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EDITORIAL

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The Backstory of "An Adversarial Dance"

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Introduction

In their editorial titled "A Practical Guide for Successful Revisions and Engagements with Reviewers," Pang and Thatcher (2023) [1] provide guidelines for successfully steering a manuscript through the process of revision toward publication. To complement the excellent insights and practical tips offered by Pang and Thatcher, *JAIS* will publish a series of backstory editorials written by different *JAIS* author teams in which the author team describes the backstory behind their paper published in *JAIS*, explaining the revision trajectory their paper took and detailing the challenges they faced as well as the lessons they learned. This editorial is the first such backstory.

In this editorial, we hope to offer a behind-the-curtain view of our recent *JAIS* publication, *An adversarial dance: Toward an understanding of insiders' responses to organizational information security measures*.[2] The journey to this publication took over 10 years, from one author's early days as a doctoral student, through his successful dissertation defense, to two conference presentations and one journal rejection, and finally culminating with one minor and three major revisions of the manuscript at the publishing journal. Every research project experiences *challenges* that require the authors to make key *choices*. Those choices produce *outcomes* (some positive, others negative), which ultimately provide important *lessons learned* for improving our craft and better understanding the research and publishing process. We try to walk the reader through a series of challenges we faced in our research process, each of which set off a chain of events leading to important lessons learned. Table 1 summarizes the challenges and the learned lessons. Hopefully, our brief commentary will help inform and encourage others along their research paths.

Challenge 1: Finding a Dissertation or Research Topic

Our paper began as a dissertation by Puzant Balozian, who was a PhD student at Baylor University from 2011 until his graduation in 2016. When Puzant originally asked Dorothy to be his supervisor sometime in 2014, she was worried that she didn't have the expertise necessary to help him—Puzant was passionate about researching security from his first year in the program whereas Dorothy had never studied anything security related in her, at that point, 20 years in academia. *Thus, the first challenge emerged, finding a dissertation or research topic.*

[1] Pang, M., & Thatcher, J. (2023). A practical guide for successful revisions and engagements with reviewers, *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, *24*(2), 317-327.

[2] Balozian, P., Burns, A. J., & Leidner, D. E. (2023). An adversarial dance: Toward an understanding of insiders' responses to organizational information security measures, *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, *24*(1), 161-221.

Table 1. Summary of Challenges and Lessons Learned

• **Challenge 1:** Finding a dissertation or research topic • **Lesson learned:** A topic of passion and interest, though risky, can result in high-quality research even if it is outside the advisor's typical research area
• **Challenge 2:** Transforming a dissertation into conference publications • **Lesson learned:** The degrees of freedom for publication are significantly smaller than those for a dissertation, and researchers must find a way to calibrate their writing for the target outlet for the work to reach a broader audience
• **Challenge 3:** Crafting a journal submission • **Lesson Learned:** Splitting up a larger work into separate conference presentations and then recombining them for a journal submission is a legitimate strategy for getting meaningful feedback without sacrificing the novelty of the combined work.
• **Challenge 4:** Responding to a rejection with an invitation to resubmit • **Lesson learned:** Researchers should communicate with their SE before deciding not to resubmit a paper at a high-quality outlet.
• **Challenge 5:** Improving the manuscript for a new journal submission • **Lesson learned:** Researchers often have just as much work to do, whether they choose to resubmit a manuscript or search for a new outlet.
• **Challenge 6:** Revitalizing our effort on the manuscript • **Lesson Learned:** Researchers may need to consider expanding an author team in order to revitalize the effort on a stalling manuscript.
• **Challenge 7:** Responding to a request for more data • **Lesson learned:** Some requests are considered non-negotiable by a review team and appeals to precedent are insufficient.
• **Challenge 8:** Repositioning the methodology • **Lesson learned:** Researchers can successfully reframe their methodology if they reach an impasse over details they cannot change ex post (i.e., order of data collection and analysis).

