

Coding the Law

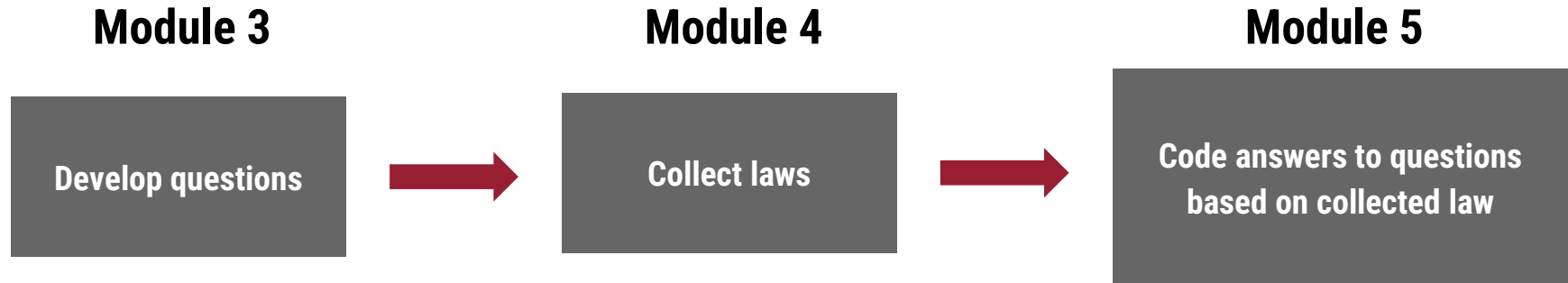
Learning objectives

- Define “coding the law”
- Understand the difference between coding for legal assessments (cross-sectional) and coding for policy surveillance (longitudinal)
- Introduce steps used to perform quality control on coding



Define “coding the law”

- “Coding the law” consists of using the legal text collected to answer the questions developed
- The goal of coding is to **read**, **observe**, and **record** the law, rather than read and interpret the law





Coding for legal assessments vs. coding for policy surveillance

Coding for legal assessments

- Code the law once for each jurisdiction, capturing a snapshot of the law at one point in time

Coding for policy surveillance

- Multiple versions of the law are coded for each jurisdiction, representing different points in time
- Researchers code a new record of the law for each amendment made to the law
- Longitudinal coding shows the law's evolution over time

QUESTION

What behaviors are restricted while driving?

- A. Handheld electronic messaging
- B. Handheld calling
- C. Hands-free electronic messaging
- D. Hands-free calling



LEGAL TEXT

Alaska Stat. § 28.35.161 Use of electronic devices while driving; unlawful installation of television, monitor, or similar device

(a) **A person commits the crime of driving while texting**, while communicating on a computer, or while a screen device is operating **if the person is driving a motor vehicle, and**
(2) **the person is reading or typing a text message** or other nonvoice message or communication **on a cellular telephone**, personal data assistant, computer, or any other similar means capable of providing a visual display that is in view of the driver in a normal driving position while the vehicle is in motion and while the person is driving



RESPONSE

A. Handheld electronic messaging

Coding for policy surveillance

Iteration 1:

December 1, 2001 - October 27, 2013

NY VEH & TRAF § 1225-c Use of
mobile telephones

[...]

4. A violation of subdivision two of
this section shall be a traffic infraction
and shall be punishable by a fine of
not more than one hundred dollars.



Q: What is the maximum penalty for a
violation?



A: One hundred dollars

Iteration 2:

October 28, 2013 – January 1, 2016

NY VEH & TRAF § 1225-c Use of
mobile telephones

[...]

4. A violation of subdivision two of
this section shall be a traffic infraction
and shall be punishable by a fine of not
less than fifty dollars nor more than
one hundred fifty dollars upon
conviction of a first violation



Q: What is the maximum penalty for a
violation?



A: One hundred fifty dollars

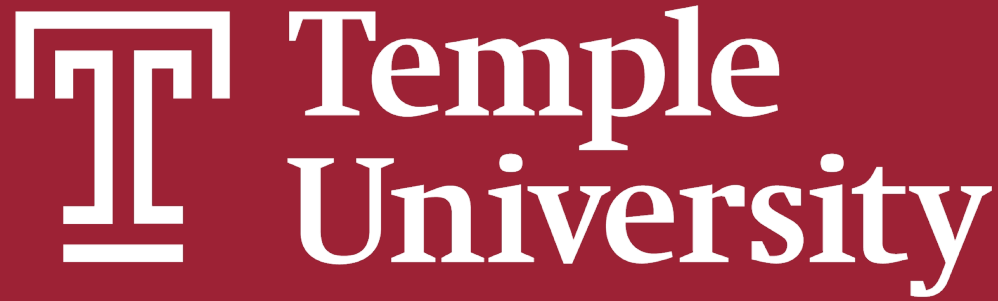


Quality control and coding

- Quality control occurs throughout the entire coding process
 - Original coding is checked daily by the supervisor
 - Redundant coding is assigned and reviewed by the supervisor throughout the life of the project
- Redundant coding consists of two researchers independently coding identical records as assigned by the supervisor
 - The supervisor compares and reviews these records to determine on what responses the researchers diverged
- Naïve coding consists of a naïve coder coding a sample of records for that project
 - The supervisor compares and reviews these records to determine on what responses the researchers diverged

Summary

- “Coding the law” consists of using the legal text you have collected to answer the questions you have developed
 - For legal assessments, researchers code the law once for each jurisdiction
 - For policy surveillance projects, multiple versions of the law are coded for each jurisdiction, representing different points in time
 - The goal of coding is to **read**, **observe**, and **record** the law, rather than reading and interpreting the law. Policy surveillance captures what the law states
- Quality control is applied to coding by a supervisor assigning and reviewing original coding, redundant coding and naïve coding



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