How Human Coding is Used and Described

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Human coding remains an important part of the data generating process for many political scientists. Yet, we lack a systematic understanding of how researchers approach and describe the human coding process. I analyze published articles in major political science journals from 2010 to 2024 that mention human coders (*N*=258). While articles largely state some form of intercoder reliability measure, a substantial percentage of articles lack minimally descriptive information on coder qualifications and replicable coding procedures --- components that, respectively, are a best practice and are important for ensuring research transparency. The results suggest that some researchers emphasize the product of human coding without fully addressing how human coding is used as a process. I conclude with suggestions for better describing human coders' work.

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Human judgement is a key component of the political science research process. A typical research article includes dozens, if not hundreds, of potentially consequential decisions about how a research question is framed, data collected, analysis performed, and results interpreted. Recently, the discipline has made two related pushes: one toward the establishment and use of best practices in empirical research and a second toward open, replicable, and transparent research (APSA 2022, 10; Stockemer, Koehler, and Lentz 2018).

While machine learning and other automated techniques have the potential to standardize and to make transparent some decisions made during the research process (Grimmer, Roberts, and Stewart 2021),[1] humans are increasingly relied upon to produce the training data and validity checks that undergird machine-learning algorithms. Humans are also skilled at determining complexity, providing clean training data or validity checks (Song et al. 2020), and helping researchers understand data generating processes (Heseltine and Clemm Von Hohenberg 2024; Lacy et al. 2015; Schedler 2012; Zamith and Lewis 2015). How does the discipline approach the use of best practices and transparent research when working with human coders?

Understanding how researchers use and describe human coders is important because of its pervasiveness and use in performing many tasks. I characterize human coders as interpreters --- people who are asked to take raw data and to make judgements to transform these data into a standardized form suitable for analysis. So, while a researcher may ask someone to transcribe handwritten meeting minutes into a spreadsheet, that task only involves human coding if the person is instructed to interpret the minutes, say to judge the tone of the minutes using a researcher-provided scale.

[1] It can, but does not necessarily (Dyrstad and Moses 2023). See Bagozzi et al. (2019) for an example.

Prior work has focused on how human coders are involved in either dataset creation or validity checks. In dataset creation, human coders can be classified as "experts," typically thought to be especially well qualified and, therefore, given more agency over more complex coding tasks, or are people who perform what I term "basic" analysis. There is not a clear definition on who constitutes an expert, and whether a task requires basic or expert coding is left to researcher interpretation (e.g., Lindstädt, Proksch, and Slapin 2020; Martínez I Coma and Van Ham 2015). Robust discussion has evaluated how experts assess quantities of interest in well-established political science datasets including Varieties of Democracy (Knutsen et al. 2024; McMann et al. 2022), the American National Election Study (DeBell 2013), and the Comparative Manifesto Project (Hjorth et al. 2015; Mikhaylov, Laver, and Benoit 2012). What constitutes expertise is often left unstated, allowing for heuristics and assumptions to be made about expert qualifications (O'Brien, Hawkins, and Loesch 2022). Yet, even if the identity of experts is known and well-described, experts can exhibit systematic biases that increase the need for transparent and replicable coding procedures (Levick and Olavarria-Gambi 2020, but see Marquardt et al. 2019).

Individuals performing basic analysis are typically characterized as crowd workers or student coders. A stated advantage of using crowd workers is that their selection and the resulting coding procedures are more systematic and transparent compared to expert evaluations or those conducted by student coders (Winter, Hughes, and Sanders 2020), and they have been used with some resulting success (Benoit et al. 2016; Horn 2019; Niemann-Lenz, Dittrich, and Scheper 2023). Employing crowd workers also helps to provide training data for or to check the validity of automated methods (e.g., Carlson and Montgomery 2017; Kaufman 2024; Ying,

Montgomery, and Stewart 2022). Both expert and basic analysis can be conducted on existing observational data or on data that the researcher collects.

Human coding is also used as part of a machine-learning process to create training data or as a validity check. Validity checks can involve humans independently coding data or coders can review machine-coded data. In the former case, coders do the same work as for dataset creation, but researchers use the data differently, whereas the process of coders reviewing machine-coded data is distinct. In all cases, typically one or two coders are used, though it is also possible to use many crowd workers (e.g., Kaufman 2024; Ying, Montgomery, and Stewart 2022).

I examine whether articles that mention human coders follow best practices --- containing reliability measures and a description of coder qualifications --- and provide replicable procedures. To do so, I collect data from peer-reviewed political science journal articles published between 2010 and 2024 in the *American Political Science Review* (APSR), *American Journal of Political Science* (AJPS), the *Journal of Politics* (JOP), *Political Research Quarterly* (PRQ), *Social Science Quarterly* (SSQ), *Polity*, and *PS: Political Science & Politics*. I categorize the way that the term "coder" is used. Even among application articles that directly engage in and use human coding, 30% of fail to provide reliability measures, 37% contain inadequate coder descriptions, and 41% lack replicable coding procedures. These results suggest a lack of disciplinary norms regarding the use and description of human coders. Consequently, researchers engage in many good faith efforts to describe the use of human coding, and some descriptions can be substantially improved. I conclude by describing some potential strategies and challenges for working with and describing human coders.

Reliability Measures, Coder Qualifications, and Replicability

To sufficiently analyze the use of human coders in political science, I first establish two main areas of interest --- best practice use and replicability --- and subsequent techniques employed to measure them.

