WEBINAR

Analyzing Qualitative Research:
After the Interview

Emergent Analysis: Strategies for Making Sense of an Evolving Longitudinal Study

March 4, 2022

NVIVO | SAGE Publishing

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Adrian Larbi-Cherif is a Researcher at the National Charter School Resource Center and an Associate at Manhattan Strategy Group. His research has used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to understand how school systems organize to improve the quality of instruction and increase equitable learning opportunities for all students. Additionally, Dr. Larbi-Cherif has helped design and implement several several research projects that have used different forms of research-practice partnerships. He is currently examining how district and school leaders can can use improvement science methods to improve the quality of instruction in contexts with an external intermediary and in contexts without an external intermediary.

Cori Egan just completed two three-year projects as a research associate at the George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development: one focused on the Tennessee Achievement School District and a mixed methods study of Shelby County School's turnaround district, the iZone, in Memphis. Prior to joining the George Washington University, she worked as a researcher for the Tennessee Department of Education, a project manager for the Michigan Council of Educator Effectiveness, and as a Teach For America Corps Member teaching high school English in North Carolina. She currently works as a consultant for Frist 8 Memphis, an early childhood advocacy organization in Memphis.

Joshua L. Glazer is an associate professor of education policy at George Washington University. Dr. Glazer's research examines multiple approaches to improving under-performing schools in high-poverty environments. He recently directed two multi-year studies into school turnaround in Memphis, including the state-run Achievement School District, and the locally operated iZone in which the district devised and directed its own improvement effort. His research into the ASD examined both the political and educational dynamics of designing systems with the technical capacity and community support needed to improve schools operating in complex and demanding environments. In addition to his work in Memphis, Dr. Glazer was also principal investigator for a multi-year study of research-practice partnerships in two mid-Atlantic cities.

Paul Mihas is the Assistant Director of Education and Qualitative Research at the Odum Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He teaches qualitative methods at the Global School in Empirical Research Methods (GSERM) at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland, the BI Norwegian Business School, and the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. He also serves as faculty at the ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods of Social Research and the annual Qualitative Research Summer Intensive. Recent publications include chapters on qualitative data analysis in the Oxford Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods in Education (2019) and in Research Design and Methods: An Applied Guide for the Scholar-Practitioner (SAGE, 2019).

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Analyzing Qualitative Research: After the Interview

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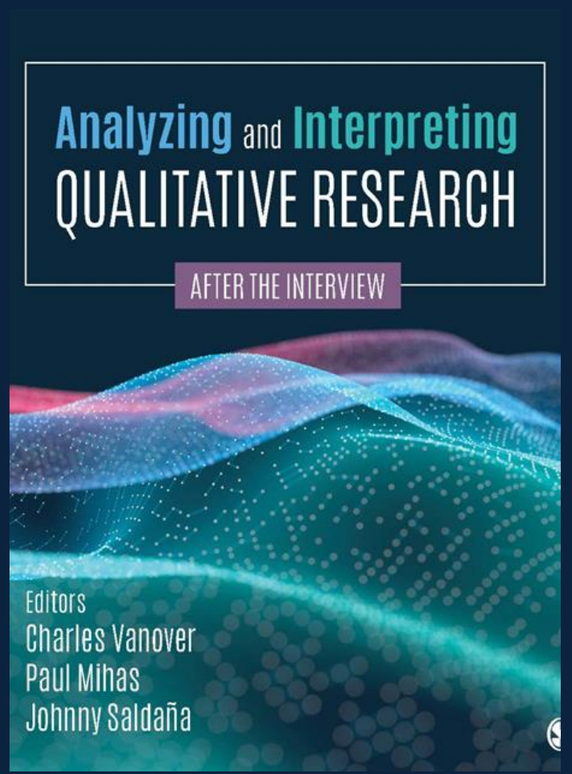

