

GovLis Guidelines for the coding of actor statements reported in newspapers

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For the set of selected policy issues, each article pertaining to each issue is to be content-coded with respect to reported statements and actions by actors that address the policy in question. The unit of analysis is a statement or action related to the public policy item (Page, Shapiro and Dempsey 1987) rather than an article. The coding is based on the following procedures and rules:

1. Determine whether the article relates to the policy issue in question. If it is loosely related to the policy issue, it shall be included and scanned for relevant statements. Please write in the text when an article is not relevant.
2. Identify the statements in the article and assign a statement id to each statement. A statement is defined as the supply of information or the presentation of the opinion of an actor. It includes direct and indirect quotes as well as more general information about statements made by actors (e.g. if the article states that an actor has "said" or "holds a view" on something, it is to be considered a statement). Reports about results from polls are not to be counted as public statements.

Variable to be coded: `statementid`

3. Determine whether the statement relates to the policy issue. Statements that are relevant to the wider topic but not to the specific policy issue, or to a related but distinct policy issue, are to be excluded. Statements broadly referring to types of policies that include the specific policy are to be included (examples are listed in Appendix C). However, statements and actions by political parties, party officials, and the government (actors with public office) are to be excluded.
4. Determine whether the statement or action emanates from an actor who has not yet been coded as the source of a statement or action in the article. If an article includes several statements or actions by the same actor, it is to be coded as only one statement or action, respectively.

If the same actor makes several statements with different content (e.g. a neutral statement and one in favour), the statement that takes a position is to be coded. If there are statements in favour and against the policy by the same actor, a statement with the view that represents the majority of displayed views is to be coded. If there are equal numbers of positive and negative statements, they are to be coded as neutral.

If a statement is made by several actors jointly, the variables pertaining to the source outlined below (source type, type of interest group, and information about source) are to be recorded for each actor separately. In other words, if several actors are mentioned in relation to one statement or action, then the statement or action appears as many times in the data as there are actors associated with it. All the statements will have the same IDs, but the actorIDs will be different.

5. Assign an actor id to a source

If an actor states another actor's opinion, the former is to be counted as the source (e.g. a company referring to public opinion) – unless the source is a media outlet that simply cites the statement of an actor, in which case this actor is the source.

If the article is written by someone other than a journalist or political actor, e.g. an expert or representative of an interest group, then opinions (for or against) given by the author are to be counted as statements.

Assign an actorid to each coded source. Actorid's are continuous across articles and issues, i.e. a given actor has the same id every time it appears on all our issues.

If a given source has two affiliations (e.g. because he represents both an interest group and a firm), the coder selects on behalf of which source he primarily speaks, but makes a note on this. In a scenario where one of the two affiliations is not a source coded here (e.g. an actor that represents both a governmental actor and an affiliation of governmental interest groups), we register the actor under the source coded here (e.g. the interest group category)

Variable to be coded: actorid

6. Identify the source (i.e. the actor) of the statement.

- 1 – Interest association (this requires that a specific interest group is mentioned rather than a reference to collections of actors such as "employers" or "workers")
- 2 – Expert*
- 3 – Private company – management
- 4 – Private company - employees
- 5 – Individuals who are not representing any of the other "collective actors" mentioned
- 6 – International organisations/agencies
- 7 – Other actors / not specified

If several sources are linked to a statement, each is to be recorded, including the source-related variables listed below (type of interest group and information).

* We apply a broad definition to experts and define an expert as someone who has working experience in the field and as such knows the rules and procedures (Farrington-Darby & Wilson, 2006, 18), as someone who is moreover able to define problems and create solutions (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2005, 787) or as someone who is in the possession of specialized knowledge (Schudson, 2006, 499).

We then subdivide the category of experts into individual experts and organized experts. These are coded with a '2' and a '1' respectively in the variable expert.

Individual expert – coded as 2

This signifies an individual expert speaking on his own behalf, rather than on behalf of an organisation. If they have an organisational affiliation, these are organisations that are not unitary (political) actors, so not organised for the purpose of giving specific institutional advice on issues.

Organised expert – coded as 1

These are actors speaking on behalf of a (perceived) unitary actor, organised for the purpose of specific institutional advice on issues.

Variable to be coded: source, expert

7. Identify whether the statement expressing the position of an actor/group of actors on a given issue can be linked to some sort of activity, e.g. a demonstration, participation in a hearing or a letter sent.