The discipline has long worked to suggest best practices that help to standardize how scholarship is conducted and to improve its overall quality. The best practices by which such standards are developed come from two sources: regulating entities --- like journals and professional associations --- and disciplinary agreement (Freese and Peterson 2017). Often, structures develop to make following best practices simpler with the eventual intent of requiring their usage. Consider the example of pre-analysis plans, which were introduced as part of broader data transparency initiatives and have been the subject of much scholarly discussion amid their increasing adoption (see Rubenson 2021 for a review). Organizations like the Open Science Foundation (OSF) have established repositories for pre-analysis plans, and the *Journal of Politics* notably began a process of requiring such plans in 2021 before removing this requirement after a change in editors.[2] Ofosu and Posner (2023) establish best practices for the content of such plans and find mixed uptake, perhaps due to some researchers submitting a plan just to claim compliance (McDermott 2022). Similar discussions on best practices have occurred in the discipline regarding statistical power (Arel-Bundock et al. 2024; Gelman 2018) and, of course, methodological pluralism (Monroe 2005), among other topics.

While political science has not widely discussed best practices in the use of human coders, other social science disciplines have established reliability measures and describing coder

[2] Compare August 11, 2021 (https://web.archive.org/web/20210811155631/https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/journals/jop/instruct) to May 20, 2025 (https://web.archive.org/web/20250520163710/https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/journals/jop/instruct).

qualifications as requisite components. Human coding involves some degree of subjective judgement on behalf of the humans involved in the coding process. To assess the impact of these judgements on the coded data, researchers recommend employing intercoder reliability measures (Hayes and Krippendorff 2007; Lovejoy et al. 2016). Percentage agreement and Krippendorff's alpha are two common measures of intercoder reliability, though there are others, and some measures are more appropriate for certain kinds of human coding tasks.

Though often excluded (e.g., Ahn, Ames, and Myers 2012; Anani Sarab and Amini Farsani 2024), researchers should include a description of human coder qualifications. Stating coder qualifications is important because they can help to contextualize lower than expected intercoder reliability and to determine the perspective with which coders worked. Krippendorff (2018, 131) recommends "clear and communicable descriptions of coders' backgrounds" to facilitate replicability.[3] Using students and research assistants to conduct human coding (Goehring 2024) reinforces broader questions about power dynamics present in data collection and analysis processes (Deane and Stevano 2016; Dumenden 2012). Crowd worker selection can be easily made transparent, but is often not equitably compensated (O'Brochta and Parikh 2021).

Replicable research refers to the process of providing readers with sufficient information so that they can repeat the data collection and analysis process and arrive at the same results.[4] The discipline has encouraged and often requires statistical code and datasets to be provided as replication data (Key 2016). Though this practice has become relatively standard over time (Stockemer, Koehler, and Lentz 2018), there remains discussion on what replicable research

[3] In qualitative coding, this is similar to providing a positionality statement (Steltenpohl et al. 2023).
[4] There is inconsistency in how terms like replicability and transparency are used (Reproducibility and transparency 2025).

looks like and how researchers can best follow replication policies (Alvarez, Key, and Núñez 2018).

Human coding requires interpretation and, therefore aligns more closely with ongoing discussions of replication in qualitative political science (Elman and Kapiszewski 2014; Golden 1995). Providing a full description of coder training and coding procedures can ensure replicability and reduce coding inconsistency (e.g., Paritosh 2012; Pickel, Stark, and Breustedt 2015; Reiter 2020). Though we know that comprehensive coder training is critically important to replicability (Budak, Garrett, and Sude 2021), there is less of a norm to provide training instructions in articles or appendices, so I adopt the more minimal definition of whether minimally informative coding procedures are stated (Hak and Bernts 1996).

Research Design

Though there are of course different ways to describe people that perform human coding, I reduce the judgement involved in determining whether an article involves the process of human coding by focusing on articles that identify one or more individuals as a "coder." This term has a conventionally agreed upon definition in the discipline that implies a formal and systematic process, and researchers who choose to use the term self-identify with that definition.[5]

I collected articles mentioning the word "coder" for the period from 2010 to 2024. I chose 2010 as the starting point because this period marked the start of a movement to enhance research transparency and replicability. The Dataverse project for depositing replication data was established in 2007 (King 2007), and *PS* ran a 2010 symposium addressing recent discussion in

[5] Whether researchers follow this definition is another matter (Carpenter 2009). Other terms include "expert," "researcher," "research assistant," "worker," "student," "annotator," and "I" (the author). See the supplemental information (SI.1) for additional discussion.

APSA about data collection, storage, and replication (McDermott 2010). Further, the traditional "top three" political science journals --- APSR, AJPS, and JOP --- all had functions for authors to provide online only appendices at this time. The APSR and AJPS specifically required authors to provide full descriptions of data coding procedures.[6] To these journals, I add the other major journals of political science associations in the United States: PRQ, SSQ, PS, and Polity.

I searched each journal on Google Scholar for the term "coder." Using Google Scholar provides a consistent search process across the journals. After downloading each article, I collected a variety of quantities of interest related to the use of the term "coder" in the article. My focus is on three questions: 1. How is the term "coder" used in the article? 2. For articles that apply human coding, what is being coded? and 3. For articles that apply human coding, what are the coding procedures --- do they follow best practices and are they replicable? I proceed by reviewing each question; full procedures are in the supplemental information.

How is "Coder" Used?

