

Thanking the World: Human Annotated Dataset of Support and Sentiments in Dissertation Acknowledgments

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Why Do Dissertation Acknowledgments Matter?

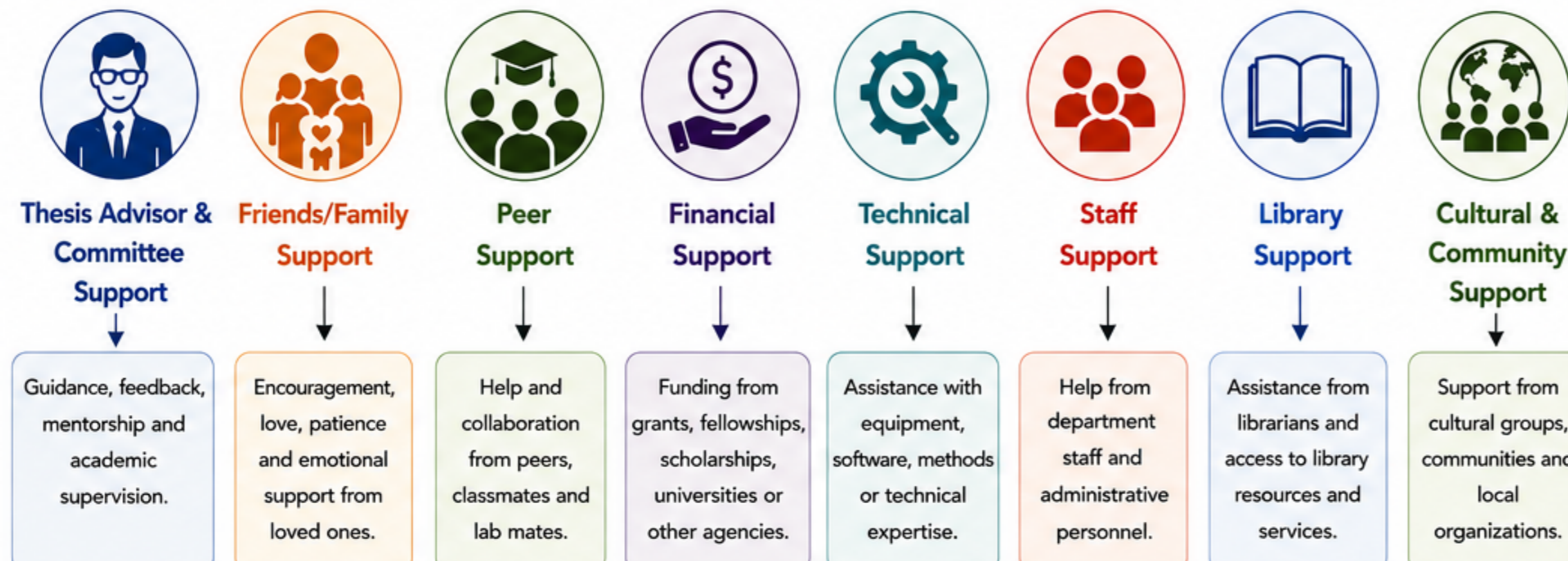
Acknowledgments are a window into the people, resources, and emotions that make scholarship possible.

FROM WORDS TO HIDDEN SUPPORT

AckSent reveals the diverse kinds of support behind every dissertation.

AN EXAMPLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT

“ I thank my **advisor** for his guidance, my **lab mates** for all the discussions, my **wife** for her endless love and patience, the **NSF** for funding this research, and the **staff** of the **Mechanical Engineering Department** for their support. ”



AckSent includes 17 detailed support tags. (See codebook for full taxonomy.)

AckSent Dataset

61,538

Hand-coded acknowledgment sentences. A 10% representative sample.

1875 to 2023

Comprehensive historical span extracted from the IDEALS Graduate Dissertations repository (UIUC).

12

Dedicated human coders organized into 6 specialized groups.

23 Total Custom Tags

17 Support Tags

Captures the dynamics of social and institutional support received during degree programs.

4 Sentiment Tags

Captures indicators of emotional well-being and context.