0 – statement only

1 – action

Variable to be coded: action

8. If the statement can be linked to an activity, select the kind of action based on the list below (Appendix A).

Variable to be coded: action_type

9. In case the source is an interest group, identify what kind of interest group(s) (see separate, detailed coding scheme in Appendix B). The interestgroup types are defined using a modified version of the interest group classification as it was made in the INTERARENA project (Baroni et al. 2014; Binderkrantz, Christiansen and Pedersen 2015).

Variable to be coded: interestgrouptype

10. Note down the following information about the source (if they are available): organization name, webpage of the organization, Email address of the organization, possibly the individual name of the actor representing the organization, the webpage of this individual and his/her Email address. If the actor is included in the list of previously coded actors, this does not have to be done.

Variable to be coded (for specified sources that are not individuals only!):

Org_name, Org_webpage, Org_email, Ind_name, Ind_position, Ind_webpage, Ind_email

11. If the article does not provide the name of the actor please indicate that the respective actor is an unspecified source. For instance, an article may cite an unknown expert about a particular policy reform.

Variable to be coded: Unspecified source

Unknown sources can be of different types, e.g. experts and individuals.

12. Identify the position conveyed in the statement by the source (note that the position conveyed in a statement may be different from the known position of the source, e.g. it might be neutral information even though the source is known to have a certain opinion). If it is only known that an actor made a statement, but unclear whether the statement was pro, against or neutral (i.e. the content is unknown), the position should be coded as missing.

0 – in favour of the policy action in question

1 – uncertain or neutral

2 – against the policy action in question

99 - missing

Variable to be coded: position

13. Reports about results from polls are not to be counted as public statements. However, we are still interested in whether reports about results of polls appear in the articles. Thus, please code the variable “ref_po” with a “1” if the article refers to a poll but only if the poll is related to the policy issue under consideration. In addition please use the variable “ref_po_name” to list the name of the poll(s) and/or polling company/companies if it is mentioned in the article (e.g. Gallup).

Please note that given that the “ref_po” and “ref_po_name” variables are at the article level, all statements from a given article will have the same values in these two variables.

Moreover, if a particular actor statement to an article refers to a poll please code the actor specific variable “ref_po_actor” with a 1 and provide the name of the respective polling company in the actor specific variable “ref_po_actor_name” (if it is mentioned).

Variables to be coded: ref_po, ref_po_name, ref_po_actor, ref_po_actor_name

Please note that we also code information about references to opinion polls for articles that do not contain any actor statements. In such a case fill in actor name as PO and use actorid 99 plus leave all other variables empty.

Please note that the recording of references to public opinion polls was only implemented in a later stage of the media coding and that before one uses this, the original articles should be revisited.

The resulting variables to be recorded in the dataset are:

1. Country (country)
2. Coder ID (coderid)
3. Policy issue ID (policyid)
4. Article ID (articleid)
5. Date of the article (date)
6. Statement ID (within issues, continuous across articles) (statementid)
7. Actor ID (actorid)
8. Source type, indicates the actor type (source)
9. Action (yes or no) (action)
10. Type of action (action_type)
11. Type of interest group (interestgrouptype)
12. Name of the organisation (Org_name)
13. Webpage of the organisation (Org_website)
14. Email address of the organisation (Org_email)
15. Name of the individual actor (Ind_name)
16. Position of the individual actor (Ind_position)
17. Webpage of the individual actor (Ind_website)
18. Email address of the individual actor (Ind_email)
19. Unspecified source, i.e. a dummy if source (actor) is not specified (Unspecified source)
20. Position (position)
21. Reference to a poll in the article (ref_po)
22. Name of the polling company mentioned in the article (ref_po_name)
23. Actor specific reference to a poll (ref_po_actor)
24. Name of the polling company mentioned by an actor (ref_po_actor_name)

Appendix A: List of actions

- 1 – Civil disobedience and illegal activities
- 2 – Demonstrations (lawful and illegal)
- 3 – Petitions
- 4 – Debate meetings and conferences
- 5 – Press release or press conference
- 6 – Publication of analyses and studies
- 7 – Participation in hearings
- 8 – Participation in public boards, councils, and committees
- 9 – Judicial action (e.g. file a law suit)
- 10 – Letter to politician
- 11 – Article or comment in newspaper
- 12 - Other events/not specified

Appendix B: List of group types¹

1 Labour groups

- 11 Blue-collar union
- 12 White-collar union
- 13 Other labour groups (i.e. think tanks related to unions)
- 14 Employee representative committee