I begin by examining the characteristics of articles that discuss coders (*N*=258). I categorized each article based on the primary way that they use human coders. In order of increasing focus on human coding, articles categorized as *cite existing work* cited existing research using human coders and mentioned human coders in their description of that research. *Propose human alternative* articles also mentioned human coding, but did so as they presented a new approach to

[6] See https://web.archive.org/web/20100206151927/https://ajps.org/manu_guides.html (February 6, 2010), https://web.archive.org/web/20100308070228/http://www.journalofpolitics.org/instructions-to-authors (March 8, 2010), and https://web.archive.org/web/20100513033114/http://www.apsanet.org/content_43805.cfm?navID=264#expand (May 13, 2010).

coding that did not rely on human coders. *Use existing dataset* articles described and utilized a previously created human coded dataset in their research. Human coding was part of the machine learning process in both *training data* and *validity check* articles, occurring at different points in the training and testing of machine learning algorithms. Finally, *application* articles applied human coding techniques to code one or more quantities of interest that are then utilized in the article.

Table 1 displays the type of article broken down by subfield. Articles discussing human coding are more common in American and comparative compared to IR or methods. Comparing the subfield breakdown to the 2022 APSR editor's report of manuscript acceptances, articles employing human coders are 15% more likely to be about American politics, 10% more likely to be about methods, 15% less likely to cover comparative politics, and 5% less likely to cover IR (Tripp and Dion 2023).

Table 1: Use of Human Coding Across Subfields

	Cite Existing Work	Propose Human Alternative	Use Existing Dataset	Training Data	Validity Check	Application	Average
American	0.06	0.03	0.03	0.10	0.03	0.75	0.47
Comparative	0.07	0.03	0.21	0.09	0.07	0.52	0.31
IR	0.23	0.00	0.36	0.05	0.00	0.36	0.09
Methods	0.28	0.25	0.03	0.11	0.06	0.28	0.14
Average	0.11	0.06	0.12	0.09	0.04	0.58	

Note: Primary instance of the use of human coders in 2010-2024 APSR, AJPS, JOP, PRQ, PS, and SSQ articles (*N*=258) by subfield. Values are percentages.

Application articles are the most popular or tied for the most popular uses for human coders across subfields. Comparative and IR rely increasingly more on existing datasets that involve human coding. IR also features several articles about human coders that provide citations

to existing work. Logically, methods articles are the most likely to propose alternative approaches to using human coders and to use human coders to produce training data.

What is Being Coded?

For the remainder of the analysis, I focus on articles using human coding for an application, training data, or a validity check. These articles all directly involve the article authors performing human coding, whereas articles that cite existing work, propose a human coding alternative, or use an existing dataset reference, but do not directly conduct human coding.

Human coding can be applied to different kinds of research questions. I categorized the unit of analysis in each article to describe the type of material humans were coding. Humans were most often used to code government documents like presidential speeches or legislative bills (24%). News content (18%), survey responses (14%), and campaign materials like advertisements (10%) were also common. Social media posts (10%), correspondence (usually e-mails in audit studies, 8%), and a residual category (17%) completed the categorization.

How Does Coding Take Place?

Reliability

Reliability describes whether an article performed any intercoder reliability calculations with 1 indicating that calculations were performed and 0 indicating that no calculations were mentioned in the article.[7]

[7] It is possible that some studies employ only one coder, though best practices suggest using two coders. If only one coder is used, I evaluate whether reliability is discussed, say against a benchmark dataset.

Reliability calculations were common in application articles (70%) and validity checks (55%).[8] These percentages are lower than in allied disciplines like communication studies where reliability calculations are almost universal (Lovejoy et al. 2016).

Most articles reported that their coding was highly reliable. However, there were exceptions including a correlation coefficient of 0.22 (AJPS.33), intercoder agreement of 70% (AJPS.18), and Krippendorff's alpha of 0.41 (JOP.14), among others. Some of these values fall below recommended levels for reliability (Krippendorff 2018, 356). Variation in intercoder reliability underscores the fact that human coding best practices require authors to provide additional information about coders and their coding procedures.

Qualifications

Qualifications takes a value of 1 if coders were described *at all* and 0 if they were referred to as "human coders" with no additional information provided. Some qualifications were described in 63% of application articles, 79% of training data articles, and 64% of validity check articles.

If *Qualifications* was 1, I categorized how the coders were described. Students (41.6%) included coders described as undergraduate or graduate students or research assistants. Crowd sourced workers commonly referred to individuals hired on Amazon Mechanical Turk, but also Crowd Flower and its successors (11.9%). In some cases, the author completed the coding (16.2%). Some coders were referred to as "experts" without additional details (2.2%). Finally, some coders were identified as qualified based on very short descriptions --- usually one or two words (3.8%). More than one coder type could be employed in each article, and 13.0% of articles did so.

[8] I exclude training data, as reliability checks are used differently in such data.

Coder qualifications may be inadequate even in cases where *Qualifications* is 1. For example, the short descriptions used included "native Vietnamese speakers" (APSR.13) and "two people familiar with Chinese politics" (APSR.48). While useful, there are tens of millions of native Vietnamese speakers, and it is unclear what "familiarity" with Chinese politics means. About half of the articles using crowd workers provided any description of how the crowd workers were selected.