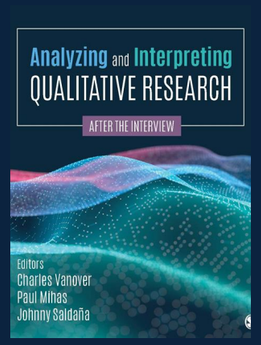

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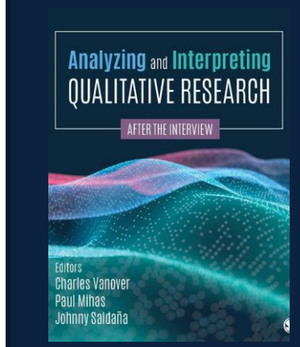

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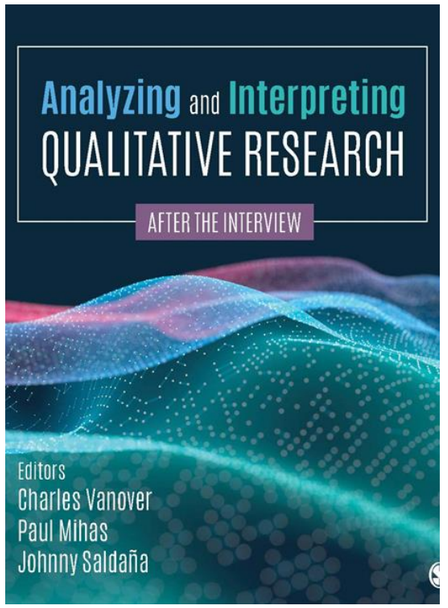
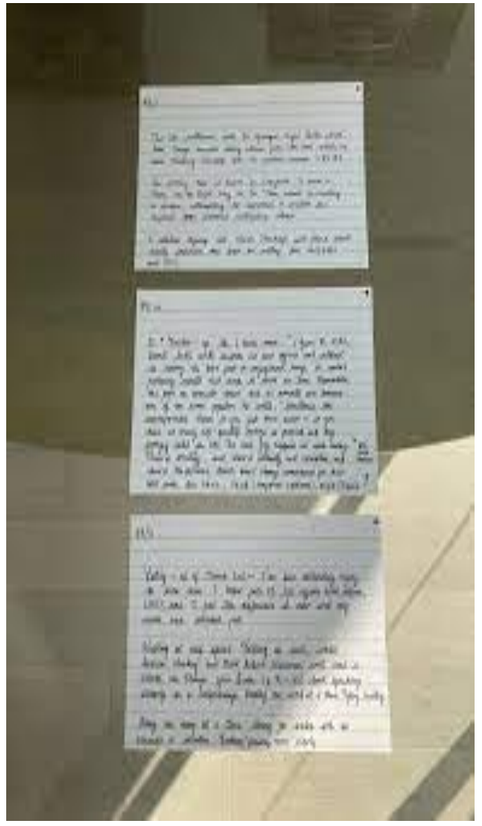
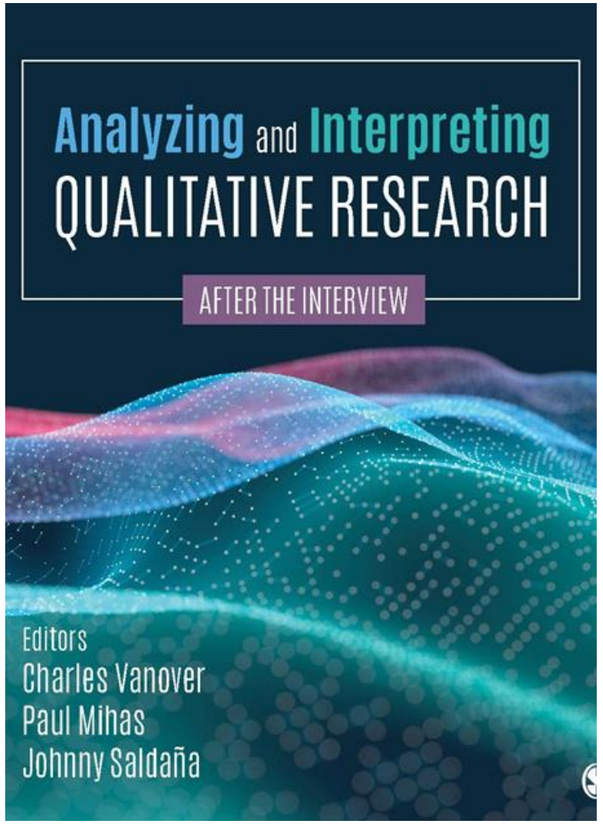


SECTION 5 • Interpretive Strategies

Listening Deeply: Indexing Research Conversations in a Narrative Inquiry – Jaime Fiddler

"I carried these cards along with me, always ready for spontaneous writing sessions."