Dorothy encouraged him to consider alternatives but eventually was persuaded by his vision, work ethic, and optimism. Puzant had excelled in two of her courses—a literature review class and a qualitative methods class. In fact, Dorothy and Puzant extended, polished, and eventually published a review of IS security in *The Data Base for Advances in Information Systems* (Balozian & Leidner, 2017)[3] based on his coursework, and it won the journal's best paper award of that year. His dissertation eventually won a "best dissertation award" for dissertations defended in 2016.

> ***Summary of Challenge 1:*** *The* ***challenge*** *of finding a dissertation topic led to a key* ***choice:*** *Should Puzant pursue a topic of passion and interest or play it safe and pick a topic more closely aligned with his advisor's past research? Based on Puzant's hard work, Dorothy became convinced that security was a suitable topic. This decision led to the* ***outcome*** *of a stream of high-quality research papers published in peer-reviewed conferences and journals. Thus, the* ***lesson learned*** *is that a topic of passion and interest, though risky, can result in high-quality research even if it is outside the advisor's typical research area.*

Challenge 2: Transforming a Dissertation into Conference Publications

For his dissertation, Puzant opted for a grounded theory approach and authored his dissertation in the traditional style—as a single comprehensive manuscript, rather than three (or more) individual essays on a topic. *This created the second challenge: to transform the successful dissertation into a journal publication.* This challenge is a lingering one for all qualitative, interpretive, or grounded theory research. While the dissertation was outstanding and very deserving of the award it had received from Baylor, it was also very broad with enormous numbers of quotes and 254 total references. The majority of conference and journal submissions have very strict length constraints. Thus, the challenge of transforming the dissertation into a publication led to key choices about what to report (quality) and how to communicate more with fewer words (quantity). The outcome of these choices was a pair of conference papers that allowed the authors to attain important feedback from experts within the larger information security discipline. This was important, because, as we noted, the dissertation committee, capable as it was, did not include such security experts.

[3] Balozian, P., & Leidner, D. (2017). Review of IS security policy compliance: Toward the building blocks of an IS security theory. *The Data Base for Advances in Information Systems*, *48*(3), 11-43.

In his first year as an assistant professor at Lebanon American University (LAU), in Beirut, Lebanon, Puzant prepared a draft for ICIS based on the dissertation. Dorothy worked to polish the paper, cutting material, moving material, and reframing material. In the process, she had an idea for another paper that would require some additional analysis that was part of neither the dissertation itself nor the ICIS paper. Puzant conducted the additional analysis and we then prepared a HICSS submission based on that analysis. Although the conference papers did not count toward his portfolio of publications at LAU (institutions vary on this), Puzant did not regret submitting the papers to these conferences because of the research and social benefits that come only through such academic gatherings. From Dorothy's perspective, the conferences provided a nice incentive to begin the process of content reduction and focus. Given that the dissertation contained a 16,300-word analysis section, and conference papers in full are typically well under 15,000 words, rendering the dissertation into the form of conference papers forced us to retain only the most interesting content and most convincing evidence from the dissertation analysis. Both papers were accepted; Puzant presented the ICIS paper and Dorothy the HICSS paper. Following the conferences, Dorothy and Puzant exchanged what they learned from the presentations, primarily by summarizing any interesting questions/comments raised during the respective sessions, and brainstormed how to use the conference presentations to move toward a journal publication. This involved the decision of whether to take one of the two papers and strengthen it for a journal submission, strengthen both papers independently and make two journal submissions, or combine the two papers into a single journal submission. We choose the latter option, namely because the papers shared the same literature base and general objective. Where they differed was largely in the analysis and findings

> ***Summary of Challenge 2:*** *The* ***challenge*** *of transforming a lengthy dissertation into articles suitable for publishing led to a key* ***choice****: How do we condense, calibrate, and focus the general contribution made by a dissertation to the specialty, or even sub-sub-specialty, of the subject matter experts who will be critiquing it for publication? The* ***outcome*** *of these choices led to two conference papers and valuable reviewer feedback. Thus, another* ***lesson learned*** *is that the degrees of freedom for publication are significantly smaller than those for a dissertation, and researchers must find a way to calibrate their writing for the target outlet for the work to reach a broader audience.*