Finally, the bulk of authors who identified their coders utilized student coders and identified them by status (undergraduate or graduate) or job (research assistant). On occasion, student coders were given a description including the location of the coders (e.g., Argentina, AJPS.18; Brazil, PRQ.25; three universities, AJPS.36) or specified qualifications (e.g., political science students, AJPS.21 or SSQ.3; French speaking, AJPS.47; Spanish speaking, SSQ.16; members of a specific course, PS.15). One article stated that, "intelligent students…interested in learning about research" were recruited as coders (AJPS.56).

Replicable Procedures

Procedures takes a value of 1 if the article contained at least <u>minimal</u> detail that would enable someone with reasonable knowledge about the topic to replicate the coding procedure and 0 otherwise. *Procedures* provides researchers with the benefit of the doubt --- anything resembling a description of the coding procedure is classified as 1.

A trained teacher with experience in coding tasks and I independently coded procedures for the APSR, AJPS, and JOP articles to determine if they contained a minimal level of detail. The teacher taught secondary school and is now a full-time freelance translator and specialist in data entry. I have worked with this collaborator on several coding projects during the past four

years, including several months of work designing and implementing coding procedures to code caste identities. Percentage agreement between coders was 0.93 and Krippendorff's alpha was 0.86.[9] SI.1 contains details on how coders were selected, coder training, and specific coding procedures. When there were discrepancies between coders, I included those cases as replicable.

Looking across all journals in the sample, 73% of validity check articles, 65% of application articles, and 65% of training dataset articles provided adequate procedures. A typical article with adequate procedures provided a lengthy description of how the coding procedure was implemented, often including part of the procedure in the main text and additional discussion in an appendix. Examples of articles with inadequate procedures include, "we had the slant of each article assessed" (APSR.17) and "In irregular cases, human coders assist in the creation of the hypothetical bill versions" (JOP.60). Neither of these articles enable someone seeking to understand or to replicate the coding procedure to successfully do so. Sometimes, the mechanics of the coding process were featured, while the content of the coding performed was less well described as is this description where coders were "trained and provided with a codebook…codebook is available upon request" (PRQ.6).

Characteristics of Application Articles

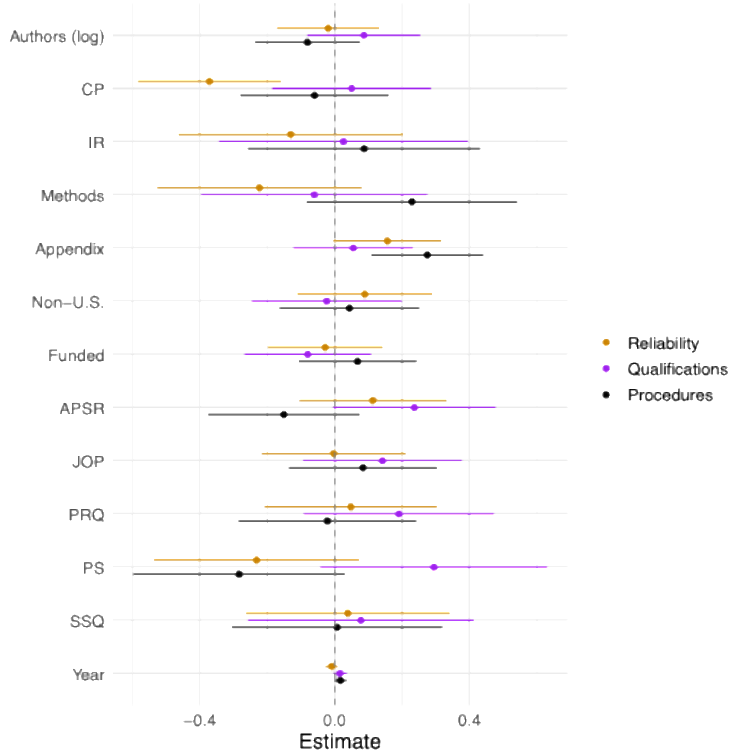
Application articles represent the most well-established use case for human coders. In application articles, human coders are primarily responsible for a part of original data collection or processing, and the resulting dataset is introduced in the article. 30% of application articles failed to provide reliability measures, 37% contained inadequate coder descriptions, and 41% lacked replicable coding procedures.

[9] Given the high level of percentage agreement, I coded the other articles.

I correlate whether application articles (*N*=150) provide reliability measures, coder qualifications, and coding procedures with descriptive characteristics of the articles including log number of authors, publication year, journal, funding, non-U.S. authors, subfield, and whether coding processes are described in an appendix.

The results shown in Figure 1 from linear models indicate few correlates to features in the coding process (see SI.2 for logistic regression models). Comparative politics articles were less likely to include reliability measures, while articles with an appendix were more likely to do so. Articles that were written in the APSR or PS compared to the AJPS were more likely to describe coder qualifications. Articles that include an appendix with more detail about the coding process and that are newer were more likely to have replicable procedures.

Figure 1: Predicting Presence of Reliability, Qualifications, and Procedures



Note: Point estimates from linear regression models with 95% confidence intervals. Reference levels are American politics and AJPS.

Beyond the Minimum

We might be interested in articles that go beyond meeting just one of the three criteria. Among application articles, 29% met all three criteria, 40% met two, 25% met one, and 6% met zero. Articles published more recently were more likely to meet more criteria. On average, application articles published between 2020 and 2024 met 2.12 standards compared to 1.70 standards for application articles published between 2010 and 2014 (*t*-value=2.66, p-value=0.01). Focusing on replicable procedures, I counted the number of words in descriptions of procedures. This is, at best, a crude measure of procedural detail as procedures often include tables and figures where words are more difficult to count. Still, application articles with replicable procedures spent 321 words on average describing them compared to 80 words for application articles without replicable procedures.