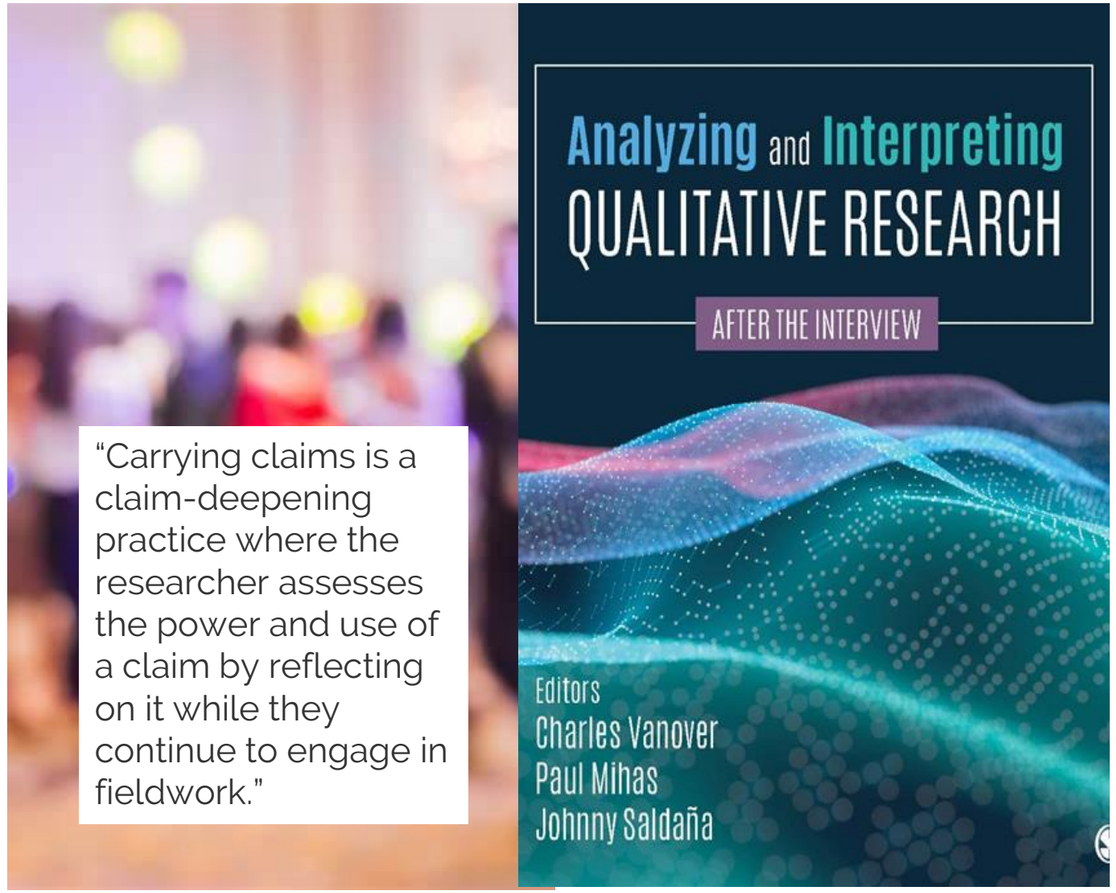




Making Claims Using Qualitative Data – Tim Huffman

Claim-making Practices

- Conceptual Cocktail Party
- Abductive Reasoning
- Jeopardy Research Questions
- Phronetic Claims
- Carrying Claims
- Negative Case Analysis



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Emergent Analysis: Strategies for Making Sense of an Evolving Longitudinal Study

Adrian Larbi-Cherif, Manhattan Strategy Group
Cori Egan, George Washington University
Joshua Glazer, George Washington University

What does it take to improve low-performing schools?