2 Business groups

- 21 Peak-level business group
- 22 Sector-wide business group
- 23 Breed associations
- 24 Technical Associations
- 25 Other business group

3 Institutional Associations

- 31 Associations of local authorities
- 32 Associations of other public institutions
- 33 Associations of managers of public institutions
- 34 Other Institutional associations

Occupational associations

- 41 Doctors' associations
- 42 Other medical professions
- 43 Teachers' associations
- 44 Other occupational associations

Identity Groups

- 51 Patients
- 52 Elderly
- 53 Students
- 54 Friendship groups (i.e. non-specific groups related to a country)
- 55 Racial or ethnic
- 56 Other – undefined - identity group
- 57 Women
- 58 Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transsexual

Hobby/Leisure groups

- 61 Sport
- 62 Other hobby/leisure

Religious groups

- 71 Associated with the protestant church

¹ In the case of labour groups, business groups, and institutional associations, the subgroup does not need to be specified – they are only listed here to facilitate the classification of interest associations.

- 73 Other religious group
- 74 Roman/Catholic groups

Public interest groups

- 81 Environment and animal welfare
- 82 Humanitarian – international
- 83 Humanitarian – national
- 84 Consumer Group
- 85 Other – undefined – public interest
- 86 Government reform
- 87 Civil liberties
- 88 Citizen Empowerment

- 90 Think Tanks

- 99 Missing / uncodeable

Appendix C: Examples

Policy item: “Food manufacturers should be made to reduce the fat/salt content in their products by government regulation.”

Article 1: Burnham calls for legal limits on salt, sugar and fat in food

Food firms should face legal limits on how much fat, salt and sugar they can put in their products to save the NHS money and help tackle illness, Labour's health spokesman has proposed. [...]

Burnham said: "Voluntary efforts [by producers to reformulate] have not worked and it's time for a different approach. There are some products on the market that are so full of salt, sugar or fat they are unacceptable. The amount of sugar in many cereals is shocking."

He said he was worried that large amounts of sugar and fat, in foods such as bread and breakfast cereals, were fuelling the UK's rising obesity levels. **Research in February by the consumer group Which? found that the breakfast cereal Kellogg's Frosties was made up of 37% sugar, while Waitrose's Honey Nut Corn Flakes were 33.6% sugar, and Special K, marketed by Kellogg's as a healthy choice, had a 17% sugar content.** "If you have maximum amounts and reduce the sugar or salt in the formulated product then people can choose if they want to sprinkle some on top - they are conscious of what they are doing - whereas if it's in the formulated product it's much harder to control," said Burnham. [...]

The statement marked in yellow refers to sugar content and is therefore to be excluded. If it referred to salt or fat content, it would need to be included.

Article 2: Comment: The corporate grip on public life is a threat to democracy: The revelation that health policy has been handed to the private sector exposes a crony capitalism that has to be overturned

The onward march of corporate power is a long established fact of British life. We've become familiar with the relentless privatisation of public assets and services, the creeping colonisation of Whitehall, and the revolving doors that see politicians, lobbyists, executives and civil servants swap places and exchange contracts with bewildering speed.

But the Guardian's revelation that fast food and drinks companies such as McDonald's, PepsiCo, Unilever and Diageo have now been asked by ministers to draw up public health policy shows the corporate takeover of politics has reached a new level. This isn't an issue of government consulting business. We're talking about the same vested interests that have fuelled the obesity and alcohol abuse crises as good as dictating terms at the heart of government.

Naturally their first demand is that there will be no *regulation* to tackle those crises: no tax or price control to reduce consumption, or even traffic-light labelling of high sugar or *fat content*.

The statement marked in yellow is to be included since it pertains to types of policies that include the policy in question – even though the general topic of the article is a different one. Note that the statement is made by four companies, all of which need to be included as sources.

- Baroni, Laura, Brendan J. Carroll, Adam William Chalmers, Luz Maria Munoz Marquez, and Anne Rasmussen. 2014. "Defining and classifying interest groups." *Interest Groups and Advocacy* 3 (2):141-159.
- Binderkrantz, Anne Skorkjær, Peter Munk Christiansen, and Helene Helboe Pedersen. 2015. "Interest Group Access to the Bureaucracy, Parliament, and the Media." *Governance* 28 (1):95-112.
- Page, Benjamin I., Robert Y. Shapiro, and Glenn R. Dempsey. 1987. "What Moves Public Opinion?" *American Political Science Review* 81 (1):23-44.