Challenge 3: Crafting a Journal Submission

Even though, technically, one can submit a conference paper as is to a journal, according to AIS policy, we (Puzant and Dorothy) did not feel this was in our best interest for several reasons. *Thus, our next challenge became combining the two conference papers in such a way as to make a new contribution worthy of a journal submission.* Our reasoning for this was threefold. First, in any subspeciality, there is a limited pool of reviewers. The chance that one will get the same reviewer at a journal that one had at a conference is not insignificant. Many comments one receives in a conference review are suggestions for a future version of a paper rather than requirements for the conference publication. One should best attend to these issues before submitting to a journal, not only because the comments might be quite good but also because one might get that same reviewer for the journal version. Second, reviewers at top journals will expect something beyond what was written in a conference publication—many will have the subconscious or perhaps very conscious attitude that if the material had already been worthy of a journal, the authors would not have first submitted it to a conference. In fact, this perspective is not without merit. Third, if the idea of submitting to a conference is to receive helpful feedback prior to submitting to a journal, then again one should incorporate said feedback. Much of the feedback we received concerned the clarity and preciseness of the constructs that emerged in our analysis. The grounded theory stemming from the dissertation was fully described in the ICIS paper. The HICSS paper introduced a contingency explanation for the behaviors described in the ICIS theory. Combining the papers meant weaving the two analyses together. As it turns out, weaving the two papers together was not straightforward because the two analyses were quite distinct and we struggled to make them into a coherent whole. We nevertheless maintained our decision to merge the two papers because we felt that, together, the two papers best explained our findings and had the best chance of having a high impact.

> ***Summary of Challenge 3:*** *The* ***challenge*** *of combining two conference presentations into a single high-quality journal submission led to a key* ***choice:*** *How do we weave the analyses together to create a compelling and impactful story with the results? The* ***outcome*** *of our choice to merge both papers together was a totally new paper with contributions above and beyond either of the conference papers, individually. Thus, another* ***lesson learned*** *is that splitting up a larger work into separate conference presentations and then recombining it into a journal submission is a legitimate strategy for getting meaningful feedback without sacrificing the novelty of the combined work.*

Challenge 4: Responding to a Rejection with an Invitation to Resubmit

Eventually, we submitted the unified research manuscript to *MIS Quarterly* in April of 2018, almost two years after Puzant had defended his dissertation. In September, the *MIS Quarterly* reviews arrived—a 12,000 word (22 pages single spaced) "rejection with an invitation to resubmit as a new manuscript." *This became our next challenge: Dealing with a rejection with an invitation to resubmit.* This challenge led to the key choice: How should we respond to such a massive review when the paper has been rejected by the reviewers. Of particular concern to Dorothy was the 10-page, 5,100-word review of Reviewer 2, who provided a numbered list of 48 points along with additional paragraphs and references. Whether this was the longest review packet she'd ever received, she doubted, but Review 2 was definitely the longest single review she recalled ever receiving and the long list of 48 points admittedly spooked her. She confesses to freezing—to being overcome with a feeling that no matter what they would do, they could not possibly address 48 points from one reviewer in addition to the many other points raised by the SE, AE, R1, and R3. *In retrospect, we see this as* ***one of the things that went wrong:*** *We should have been more open to a highly critical review.* As academics, we know that most of our papers will be rejected; it is just part of the process. We must remind ourselves that *rejection is not failure*. We must also poise ourselves to deal with reviews that are intimidating, demanding, and sometimes unreasonable without taking it personally and without letting it discourage us from trying.

Dorothy set about highlighting important points in the review packet. In preparing the current narrative, she returned to the reviews that she had saved in a word document. There are many points highlighted throughout the 22-page packet, with the exclusion of the 10 pages of Reviwer 2. She could not even bring herself to attempt to digest the 48 points. That said, one must also admire an individual who is willing to be so meticulous in their review. Thus, she was neither angry nor annoyed; more accurately, she was overwhelmed by that single review in a way that she had never been before. We decided to work to address the points Dorothy had highlighted in the reviews.