Competition?

Tough accountability policies?

More money?

Better training for teachers?

Smaller classes?

Shelby County iZone

District-led effort to “turn around,” 23 of the lowest performing schools in Tennessee.

Serve communities beset by intergenerational poverty, social isolation, and neglect.

Failure to improve could lead to takeover by the state

Research Problem Statement

- Could a district with a long history of poor performance, a track record of failed reforms, and a student body with many academic and social needs find a way to dramatically improve teaching and learning?
- How could principals and teachers manage the demands of accountability, an intellectually rigorous curriculum, and a student body with a great many academic and social-and-emotional needs?

Methodological problem statement

The codebook that we used to code our data no longer matched our research questions that had become more nuanced and specific over time.

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Your thoughts?

What do you do when your research questions change after you started collecting and coding data?

(1) collect more data;

(2) stick with your original questions;

(3) create a new codebook; or

(4) do a second round of coding that bridges your old questions and your new ones.

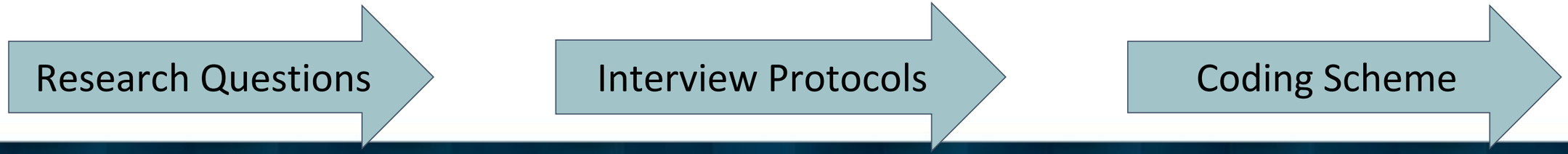
Stage 1: Refining Research Questions, Analytical Domains, and Research Subquestions

We launched the study with 3 research questions:

- iZone Goals
- iZone Strategy
- Implementation

Then, we conducted interviews and created a codebook.

- Codes were broad
- But tightly aligned to research questions

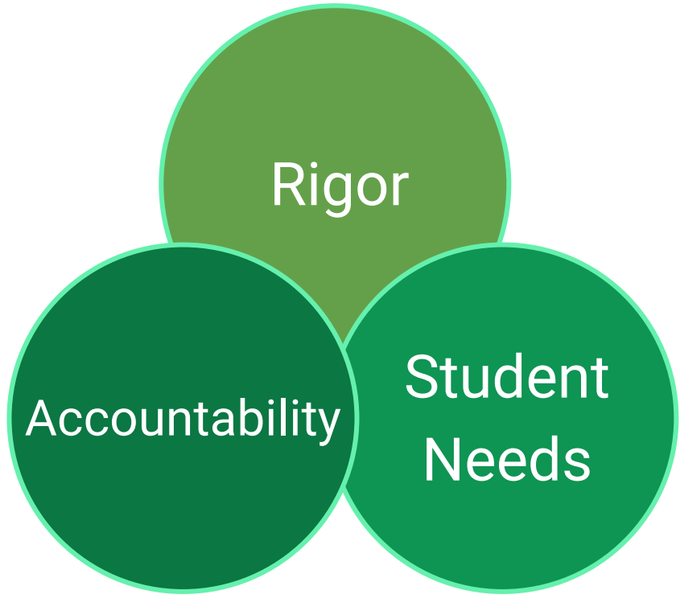


Stage 1: Adapting to New Data After Year One

After three data collection trips, our interpretation of the iZone strategy began to shift.

- Honed in on a trio of challenges
- Refined and reframed research questions based on new data
- Protocols and perspective became more nuanced and focused

New RQ: How does the iZone contend with the trio of challenges: rigor, accountability, and student needs?