Recall that the definition of replicable procedures is generous --- any article with the potential for procedures to be replicated is counted as having replicable procedures. It is challenging to further differentiate between articles that meet that minimum standard and articles that substantially exceed it because there are no disciplinary standards on what constitutes replicable procedures. I subset to just application articles marked as having replicable procedures. Here, the application articles that met additional standards beyond having replicable procedures do not have statistically significantly longer procedures compared to the application articles that only met the replicable procedures standard (303 versus 433 words, *t*-value=0.58, p-value=0.57). While the length of coding procedures is important in determining whether they are replicable, length was not associated with compliance with other minimum standards.

So which articles go beyond the minimum? Among those with replicable procedures, 44 of 89 (49%) met all three standards. AJPS.51 is the application article meeting all three standards

with the shortest replicable procedures. These procedures state, “Responses to the open-ended FMCs were coded as correct or incorrect by two independent coders.” The article is about factual manipulation checks. Some manipulation check questions eschewed multiple choice options for an open text box. Human coders then matched the open-ended responses to the list of multiple-choice topics. A detailed 47-page appendix provides information on a variety of different uses of human coding and coding procedures across the several studies presented in the article. There is some inherent subjectivity in matching open-ended responses to a list of topics. Could the authors have provided a table listing common open-ended responses and their associated topic or, better yet, the complete correspondence listing each response and the categorized topic? Yes, but then again, the combination of this description and the replication files are likely enough to replicate the study and this coding procedure with good accuracy.

Discussion and Conclusion

The discipline lacks a consensus on how to discuss human coding. Without such a consensus, many researchers approach human coding with good intentions and describe what they feel is relevant. Readers can understand some coding processes as a result. However, standardization of the ways in which the human coding process is described can lead to a rush toward meeting only minimal requirements.

Researchers should include a good faith description of coding processes with an eye toward transparency and openness --- a conversation ongoing in other disciplines (Aguinis and Solarino 2019). Describing coders as such with no additional details and stating that coders coded a concept, again with no additional details, are not a good faith descriptions of coding processes, yet such approaches are common in political science.

This article reveals patterns about how human coding is discussed and how human coders are used. Toward the former, there are few reliable predictors of whether discussions about human coding will meet minimum standards. One predictor is the presence of an appendix describing the coding process. That having an appendix is correlated with increased discussion of reliability measures and replicable procedures suggests that articles using human coding may require more space to adequately discuss how the coding occurred. While the Internet has made it easier for journals to offer online-only appendices without increasing journal formatting costs, many journals are now offering short article formats with more restricted word counts. Should information about human coding be mostly or fully relegated to an appendix, must the contents of that appendix be clearly identified in the manuscript text, and what is the appropriate amount of information contained in the manuscript itself?

Identifying a coder as a "coder," "research assistant," or "research assistant with four years studying this topic" is a difference of up to seven words. That discussions of coder qualifications are more common in particular journals suggests that journals may have reputations or norms to encourage more or less description of these kinds of research design decisions.

Authors and journal editors can move the conversation on describing human coders forward by naming the lack of consensus on how to do so as a problem. Before journals make a decision about potential standards for manuscripts using human coders, the discipline should hold discussions on different ways to describe human coding and develop a variety of models for doing so. In this way, the process of describing human coding can follow the lengthy, but fruitful process of discussing standards for pre-analysis plans. Though still the subject of extensive discussion, the discipline has largely acknowledged that pre-analysis plans are appropriate in

many circumstances. Organizations have developed to engage a variety of stakeholders in the process of setting policies on the kinds of information required to produce such plans. This strategy can be replicated for standards discussing the use of human coders. By doing so, more voices and perspectives can be heard and disciplinary norms formed before any potential journal mandates follow. Recent work on human coding exemplars Edgell, Lachapelle, and Maerz (2025) may be a start to this process, and it should proceed with both a reality of the current state of human coding and aspirations for developing best practices.

As the conversation of describing the use of human coders progresses, it will inevitably prompt questions about how human coders are used. This article finds that human coders are used for a variety of coding tasks across subfields. Coders are typically undergraduate or graduate students. Thresholds for reliability are up to researcher interpretation. Each of these findings deserves additional exploration and understanding. Human coding is foundational to the production of political science data, and the systems, people, and practices we use to perform human coding tasks are worthy of additional attention.

This article reviews how human coding is used and described in several general interest journals in political science. For consistency, I selected journals based in the United States and sponsored by political science associations. Future work would do well to extend this work to other general interest journals headquartered by non-U.S. associations and to subfield journals. There is often much to learn from both of these groups about good research practice.

Since the discipline appears to lack consensus on how to describe the human coding process, I set what I regard as minimum standards: whether a coder is identified, if reliability calculations are mentioned, and if there is some amount of detail in the coding procedure. Once the discipline makes additional progress on establishing disciplinary norms and best practices

regarding the use and description of human coders, it will be worthwhile to revisit these and additional data to identify the proportion of articles meeting these new and likely more substantial standards.