In the end, we chose not to resubmit to *MIS Quarterly*. In hindsight, *we consider it* ***something that went wrong:*** *We should have communicated with the SE at MIS Quarterly before deciding NOT to resubmit our paper.* The SE had written an excellent two-page report. At the time, Dorothy felt that an SE's time is so valuable that one should take their written report and make an appropriate decision. Now as EIC, Dorothy feels that authors should make their decisions in consultation with the SE, certainly if the decision is to NOT resubmit. If an SE offers an opportunity to resubmit as a new paper, the authors should explain what they are thinking to the SE, given that the SE has put time into the paper and has seen some potential. At this point, Puzant and Dorothy cannot even recall if they thanked the SE for the report and letter or whether we were stunned into silence. To the SE now: thank you. It is surely no easy task as an SE to sort through 20 pages of AE and reviewer comments in addition to the 50-page, 17,000-word paper. To even attempt to summarize the 20 pages of AE and reviewer comments into a coherent SE letter is a labor of commitment to the academic community. Unfortunately, we will never know what might have happened if we had discussed our concerns with the SE.

> ***Summary of Challenge 4:*** *The* ***challenge*** *of responding to a rejection with an invitation to resubmit created a key* ***choice:*** *Do we attempt to satisfy the reviewers in the creation of a wholly new submission or do we move on to another outlet? The* ***outcome*** *of our choice to not resubmit the paper to MIS Quarterly is that we will never know what might have happened if we had first discussed the decision with our thoughtful SE. Thus, another* ***lesson learned*** *is that researchers should communicate with their SE before deciding not to resubmit a paper at a high-quality outlet.*

Challenge 5: Improving the Manuscript for a New Journal Submission

After deciding not to resubmit the paper to *MIS Quarterly*, *our next challenge became preparing the manuscript for a new journal submission*. This challenge presented a key choice: How thoroughly should we address the previous reviewers' concerns? Based on our reading of the reviews, we determined that some of the major changes that needed to be made were (1) a stronger literature and more substantial positioning of our work in prior literature; (2) a substantial rewrite and reanalysis that related our emerging constructs to existing constructs in the literature; (3) more thorough explication of our coding process and triangulation as well as the linkages among our codes—in fact, the AE wrote an entire page of various issues related to our use of grounded theory; and (4) the selection of an appropriate lens to guide our analysis, even if we were conducting a grounded theory analysis. In essence, we needed to rewrite the introduction to make a stronger case for the study, add a literature review and demonstrate where our study fit in the stream of existing research, reanalyze our data by applying a theoretical lens as a tool to assist our understanding, provide extensive explanations and evidence of our coding and resulting theory, and make a more compelling case for our contribution.

It is tempting to simply take a rejected paper from one journal and resubmit as is to another, but we feel that one owes it to the reviewers, and to oneself, to learn what one can from a review packet and make all the improvements that are feasible before submitting to another journal. ***This is something that we would say we did right:*** *substantially improving the paper and addressing as many comments from the MIS Quarterly rejection as possible.* In fact, all areas of the paper—the introduction, the literature review, the method, and the contribution—needed addressing. We certainly did not address all the reviewer comments and honestly, with all apologies to Reviewer 2, did not ever return to their 48-point review. We did, however, address any other comments pushing for clarifications, justifications, and motivations. We also took to heart the comments questioning the veracity of our analysis and our lack of a theory lens to guide our analysis.

> ***Summary of Challenge 5:*** *The* ***challenge*** *of improving the paper for a new journal submission presented a key* ***choice:*** *How thoroughly should we address the prior reviewers' concerns? An* ***outcome*** *of our choice to try and address the reviewers' major concerns before submitting to a new journal was that we still had a lot of work to do. Thus, a* ***lesson learned*** *is that researchers often have just as much work to do, whether they choose to resubmit a manuscript or search for a new outlet.*