Stage 1: Adapting Again After Year Two

At the end of the study's second year, we refined our theory **again** by distinguishing between the iZone's:

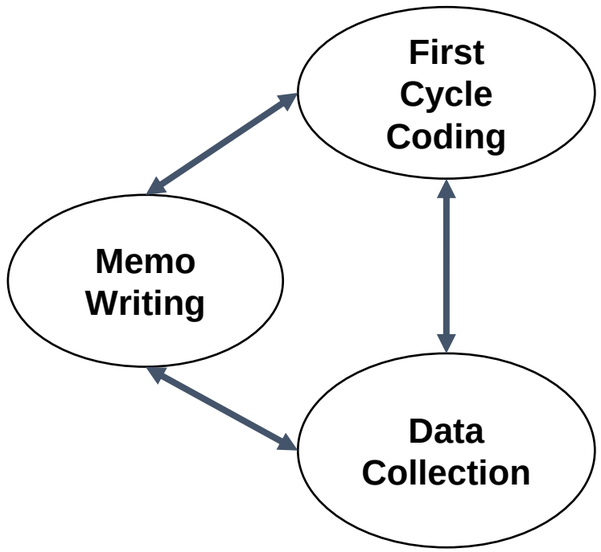
- Model for teaching and learning
- Strategy for implementation

Yet again, we revised our research questions to depict the complexity of the iZone that we were observing.

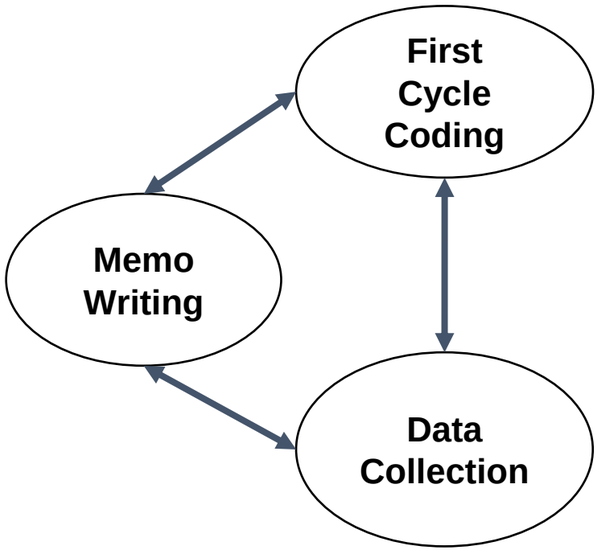
- How does the iZone develop a shared model of teaching and learning?
- What implementation strategies help teachers and leaders overcome "the trio"?

Process for Refining Research Questions, Analytical Domains, Research Sub-Questions

What are the goals and strategies of the iZone? How are these enacted?



How does the iZone contend with the trio of challenges: rigor, accountability, and student needs?



How does the iZone develop a shared model of teaching and learning?What implementation strategies help teachers and leaders overcome “the trio”?

May 2017 — May 2018 — May 2019

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Stage 1: Challenges and New Analytical Strategies Emerge from Adaptations

These new questions created new challenges for our research team.

