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I took your advice. I followed it exactly. It led where you told me it would. I brought supplementary materials with me; I'd like to walk through them with you, give you an accurate picture of where I am now. I am done with CS1. CS2 will take less time because I know what I am doing now. CS3 will take less time yet because the evidence is smaller. This no longer feels like a huge unmanageable project; it feels like a small, manageable one. That is a state where I only got to recently. I finally 'got' grounded theory. Dr Martin can tell you about all the times I ranted to him on Skype about how it wasn't coming together, I didn't know what I was doing, it wasn't converging. Dr Jirotka, you might recall how I contacted you by email around that time. I apologise for never following up. I figured it out for myself. But it was very hard. Apparently, that's not at all an uncommon experience, from what I read in books and articles about grounded theory. The researcher starts using it, flounders around in the wilderness for quite a long time, not getting anywhere, complains that it feels like taking the scientific method and turning the handle the wrong way. How do I know when I'm done? How do I know when I have a grounded theory? Then one day it crystalises and the researcher goes and writes an article about how grounded theory is the best thing ever. My favourite of those article are the ones by George Allan and the one by Bob Dick.

I have a grounded theory. It matches my thesis fairly closely, but I expect the grounded theory to change after CS2, because CS1 was a successful certification and accreditation, after all, and CS2 introduces some pathological incidents. Of course it's going to change. I have three elements of my thesis as described in the Chapters 1–3 that I sent you. First, there's the idea that repeated running and re-running of the same test procedures, written by the same people, run by the same people, over and over again by accreditors at different security levels is the cause of the unnecessary inefficiency in certification and accreditation of cross domain systems. Secondly, my accreditor model, which is general enough to cover all the cases of accreditors at different security levsls, non-hierarchical security classifications, and international accreditations especially, which is crucial for cross domain systems. The explanation of the guaranteed adversarial environment that cross domain systems always find themselves being installed in, just by definition. That's published work. Finally, I have the grounded theory, which is derived from these three case studies that I claim are ideal to show the concept because they are interrelated in these ways. That's my thesis, my argument, and my validation. I still have to write an overview of the nominal DIACAP process in Chapter 3, and an overview of the nominal Common Criteria process in Chapter 4, but I haven't done those yet. That's easy.

I worked out the grounded theory on paper. I bought Atlas.ti, and used it, but then I went back to paper. I worked better that way, on paper and in greppable text files. I have these tags that I can search for in my text editor. I just works better for me.

Chapter 2 is very outliney. I wasn't sure how to write the methodology until very recently. I worked on Chapter 3, figuring I would go back and fill in Chapter 2 after I finished getting myself out of all the blind alleys I found.

The project manager tenure bit is from the grounded theory in CS2, not CS1. I told you I'd been working on CS2 lately.

I would like another term, out of fairness. My University Card will expire, and can't lose access to the library. Confirmation was delayed, and I don't get the full year after to finish as is traditional. I could finish by January, but it's a risk and I'd like to have Hilary as a buffer on the end of Michaelmas term.

Let's go.

References