Challenge 6: Revitalizing our Effort on the Manuscript

After deciding to undertake major revisions on the manuscript, Dorothy and Puzant recognized they were both somewhat drained by the paper and losing confidence in their ability to shape the data into a top-level journal publication. Moreover, Puzant's new situation as an assistant professor had him developing several preps, and his business school was emphasizing quantity, not quality, of publications. *Thus, our next challenge became how to revitalize our efforts on the paper.* This challenge led us to a key choice: to expand the author team to increase the subject matter expertise and add fresh perspective to the project. Dorothy suggested inviting A. J. Burns to join the team. A. J. was beginning his fifth year as an assistant professor at Baylor University, where both A. J. and Dorothy were working at the time. A. J. was already establishing himself as a serious scholar in the field of IS security.

Puzant and Dorothy were both thrilled when A. J. agreed to join the team to work the paper into a new submission for *JAIS*. This is also ***something that we would say we did right:*** *adding a co-author to help us address the concerns in our rejected manuscript.* Author teams need to look into themselves and honestly assess how much energy they are willing to expend in getting a paper through the review and revision process at a top journal. If they feel they are at a point where they need fresh inspiration, then by all means, they should look to add a co-author whose interests, motivations, and experience align well with the paper. A. J. was a natural choice to join the team as he had subject matter expertise in IS security, was motivated to work on high-impact research, and had a track record of publishing in high-quality peer-reviewed journals.

A. J. and Dorothy had a long discussion one afternoon in her office and she recounted the paper's history. She'd prepared a Dropbox folder, and placed the ICIS, HICSS, and *MISQ* submissions, as well as the highlighted *MISQ* review packet into the folder. A. J. studied the paper's past and came ready with some suggestions for moving forward. As a new member of the team, A. J. helped propel the paper forward at a time when it could have easily stalled. What was particularly effective was that A. J. did not wait to be told what to do but instead came prepared to overhaul the paper based on a shared vision of where it had been, where it was, and where it needed to go. Virtually no section was untouched. Probably the only thing A. J. did not do was return to the original data and conduct a new analysis. Unhindered by the various issues that Puzant and Dorothy had wrestled with in the past (issues concerning construct meanings, labels, and relationships), A. J. brought a fresh perspective. Ultimately, this resulted in a much-improved paper. For A. J., the paper represented a methodological departure—prior to this paper, A. J. had worked exclusively with quantitative data. In many ways, this was an advantage: He approached the case data with the same skepticism that other quantitatively inclined authors would and challenged Puzant and Dorothy on points that needed greater support.

> ***Summary of Challenge 6:*** *The* ***challenge*** *of needing to revitalize the effort on the manuscript led to a key* ***choice:*** *to expand the author team. The* ***outcome*** *of adding a new co-author was that the team expanded its subject matter expertise, got fresh perspective, and received a much-needed boost of energy for working on the paper. Thus, a* ***lesson learned*** *is that expanding an author team can be a way to revitalize the effort on a stalling manuscript.*

Challenge 7: Responding to a Request for More Data

Because by this point, it was known that Dorothy would be taking over as editor-in-chief of *JAIS*, but her term had not yet begun, our paper was handled by an anonymous SE. One of the *JAIS* senior editors selected reviewers and selected another SE to handle the paper, but the selected SE did not know our identity, nor did we know the SE's identity. This allowed the anonymous SE to be completely frank about the paper. We (Puzant,

A. J., and Dorothy) submitted the new version of the paper to *JAIS* in June 2019, roughly 10 months after receiving the *MISQ* reject/resubmit decision.

The *JAIS* reviews were returned in early October 2019. The decision was "major revision." This created a new challenge: We had to respond to the reviews at another journal. This review packet also had three reviewers but was in total six single-spaced pages. The *JAIS* SE had prepared a detailed report as had one of the three reviewers in particular, Reviewer 1. It was clear from the SE report and reviews that we still had to address some of the issues mentioned in the *MISQ* reviews. Even though we had added a literature review, introduced a theoretical lens, reframed the analysis using the new theoretical lens, and worked to better situate our study in the prior literature, we were again challenged to write a more compelling justification of the need for the study, reconsider some of our emerging constructs that the review team felt were not new, and, perhaps most importantly, provide far more evidence to support our claims. The linkages between the data analysis and the theoretical claims linkages were simply not clear to the review team.