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Supplemental Information: How Human Coding is Used and Described

SI.1: Variables and Procedures

Variables

- ID: Unique ID number assigned to each article.
- Journal: AJPS, APSR, JOP, PRQ, SSQ, PS, or Polity. As only two articles were published in Polity using human coders during this period, Polity was excluded from the analysis.
- Type: "Application" when an article conducted human coding to measure a quantity of interest. "Citation" when an article mentioned human coding, but did not use or conduct human coding. "Error" when the article did not mention human coding or mentioned the term "coder" in a context other than a human coder. "Existing Dataset" when the article used a previously created dataset that relied on human coding. "Alternative" when a non-human coding alternative was presented and discussed. "Training Data" when human coders were used to produce training data for a non-human model. "Validity Check" when human coders were used to check or validate results from a non-human model.
- Citation: Article citation.
- AuthorNum: Number of authors.
- Year: Publication year in print issue of the journal. First view articles are marked with publication year 2024.
- Title: Title of article.
- Task: Short description of the role of coders in the article.
- C_Description: Quotation from the article or appendix describing the identity of the coders.
    - C_Unstated: A coder described only as a "coder."
    - C_Student: A coder who is a university graduate or undergraduate student, including "research assistants."
    - C_CrowdSourced: Coders hired from a crowd sourcing platform like Amazon Mechanical Turk.
    - C_Author: A coder described as the author or "I."
    - C_Expert: A coder specifically described as an "expert."
    - C_QualifiedPerson: A coder not identified as an expert, but described with features that make them particularly qualified to complete the coding.
- DocumentsCoded: Description of the type of material being coded.
    - D_Survey: Documents coded come from survey responses, most frequently open ended survey questions.
    - D_News: Documents coded come from news sources including print, television, radio, and the Internet.

    - D_Government: Any form of government produced document.
    - D_Correspondence: Correspondence (usually e-mails).
    - D_Campaign: Any campaign materials.
    - D_SocialMedia: Social media posts.
    - D_Typology: If a document did not fall into the above categories, and the purpose of the coding was to produce a typology or to classify something.
    - D_Other: All remaining documents.
- C_Procedures: Quotation describing how the coding was conducted for at least one variable where human coding was used.
- C_ReplicableProcedures: "1" if the article contained enough information so that someone with reasonable knowledge about the topic of the article could replicate the coding procedure. The quantity to be coded was identified and the codes to be used were provided and described in at least minimal detail. "0" otherwise.
    - Examples of procedures lacking minimal detail (coded 0):
        - "Data on the methodology and coding can be found on XYZ website." The procedures should be described in the text.
        - "Coders selected the most positive ad." This does not describe what a positive or negative ad is, so the codes are not minimally described.
        - "Coders assigned a code — 1 through 5 — with 5 being positive and 1 being negative to a news article." This describes the quantity to be coded and the codes, but there is no rationale provided to coders and such rationale is not obvious.
    - Examples of procedures with minimal detail (coded 1):
        - "Candidate ballot characteristics were collected and coded by human coders." Ballot characteristics are set by the government and are standardized. The only task for the coder is copying down what has already been written.
        - "Coders selected the most positive ad, where a positive ad was defined as XYZ. Coders made a ranking of the 5 ads from most to least positive." Provides a definition on what a positive ad is.
        - "Coders assigned a code — 1 through 5 — with 5 being positive and 1 being negative to a news article based on their overall impression of the emotions conveyed by the article text." This provides some rationale and guidance for how coders should complete the coding.
- C_Reliability: Quotation describing reliability statistics or tests. Marked as "Nothing Stated" if no reliability measures were discussed in the text. Not applicable for training data, as variation among human coders in training data is used to feed the resulting statistical model.
- C_ReliabilityMeasures: "1" if any reliability measures were provided or discussed. "0" if not.
- A_HasCodingProcedures: "1" if the main text section discussing the coders references additional information available in an appendix or supplemental information. "0" if not.
- Location: Description of the countries where the study was carried out.
- Subfield: Classification of the study into subfield (Comparative, American, IR, Methods).
- NonUS: "1" if one or more authors listed a non-US institutional affiliation. "0" otherwise.

- Funding: “1” if funding was disclosed. “0” otherwise.

Article Identification

There are many ways to describe a human coder, including by listing specific tasks the coder completes (e.g., “annotator”) or by the type of person who completes the task (e.g., “crowd worker,” “research assistant,” “I”). As mentioned in the main text, I use the term “coder” because of its accepted meaning in the discipline and the expectation that someone referred to as a coder will utilize a systematic process to label data, thereby following best practices for human coding.

In Table SI.1.1, I describe the frequency of other terms associated with human coding across the six journals for the period from 2010-2024. Articles using the term “research assistant” do so for a variety of reasons, as research assistants do not only perform human coding tasks. Were I to also use this term, I would be required to make judgements about whether a task a research assistant performed qualifies as human coding using a definition of human coding that I construct. The other two terms (“annotator” and “crowd worker”) are rarely used.

I use the term “coder” because it characterizes a specific task that can be performed by various people. By relying on researchers to identify when they are using human coders, I remove subjective categorization tasks from the analysis. It would be an interesting future research project to survey researchers about how they choose to describe individuals involved in the human coding process and to compare those descriptions to a broader review of published work.

Table SI.1.1: Alternative Identifiers to “Coders”

	Annotator	Crowd Worker	Research Assistant
AJPS	1	1	10
APSR	4	2	23
JOP	0	0	98
PRQ	1	0	21
SSQ	0	0	15
Polity	0	0	4
PS	0	0	82

Note: Count of articles in various journals using alternative terms to “coder” from 2010-2024.