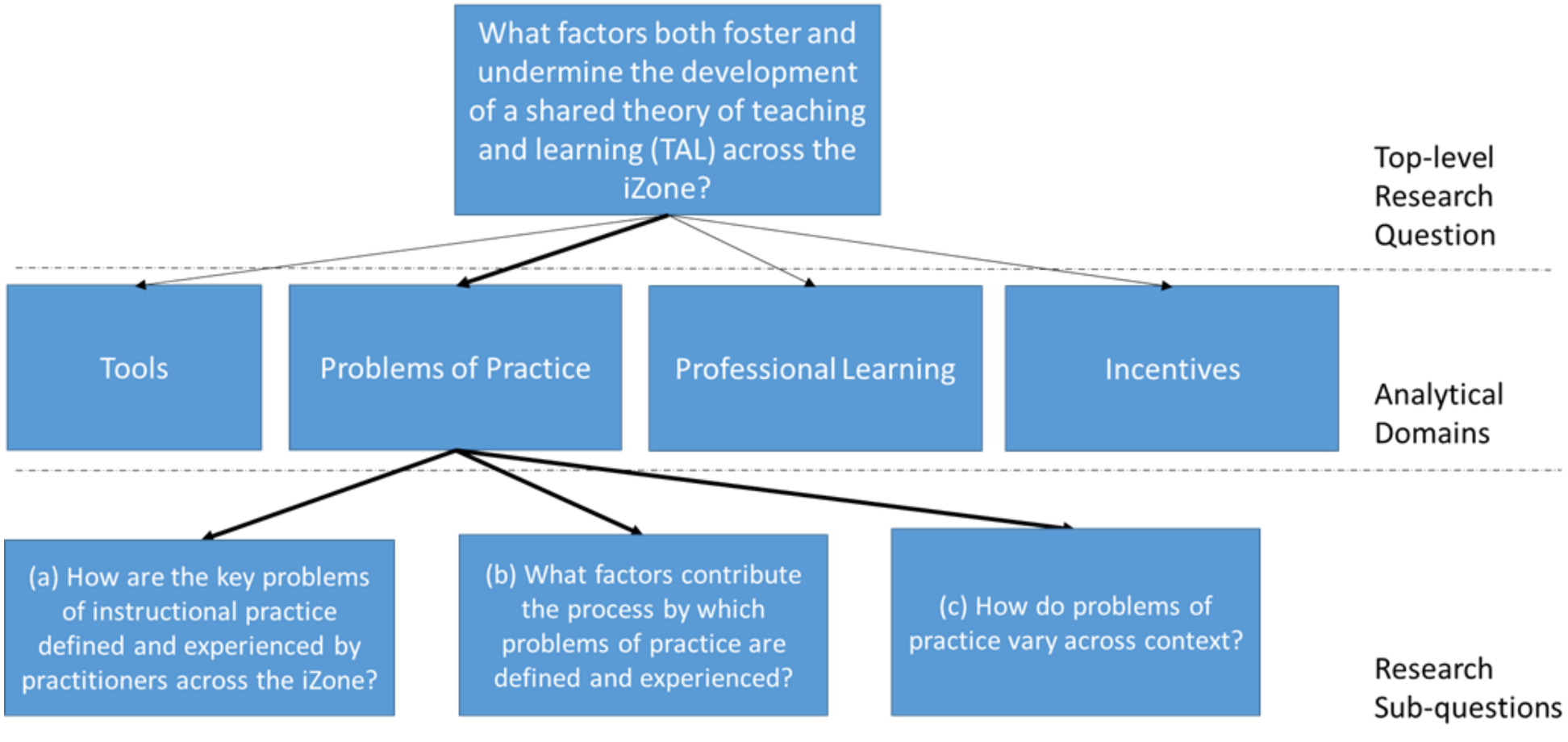
- Rendered some initial codes less relevant
- Left codebook incomplete
- Robust data set made re-coding everything impossible

So, we created analytical domains nested under:

- Tools
- Problems of Practice
- Professional Learning
- Incentives

Finally, we developed research subquestions to structure analysis.

Stage 1: Example of Research Question, Analytical Domains, and Research Sub-Questions



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Your thoughts?

Have you encountered the dilemma of having to strategically recode only a portion of the available qualitative data?

(1) Yes;

(2) No;

Stage 2: Analyzing Each Analytical Domain Systematically.

After specifying the analytical domains, we were still left with the dilemma of what to systematically recode from our database of:

- 157 interviews
- 93 codes and subcodes
- 4,800 coded excerpts
- >23,000 code applications.

