtual.

Ray, R., **Sakshi Bhalla** & Harsh Taneja (2021). Do fact-checkers overcome partisan divides: An investigation of Indian Twitter users. *International Communication Association*, Virtual. [Full paper]

Bhalla, S. (2018). The Global in the Local: Inter-cultural Translation in the Backdrop of Global Advertising. *International Symposium on Linguistics Across Disciplines*, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. [Full paper]

WORKSHOPS **Bhalla, S.** (2024). Diffused News Cultures: Explaining news cultures through spatial relationships. *Local Journalism Researchers Workshop*, Chapel-Hill, NC.

PRESENTATIONS **Bhalla, S.** (2024). Navigating Narratives: Selective Exposure to Indian Journalists. *Social Media and Society in India*, Ann Arbor, MI/Virtual.

Bhalla, S. (2022). How politics and platforms skew media literacy instruction. *Institute of Communications Research at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*.

Bhalla, S. (2021). Ahirani: A Sociolinguistic Profile. *Centre for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*.

Bhalla, S. (2021). Foregrounding Space and context: A discursive study of fact-checking in India. *The Great Mediation (University of Chicago)*.

Bhalla, S. (2019). The Technological Mediation of Political Rhetoric on Twitter. *Mediated Campaigns and Unmediated Politics in Millennial India*, Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi.

INVITED TALKS **Bhalla, S.** (2024). News and Information Consumption in the Contemporary Media Environment: Are Fact-Checkers Enough? *Jio Institute Masterclass*. with *Harsh Taneja & Rik Ray*

OTHER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Student Researcher	Jun-Aug 2021
Open Markets Institute (Center for Liberty and Journalism)	
• Worked with the Illinois Project team and collected data for multiple research projects.	
Research Analyst	Jan 2021-Apr 2021
Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)	
• Collection and analysis of online survey data to study online and on-ground protest networks in India. The findings have been published in Communication, Culture & Critique .	

	Research Assistant Indraprastha Institute of Information & Technology (IIIT-New Delhi) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studied media parallelism and framing of policy discourse across news publications during the General Election of 2019 in India.. 	2019-20
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	Pre-doctoral Fellow University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead Teaching Assistant: Foundations of Data Curation (CS 598) Instructor of Record: Audience Analysis (ADV 483) Teaching Assistant: Intro to popular TV and movies (MACS 100), Intro to Advertising (ADV 150) Research Assistant: Examined approaches to media literacy used by high-school teachers in the state of Illinois through semi-structured interviews with the IMEDIA research group. 	2021 - Present Champaign, IL
	Graduate Student Mentor Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program (URAP), University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduced undergraduate students to research on media and communications, guiding them on projects. Final project presented at Undergraduate Research Symposium. Jury member for the <i>Social Issues & Policy</i> and <i>Social Science & Human Behavior</i> panels for Undergraduate Research Symposium 2025. 	2022 onwards
PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS	<i>Member</i> , International Communication Association <i>Member</i> , American Political Science Association <i>Affiliate</i> , Center for Information, Technology, and Public Life (CITAP)	
IN THE MEDIA	Interview on Centre for Innovation & Sustainability in Local Media. Q&A with media and politics researcher, Sakshi Bhalla Also syndicated by Editor & Publisher	
DATA SCIENCE & TECH	Languages: R (proficient), Python (intermediate), HTML/CSS (intermediate) Programs: UCINET, LaTeX Statistical Modelling: Statistical inference, causal inference, network analysis and spatial econometrics, machine learning	
SERVICE TO THE DEPARTMENT	ICR Graduate Student Conference: Organizing team & Reviewer ICR Graduate Student Representative	2023 2023-24
SERVICE TO THE DISCIPLINE	Reviewing for annual conferences: International Communication Association (Political Communication, Computational Methods, Journalism Studies, and Human-Machine Communication divisions) Reviewing for journals: <i>Journalism Studies</i> , <i>Humanities and Social Sciences Communications</i> - <i>Nature</i>	

OTHER CERTIFICATIONS	Role of Media in Conflict and Peace 2014 Certification workshop offered by Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace.
	Journalism as a Public Good 2014 Short term certificate course offered by Lady Shri Ram College for Women.
	Film Appreciation 2013 Six-week certification offered by Lady Shri Ram College for Women.
NATURAL LANGUAGES	English (proficient), Hindi (proficient), Punjabi (intermediate), Ahirani (beginner)
RELEVANT COURSEWORK	University of Illinois Theory: <i>States, Space and Informatization; Public Opinion & Public Sphere; Mass Media and the Individual; Political Campaigns Analysis; History, Politics, and Identity; Communication & Public Opinion; Political Communication.</i> Method: <i>Network Analysis; Computational Political Communication; Postcolonial Theory and Methods; Quantitative Research Methods; Statistics and Probability I & II; Statistical Modelling I; Spatial Econometrics and Causal Inference; Hierarchical Linear Modelling; Statistical Learning; Time Series Analysis.</i>
	Jawaharlal Nehru University <i>Sociolinguistics; Semiotics and the Philosophy of Structures; Issues in Linguistic Theory; Forms of Media: Senses, Mediation and Perception; Field Methods; Media, Politics and Violence; Visual Histories; Media in India.</i>
	Lady Shri Ram College for Women <i>Media and Culture Studies; New Media Technologies; Indian State and Democratic Polity; International Politics; Advertising and Public Relations; Human Rights, Gender and Environment; Seminar on Urban Spatiality; Communication Research Methods.</i>
NON-ACADEMIC WORK EXPERIENCE	Junior Writer – Senior Writer Mar 2016-Jul 2018 Thinkstr Consultancy Pvt. Ltd. Gurgaon, India <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spearheaded strategic communication for NITI Aayog (Government of India), including the nationwide launch of digital payments in a 100 day campaign across 100 Indian cities. See impact here and here. Longhand Awards shortlist.
	Associate Jun 2015-Feb 2016 D. E. Shaw & Co. Hyderabad, India
INTERNSHIPS AND PROJECTS	Summer Intern Summer 2014 The Coca-Cola Company (India and Southwest Asia HQ) Gurgaon, India <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with the Public Affairs and Communication Department. Assisted with the strategy of the TCCC's Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives and outreach to customers.
	Associate Editor 2012-2014 Counter-talk (The annual journal of Department of Journalism, Lady Shri Ram College) New Delhi, India

REFERENCES Available upon request.