Preregistered Design Features:
Topic Coding

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1 Introduction

This document preregisters a protocol for identifying message topics. It was uploaded to the AEA registration page before the topic coding exercise had begun.

2 Protocol

Topic coding takes place in three stages. The first stage involves an exploratory search for topics by research assistants. The second phase involves coding messages based on these topics. The third stage is designed to identify messages that may have been missed using phrases common to the message topics. A coordinator who is familiar with the project will oversee the topic coding exercise. Instructions (which will be given to research assistants) are provided in italics.

Stage 1. Exploratory topic identification. *In the first stage of this exercise, read through the following list of messages, and jot down topics, phrases, or themes that you observe across messages on a piece of paper. After you complete this task, you will be introduced to a partner who has done the same exercise, and you will compare your lists to see which themes you both identified. Include example messages that you think are representative of each topic. Reach out to the research coordinator if you have any questions.*

After completing this stage, the research assistants will be told to identify around 10 themes that are the most common. Later, they will then be given a spreadsheet that contains a list of the most common themes, and will code each message based on these themes.

Stage 2. Topic coding. *In the second stage of this exercise, you will each read through the entire list of messages. Classify which topics are present for each message. If you identify a topic in a given message, enter "1" in the respective topic column. As you complete this task, please keep track of words or phrases that are common to specific topics. This task must be completed individually, without any interaction with the other research assistant. Reach*

out to the research coordinator if you have any questions.

Resolving disagreements. If the two research assistants disagree about whether a message belongs to a particular topic, a third research assistant will provide an additional rating for that message, and the classification will be based on the third research assistant's classification.

Stage 3. Common phrases. The final stage of the task is designed to catch messages that include phrases common to a particular topic that research assistants may have missed. One research assistant will search through the entire list of messages for those that (*a*) have a phrase that is commonly associated with a topic, but (*b*) are not flagged as belonging to that topic. The second research assistant will review these messages to ensure that they do in fact belong to the topic.