Coding Procedures

Data collection proceeded in two stages. First, I used Google Scholar to search for all articles in the AJPS, APSR, and JOP published since 2010 including the word “coder.” Different search engines produce different results based on the quality of optical character recognition. I used Google Scholar to provide a consistent search engine across the three journals. I chose 2010 as the starting point because this was the period around which providing replication data and supplemental information on coding procedures was widely accepted in the discipline. Data collection occurred on June 7, 2024. A second round of data collection containing articles from Polity, SSQ, PRQ, and PS from the period from 2010 to 2024 occurred on September 13, 2025.

After compiling a list of all journal articles with the word “coder,” I proceeded to download the articles from the journal publishers. The coding procedure went as follows. First, I developed the list of variables to code. I then opened the PDF of an article and searched for the word “coder.” If “coder” was mentioned more than once, I checked to determine whether it was

mentioned in the same context. If not, I coded any "application" first, then "training data" or "validity checks," then "existing data," and finally "citations" or "alternatives." I selected direct quotations as they pertained to describing the coders and the coding procedures. If an appendix or supplemental information file was mentioned *in the context of discussing the coding*, I reviewed it for potential additional information.

I then extracted the relevant text describing the coder, describing the coding procedures, and assessing the reliability of the results. The variable C_ReplicableProcedures requires some subjective judgement, so two coders independently performed the coding for the articles published in AJPS, APSR, and JOP. I have five years of experience designing and implementing human coding procedures. I teach undergraduate research methods and supervise undergraduate research projects in political science and sociology across all subfields each year. The second coder was a long-time collaborator. The collaborator is a former secondary school teacher who is now a full-time freelance translator and specialist in data entry. I have worked with this collaborator on several coding projects during the past four years, including several months of work designing and implementing coding procedures to code caste identities. She completed the coding for this variable and indicated her confidence in each coding as either high (90%+ confident), medium (75-90% confident), or low (less than 75% confident). She provided notes describing her rationale for medium and low confidence codings that I later reviewed.

The coding proceeded in two stages. First, working independently, we each coded the procedures based on the above definition. Percentage agreement was 0.90 and Krippendorff's alpha was 0.79. I then identified the sixteen cases out of the 155 that were being coded where there was disagreement. Each coder reviewed their codings for these cases with one coder changing five of their codes in response to this review. The final percentage agreement was 0.93 and Krippendorff's alpha was 0.86. In the eleven remaining cases, coders disagreed on the coding, meaning that there was some potential for the coding procedures to meet the minimum standards to be coded as "1." These cases were all coded as "1," which biases against finding substantive differences between procedures coded as "0" and procedures coded as "1."

SI.2: Models

Table 1: Linear Regression Models

	Dependent variable:		
	Reliability	Procedures	Qualifications
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Num. Author (log)	-0.020	-0.081	0.086
	(0.077)	(0.080)	(0.085)
Year	-0.009	0.017	0.015
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)
Comparative	-0.372	-0.060	0.050
	(0.109)	(0.112)	(0.120)
IR	-0.131	0.087	0.026
	(0.170)	(0.176)	(0.188)
Methods	-0.224	0.228	-0.061
	(0.155)	(0.160)	(0.171)
Appendix	0.156	0.274	0.054
	(0.082)	(0.085)	(0.091)
Non-US Author	0.089	0.043	-0.024
	(0.103)	(0.106)	(0.113)
Funding	-0.029	0.068	-0.080
	(0.087)	(0.089)	(0.096)
APSR	0.113	-0.152	0.236
	(0.111)	(0.115)	(0.123)
JOP	-0.003	0.083	0.141
	(0.109)	(0.112)	(0.120)
PRQ	0.047	-0.022	0.190
	(0.130)	(0.135)	(0.144)
PS	-0.232	-0.284	0.293
	(0.155)	(0.160)	(0.172)
SSQ	0.038	0.007	0.077
	(0.155)	(0.159)	(0.171)
Constant	19.761	-33.337	-30.489
	(18.314)	(18.896)	(20.241)
Observations	150	150	150

Table 2: Logistic Regression Models

	Dependent variable:		
	Reliability	Procedures	Qualifications

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Num. Author (log)	-0.060	-0.468	0.405
	(0.445)	(0.419)	(0.384)
Year	-0.055	0.092	0.072
	(0.051)	(0.048)	(0.045)
Comparative	-1.990	-0.341	0.187
	(0.612)	(0.583)	(0.557)
IR	-0.901	0.727	0.081
	(0.959)	(1.105)	(0.836)
Methods	-1.184	1.402	-0.289
	(0.764)	(0.938)	(0.761)
Appendix	0.929	1.330	0.255
	(0.465)	(0.418)	(0.406)
Non-US Author	0.572	0.242	-0.097
	(0.565)	(0.556)	(0.527)
Funding	-0.209	0.427	-0.361
	(0.493)	(0.463)	(0.424)
APSR	0.773	-0.780	1.076
	(0.641)	(0.572)	(0.555)
JOP	0.001	0.578	0.597
	(0.581)	(0.607)	(0.514)
PRQ	0.232	-0.072	0.822
	(0.720)	(0.661)	(0.632)
PS	-1.102	-1.424	1.319
	(0.783)	(0.883)	(0.784)
SSQ	0.211	0.138	0.318
	(0.868)	(0.789)	(0.739)
Constant	111.624	-185.257	-145.374
	(103.298)	(95.726)	(91.530)
Observations	150	150	150

SI.3: List of Articles

ID	Citation
AJPS.01	Quinn, Kevin M., Burt L. Monroe, Michael Colaresi, Michael H. Crespin, and Dragomir R. Radev. "How to analyze political attention with minimal assumptions and costs." American Journal of Political Science 54.1 (2010): 209-228.