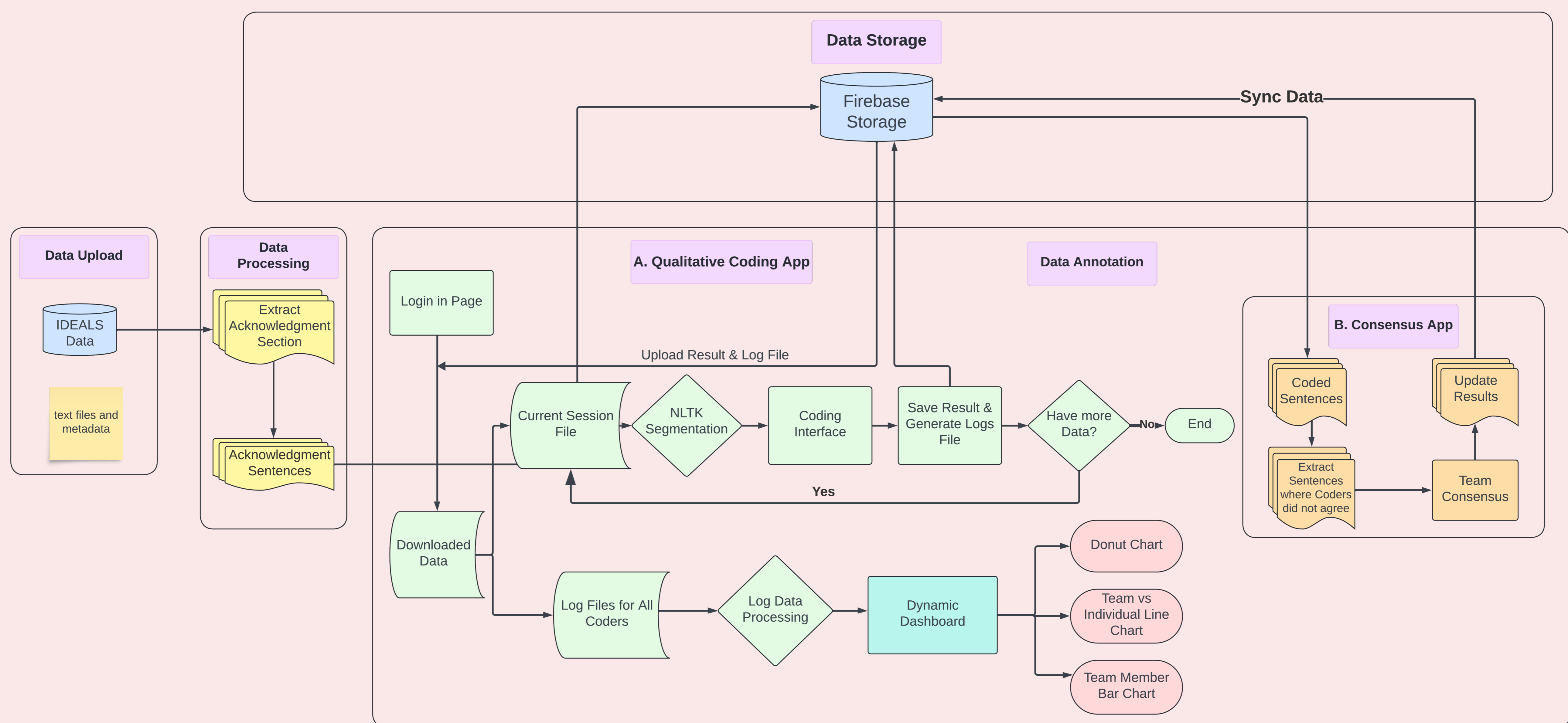
2 Non-Support Tags

Filters out administrative or non-relevant acknowledgment data.

Behind every dissertation is a community. Acknowledgments help us see them, study them, and give them the recognition they deserve.

Workflow of Data Annotation Process

Qualitative Coding Interface | Consensus Interface | Progress Analytics Interface



Ongoing and Future Work

Now: AckSent Foundation

Using the hand-coded golden dataset as foundational ML training data.