Moreover, in what, for us, became one of the more critical issues, we were asked to conduct additional data collection in a different industry as a means of providing evidence to support the generalizability of our findings outside the context of our case study, which happened to be in the higher education industry. We were asked by the SE to "collect more data from another organization, outside of academia, to better validate the model." Reviewer 1 commented "I'm sure you were expecting it [actually we were not]. You need more data." The reviewer went on to say: "This won't be hard, you just need a few more interviews." This request was among *the most challenging* we faced. We considered it very hard and wondered if we misunderstood—how can collecting data in a new company be "not hard." *This became our next challenge: how to respond to the request for more data.* We were having visions of a completely new case—how could "a few interviews" outside academia be considered legitimate? We would need a full case. In fact, Puzant had collected data from a second organization that we had not used—at the time, we felt that the single case was already so rich that adding a second case would not be helpful—but this data was also from an organization in higher ed and therefore would not mollify the review team. But now we were being asked to verify what we'd done by collecting data from another organization—we knew that "a few interviews," would hardly constitute a case. Thus, this challenge created a key choice: Should we try to collect new data or try to explain why our data is sufficient? We wrestled with this request. Dorothy had always abided by the mantra "the reviewer knows best" and tried to simply do what reviewers request rather than arguing. However, this time she suggested we try to argue our way around this request. Teaser: it did not work.

We scoured the past 10 years of *MISQ*, *ISR*, and *JAIS* for single case studies and carefully studied whether any of them had gathered additional data to provide a verification of their findings. We did not find a single one—or at least not a single one that was reported in a published paper. We put together a list of the papers, the samples, and the setting and provided this in our response document. We completed our revision and resubmitted in July 2020, nine months after the reviews (as the reader might certainly note, we were not fast in our work). The Round 2 SE report and reviews were received three months later. In this round, the SE made it very clear that the additional data collection was non-negotiable. The two major issues still plaguing the paper were "contribution and methodology." In an interesting twist, Reviewer 1, who had acknowledged being a grounded theory expert, mentioned that they "would be prepared to consider your views at face value, if you did not attribute them to grounded induction." The SE and Reviewer 1 were both asking for much more explanation of how we applied grounded theory and evidence supporting our emerging constructs. But then Reviewer 1 was also suggesting we consider repositioning as an "exploratory" case study. One other comment from the SE posed a challenge for us—"given the lingering concerns, I would strongly recommend that the authors recruit a scholar with experience in grounded theory as a co-author." Even if we felt up to the challenge, did we need another co-author as a signal? We decided against adding an additional author.

> ***Challenge 7 Summary:*** *The* ***challenge*** *of responding to a request for new qualitative data led to a key* ***choice:*** *Should we conduct new interviews or argue against it? Our decision to not collect new data produced the* ***outcome*** *of the review panel doubling down on the need to collect new data. Thus, a* ***lesson learned*** *is that some requests are considered non-negotiable by a review team and appeals to precedent are insufficient.*

Challenge 8: Repositioning the Methodology

Based on the reviewers' comments that our work was not sufficiently based on grounded theory methodology, we set about rereading grounded theory papers and reading other works concerning qualitative analysis. We ultimately agreed with Reviewer 1 that a clearer path to publication was to reposition away from grounded theory methodology because there are too many expectations associated with the label that we might not ultimately be able to fulfill—in particular, that data gathering and analysis had not been conducted simultaneously. Rather, the data was all collected prior to undertaking the analysis. We treated this revision as a very major risky revision. This became *our next big challenge: to reposition our method away from grounded theory.*