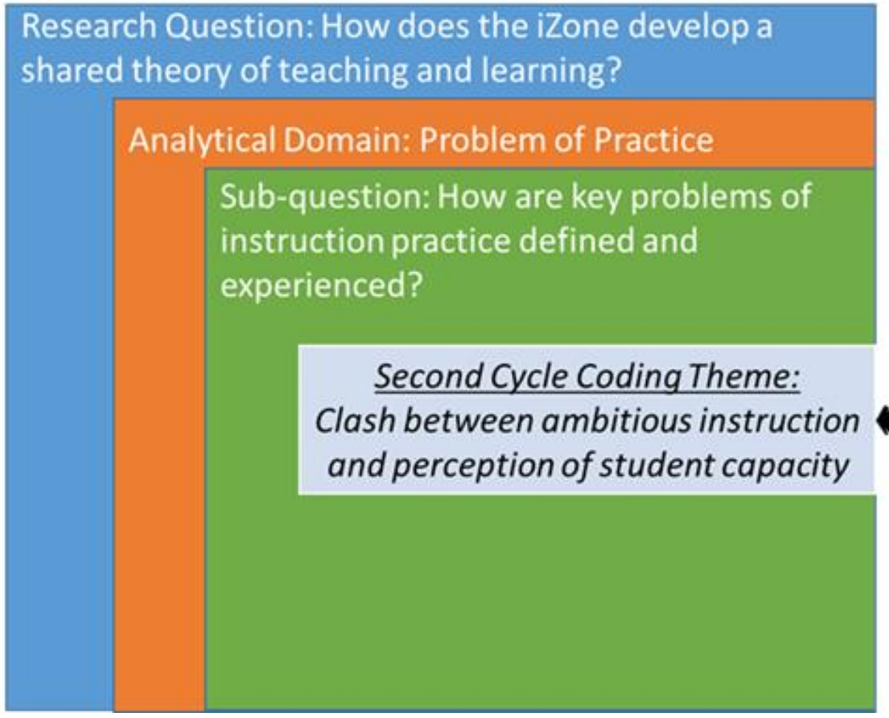
Suffice it to say, it was infeasible to recode the entire dataset!

Stage 2: Determining which data to recode

Determining what to recode required that our team:

- Reach consensus on which codes and role groups to sample, which was challenging:
  - Our initial codes generally did not had theoretically salient labels (e.g., “problems of practice”)
  - Some codes housed more than 1,000 coded excerpts
- Use trial and error in terms of selecting codes, selecting role groups, and determining if we made the right selections.
- Be practical in terms of what we could recode, yet still be rigorous in methods.

Stage 2: Defining Theoretically Salient Themes



Initial Codes from First Wave Coding
Tools for Instruction
➢ Challenges and benefits of implementing Eureka curriculum
➢ Challenges and benefits of implementing other curricula
➢ Challenges and benefits of using pacing guides
Supporting Currently Struggling Students
Instructional Practice
➢ Challenges and benefits of enacting instructional vision

Stage 2: Defining Theoretically Salient Themes

How we defined themes like “Clash between ambitious instruction and perception of student capacity:”

1. Set up a coding spreadsheet in which each row housed the coded excerpt,
2. Divided up “rows” and wrote summaries for each row,
3. Identified common themes based on summaries,
4. Reviewed each recoded excerpt to come to a consensus on theme.

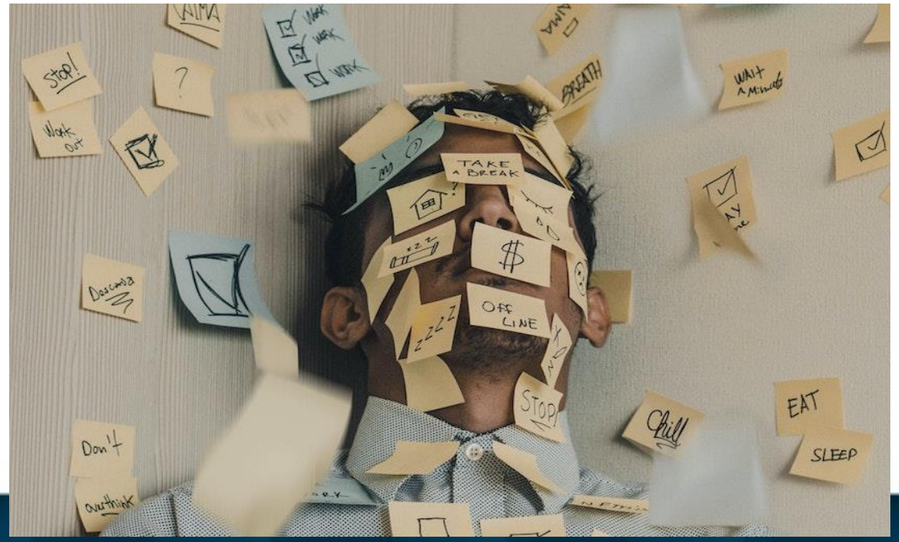
Stage 2: Defining Theoretically Salient Themes