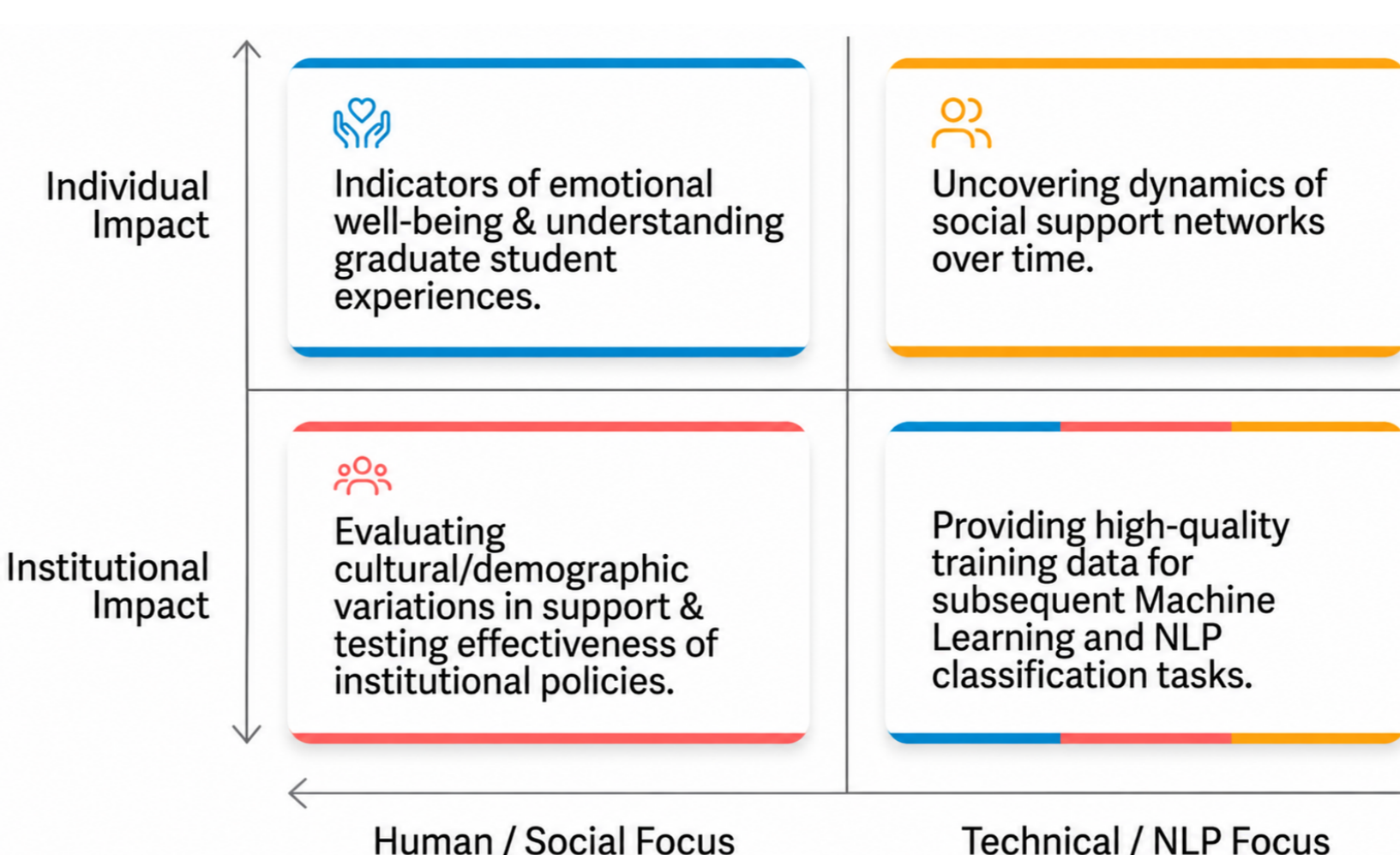
Next: Massive Scaling

Deploying models to label millions of acknowledgments across PDDT, HathiTrust, ShAREOK, and University of Hawaii at Manoa.

OpenCoder

A web-based, open-access, AI-assisted tool bringing precision sentence-level qualitative coding to all researchers.

AckSent in Action



Exploring Linguistic Discourse and Potential Biases

- Investigate adjectives used when acknowledging female vs. male supervisors
- Analyze whether certain adjectives exhibit gender-associated patterns
- Examine potential biases in expressions of gratitude

Tracking Language Evolution Over Time

- Study the evolution of language in acknowledgment sections over the years
- Analyze shifts in expressions of gratitude and recognition
- Uncover linguistic trends and changes in academic writing

Correlation with Academic Achievements

- Investigate the connection between acknowledgment section vocabulary and academic success
- Measure factors like academic placement and citation recognition
- Identify specific vocabularies linked to subsequent achievements

Discerning Variations Across Disciplines and Languages

- Explore variations in acknowledgment sections across diverse academic fields
- Analyze differences in language use in acknowledgment sections in various languages