The challenge to reposition way from grounded theory methodology presented us with a key choice: to select a methodological frame for the analyses that is more appropriate. Based on encouragement from the reviewer, we chose to frame our work as an exploratory case analysis. This revision took us even longer to complete than the first (13 months total), in large part because of the additional data gathering and analysis. We kept the theoretical lens—the same lens we had added to the paper based on the *MISQ* reviews that asked for a theoretical lens to help with the analysis (in spite of the paper being grounded theory, at that time)—but rather than framing the analysis as a way to bring insight to the theory, we framed the theory as a way to bring insight into the analysis and explained in the paper that we did not enter into the research with the intent of studying this theory, rather we realized this theory would help strengthen the analysis during one of the many iterations of analysis we conducted. We also decided to collect additional data and put serious effort into addressing the explanation and evidence concerns. This second *JAIS* revision needed to be a massive one. In addition to just “a few interviews” in another company, we also did a survey. We wanted evidence that the profiles we had developed based on two beliefs were experienced outside our case organization and case industry.

Furthermore, the SE challenged us to show evidence of where each individual interviewee fell in our resultant quadrants. At first, we felt this was an unusual request and were unfamiliar with such tables in published work, but again, we decided in this round to simply do what was requested. To properly fulfill this request, we decided we needed additional coders to independently categorize the interviewees so that we could then compute interrater reliability. Fortunately, Dorothy was teaching a qualitative methods class again and she has always given students data to analyze in class, preferably data from a project that has not yet been published so that the students cannot see how the data was ultimately analyzed before conducting their own analyses. Four PhD students conducted the analyses, with teams of two each taking half the interviews. We put together numerous tables with our data structures supported by many quotes and prepared a very large table with a row for each interviewee and evidence from the transcript indicating the interviewee’s stance, supported by quotes, with regard to each construct in our study. In the end, we were quite glad we went through these various exercises (the comprehensive appendix to the paper is a testament to this work). The additional data and analyses did reassure us that the data we had was not exclusive to the higher ed setting and they also helped provide stronger evidence in support of the analysis we had conducted. ***This is something we did right*:** *we got creative and found a way to collect mixed methods data (both interviews and surveys) to validate our results and satisfy the reviewers.*

> ***Challenge 8 Summary:*** *The* ***challenge*** *of repositioning the methodology in our study led to a key* ***choice:*** *what frame is better suited to explain our analyses. Our decision to reframe our methodology as an exploratory case study led to the* ***outcome*** *of our whole paper needing an overhaul. Thus, a* ***lesson learned*** *is that researchers can successfully reframe their methodology if they reach an impasse over details they cannot change ex post (i.e., order of data collection and analysis).*

The Payoff

We resubmitted the paper on December 6, 2021, and received the SE report on January 4, 2022. We still did not know who the SE was, but we were certainly impressed that the report came back so soon, especially over a holiday period. The SE read over the paper first before assigning it back to reviewers, and seeing the enormous changes and progress, the SE decided to handle it one-on-one from there out. We made one additional round of minor changes and the paper was ultimately accepted on April 27, 2022. For a summary of the things that went right and wrong, see Table 2.

Table 2. What Went Right and Wrong

What went right
• We substantially improved the paper and addressed as many comments from our *MIS Quarterly* rejection as we could
• We added a co-author to help us address the concerns in our rejected manuscript.
• We got creative and found a way to collect mixed methods data (both interviews and surveys) to validate our results and satisfy the reviewers.
What went wrong
• We should have been more prepared for a troubling first round of reviews.
• We should have communicated with the SE at *MIS Quarterly* before deciding NOT to resubmit our paper.

Conclusion

Every review process is different, and one has to be careful about extrapolating too much from a single experience. What we learned from our experience working on this paper is that sometimes the changes one is least prepared to make are the very changes from which one learns the most and which improve the paper the most. While we resisted the collection of additional analysis and the imposition of what we felt was a "positivistic" style of analysis on our qualitative data, in hindsight, we feel these both significantly improved the quality of the paper. The initial insights did not change, but additional insights emerged and the legitimacy of the insights increased, which thus raised the level of the paper. Although the journey was a long one, it was rewarding: rewarding to see a dissertation shape into top journal publication, of course, but equally rewarding to hone stronger qualitative analysis skills and to develop a deeper understanding of the theory-data-analysis-insight-theory connection that is so challenging in qualitative research.

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