Excerpt	Summary	Theme
Interviewee: A lot of the times the way the curriculum is written, they want students to be conceptual first and then go to the procedural. But when you're working with children that are fragile learners, it doesn't always happen that way. Once they get the procedural part of it, they get confident and then they can make the connections to the conceptual.	Students who are behind can't start with the conceptual aspects first, but this clashes with the curriculum and the iZone's vision for math instruction.	Clash between ambitious instruction and student capacity.

Stage 3: Writing Memos for Each Analytical Dimension in Teams

After conducting the second cycle of coding, we still had to:

1. Form theoretically salient claims
2. Write analytic memos that would be the foundation of future manuscripts



Stage 3: Formulating Claims for Analytic Memos

Formulating claims involved:

- Deeper reading both within and across themes,
- Examining themes across relevant dimensions:
  - E.g., High School teachers reported more often that they struggled with teaching at grade level
- Leaning into disconfirming evidence
- Leveraging triangulation
- Revise, revise, revise

Stage 3: Writing Memos as a Team

Writing memos as a team allowed for us to leverage different forms of expertise and different field experiences to:

- Debate claims and ask for more nuanced evidence,
- Form more robust claims with validity outside of our context,
- Further develop theories explaining phenomena through collective writing.

Recap of Making Sense of a Longitudinal Study

- Stage 1: Refined Research Questions, Analytical Domains, Research Sub-Questions
- Stage 2: Analyzed Each Analytical Domain Systematically
  - Determined which codes to pull for each analytical domain
  - Defined theoretically-salient themes through recoding
- Stage 3: Wrote Memos for Each Analytical Dimension
  - Used Themes to Formulate Claims for the Analytic Memo
  - Revised Memos as a Team

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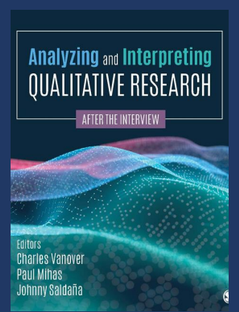

The "After The Interview Project" Data Analysis

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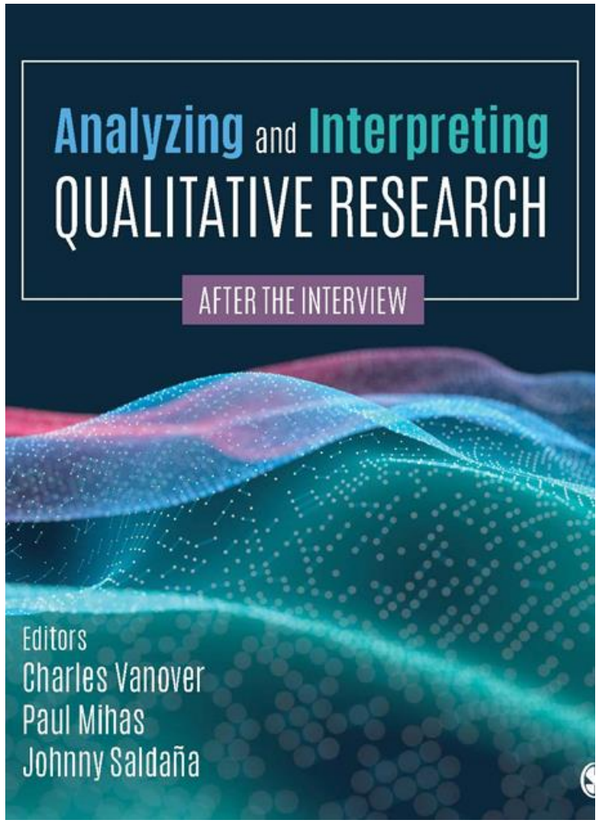

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