AJPS.02 Sovey, Allison J., and Donald P. Green. "Instrumental variables estimation in political science: A readers' guide." American Journal of Political Science 55.1 (2011): 188-200.

AJPS.03 Hopkins, Daniel J., and Gary King. "A method of automated nonparametric content analysis for social science." American Journal of Political Science 54.1 (2010): 229-247.

AJPS.04 Peterson, Erik. "Paper cuts: How reporting resources affect political news coverage." American Journal of Political Science 65.2 (2021): 443-459.

AJPS.05 Kalla, Joshua L., and David E. Broockman. "Campaign contributions facilitate access to congressional officials: A randomized field experiment." American Journal of Political Science 60.3 (2016): 545-558.

AJPS.06 Lauderdale, Benjamin E., and Tom S. Clark. "Scaling politically meaningful dimensions using texts and votes." American Journal of Political Science 58.3 (2014): 754-771.

AJPS.07 Benoit, Kenneth, Kevin Munger, and Arthur Spirling. "Measuring and explaining political sophistication through textual complexity." American Journal of Political Science 63.2 (2019): 491-508.

AJPS.08 Lowande, Kenneth, Melinda Ritchie, and Erinn Lauterbach. "Descriptive and substantive representation in congress: Evidence from 80,000 congressional inquiries." American Journal of Political Science 63.3 (2019): 644-659.

AJPS.09 Kriner, Douglas, and Francis Shen. "Responding to war on Capitol Hill: Battlefield casualties, congressional response, and public support for the war in Iraq." American Journal of Political Science 58.1 (2014): 157-174.

AJPS.10 Roberts, Margaret E., Brandon M. Stewart, Dustin Tingley, Christopher Lucas, Jetson Leder-Luis, Shana Kushner Gadarian, Bethany Albertson, and David G. Rand. "Structural topic models for open-ended survey responses." American journal of political science 58.4 (2014): 1064-1082.

AJPS.11 Baum, Matthew A. "The Iraq coalition of the willing and (politically) able: Party systems, the press, and public influence on foreign policy." American Journal of Political Science 57.2 (2013): 442-458.

AJPS.12 Kalla, Joshua L., and David E. Broockman. "Congressional officials grant access to individuals because they have contributed to campaigns: A randomized field experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* (2014).

AJPS.13 Rossiter, Erin L. "Measuring agenda setting in interactive political communication." American Journal of Political Science 66.2 (2022): 337-351.

AJPS.14 Hager, Anselm, and Hanno Hilbig. "Does public opinion affect political speech?." American Journal of Political Science 64.4 (2020): 921-937.

AJPS.15 Cook, Scott J., and Nils B. Weidmann. "Lost in aggregation: Improving event analysis with report-level data." American Journal of Political Science 63.1 (2019): 250-264.

AJPS.16 Adams, James, Lawrence Ezrow, and Zeynep Somer-Topcu. "Do voters respond to party manifestos or to a wider information environment? An analysis of mass-elite linkages on European integration." American Journal of Political Science58.4 (2014): 967-978.

AJPS.17 Wratil, Christopher. "Territorial representation and the opinion–policy linkage: Evidence from the European Union." American Journal of Political Science 63.1 (2019): 197-211.

AJPS.18 Carnes, Nicholas, and Noam Lupu. "Rethinking the comparative perspective on class and representation: Evidence from Latin America." American Journal of Political Science 59.1 (2015): 1-18.

AJPS.19 Kaufman, Aaron R., Gary King, and Mayya Komisarchik. "How to measure legislative district compactness if you only know it when you see it." American Journal of Political Science 65.3 (2021): 533-550.

AJPS.20 Adams, James, Lawrence Ezrow, and Zeynep Somer-Topcu. "Is anybody listening? Evidence that voters do not respond to European parties' policy statements during elections." American Journal of Political Science 55.2 (2011): 370-382.

AJPS.21 Fridkin, Kim L., and Patrick Kenney. "Variability in citizens' reactions to different types of negative campaigns." American journal of political science 55.2 (2011): 307-325.

AJPS.22 Lowande, Kenneth, and Andrew Proctor. "Bureaucratic responsiveness to LGBT Americans." American Journal of Political Science 64.3 (2020): 664-681.

AJPS.23 Bisgaard, Martin. "How getting the facts right can fuel partisan-motivated reasoning." American Journal of Political Science 63.4 (2019): 824-839.

AJPS.24 Slothuus, Rune, and Martin Bisgaard. "How political parties shape public opinion in the real world." American Journal of Political Science 65.4 (2021): 896-911.

AJPS.25 Bonica, Adam. "Inferring roll-call scores from campaign contributions using supervised machine learning." American Journal of Political Science 62.4 (2018): 830-848.

AJPS.26 Lenz, Gabriel S., and Chappell Lawson. "Looking the part: Television leads less informed citizens to vote based on candidates' appearance." American Journal of Political Science 55.3 (2011): 574-589.

AJPS.27 Groenendyk, Eric, and Yanna Krupnikov. "What motivates reasoning? A theory of goal-dependent political evaluation." American Journal of Political Science 65.1 (2021): 180-196.

AJPS.28 Hetherington, Marc J., and Jason A. Husser. "How trust matters: The changing political relevance of political trust." American Journal of Political Science 56.2 (2012): 312-325.

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