# Distinguishing Between the Types of Grounded Theory:
## Classical, Interpretive and Constructivist

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*Since its inception in 1967, the grounded theory methodology has developed into many perspectives, each underpinned by different ontological and epistemological assumptions. This is shown primarily through the work of Glaser and Strauss; Glaser; Strauss and Corbin; and Charmaz. Positivism versus interpretivism; prior knowledge and experiences versus a clean slate; pre-established data coding categories versus building from the ground up – each of these opposing assertions can be applied as a characteristic towards the three types or perspectives of grounded theory. But which assertions go where? This paper will argue that, by clarifying these perspectives and giving each its own separate label, grounded theory researchers will be able to more easily identify and distinguish a chosen approach and its implications within research.*

**KEYWORDS:** Grounded theory, Grounded theory types, Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology

## Introduction & Background

As per the fathers of grounded theory, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, the intent of this methodology focused on the "discovery of theory from data [that is] systematically obtained and analyzed in social research" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1). Further, their educational upbringing in the positivist and interpretivist schools of thought are credited with influencing the direction of the methodology. While Glaser brought forth "epistemological assumptions, logic, and [a] systematic approach," Strauss contributed "notions of human agency, emergent processes, social and subjective meanings, problem-solving practices, and the open-ended study of action to grounded theory" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 9). The first application of grounded theory, prior to its formal unveiling to the research community, was through the original authors' 1965 project (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1965, 1967; Holton & Walsh, 2017). This project, with a focus on death and dying perceptions, has been succinctly summarized by Kathy Charmaz (2014):

> ...Glaser and Strauss's research team observed how dying occurred in a variety of hospital settings; they looked at how and when professionals and their terminal patients knew they were dying and how they handled the news. Glaser and Strauss gave their data explicit analytic treatment and produced theoretical analyses of the social organization and temporal order of dying (p. 5).

Grounded theory is an inductive methodology that attempts to bridge the gap between research and theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It emphasizes a simplified approach to methods that collect rich and unbiased data. This leaves theory to be conceptualized within the study and by the data rather than verifying previous theoretical assumptions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014; Farragher & Coogan, 2018). Researchers wanting to use grounded theory do so with an intent to provide a useable theoretical explanation for a complex problem. Rather than relying on past analyses or assumptions to highlight the right answers to the wrong questions, grounded theory pushes researchers to be enthusiastic and driven towards finding the right answers to the right questions.

However, as time progressed and distinct assumptions of how grounded theory could improve and evolve, many complexities arose. In the past few decades, discussions regarding grounded theory have become contentious and confusing due to the numerous (original and emerging) approaches. If one were to ask, 'What is grounded theory?' the discussions would appear tedious (to allow for a backstory reaching to the 1960s origin), contentious (arguing which perspective is grounded theory), or even confusing (attempting to clarify the original from the emerging). Rather, the questions that should be asked are: 'What types of grounded theory are there?' and 'How do we distinguish them?' Simplified, contemporary grounded theory contains three separate and leading perspectives towards its application in research: (1) classical grounded theory **(GT)**; (2) interpretive grounded theory **(IGT)**;

and (3) constructivist grounded theory **(CGT)**.[1]

While both GT and CGT can and have been easily referenced – although it is not always done with regards to the former – IGT has yet to be labelled in a way that distinguishes its unique capabilities.[2] This paper suggests a consensus be reached on the unique title and application of each type of grounded theory within current and future academic research and literature. To do so would be doing a service to current and future grounded theory researchers. To learn, understand, and effectively apply any one of these will become easier as they would no longer be mixed under one heading or methodological title.

The structure of this paper will lightly touch on the rift that initiated the emergence of new and distinct grounded theory perspective, along with their primary authors. Next, a comparative analysis will take place regarding the unique nature of each type of grounded theory approach and their most significant methodological steps. It is during this examination that clarification will occur for long-standing confusion and misinterpretation – such as philosophical influences and the allowance of prior knowledge. Lastly, a discussion on the future use and implications of expressing these types with their own title will occur as one last attempt to argue their potential. Included here is a brief discussion on a variety of research fields which utilize one or more of these perspectives (such as nursing, environmental studies, education and science research) to convey their expanding use and connection to many research areas.

## Methods

In addition to reviewing the primary texts (*Basics of Qualitative Research*, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, and *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*), articles written by the leading authors (Barney Glaser, Anselm Strauss, Juliet Corbin, and Kathy Charmaz) were included, which addressed critiques, advancements and clarifications towards the utility of the different types of grounded theory. Supplementary literature, written by numerous researchers and academics, were also chosen and included within this article for their attempts to: (1) clarify grounded theory as a methodology; (2) compare two or more grounded theory perspectives; (3) have detailed their application of a grounded theory within a research project.

With the exception of the primary authors,[3] the literature was collected from scholarly source search queries. The primary search queries were conducted in the University of Regina's main library database, with specifications set for peer-reviewed articles within the span of 1989-2019. The inclusion of these two criteria allowed for the most recent research examinations and discussions, held up and scrutinized by other leading researchers and experts, to be analyzed and included in this discussion as supporting evidence. Primary word searches within these queries included (but were not limited to): grounded theory, classical grounded theory, interpretive grounded theory, constructivist grounded theory, Glaser, Strauss, Corbin, and Charmaz. Articles were vetted for their direct acknowledgement of any or all type(s) of grounded theory as well as their reference list for whether it included any or all original author(s). For example, articles were omitted if, at the bare minimum, they did not state grounded theory as their methodology or if they did not include any of the original authors in their reference list.[4]

Lastly, as a secondary exploration, each original text and supplementary articles' reference list was examined; this process allowed for the discovery of secondary sources (also checked for their peer-reviewed journal status) vital to the overall discussion presented here. In total, four primary texts (this includes two sep-

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[1]Farragher and Coogan (2018, p. 5) refer to a fourth type of grounded theory as "Feminist Grounded Theory." However, throughout my research and numerous examined peer-reviewed sources, there was no other reference or discussion on this fourth type. Therefore, it has been omitted from this examination on the leading types of this methodology.

[2]Insufficient examples include: "Straussian grounded theory" (Farragher & Coogan, 2018, p. 5; Howard-Payne, 2016, p. 51; Kenny & Fourie, 2014, p. 1); "the constructivist approach to GT" or "this GT" (referring to CGT; Kean et al., 2016, p. 3113, 3115); "Glaser and Strauss's original version and Strauss and Juliet Corbin's proceduralised [sic] version" (referring to GT and IGT respectively; Lian, 2016, p. 88) "Glaserian. . . grounded theory" (Howard-Payne, 2016, p. 51). Furthermore, Taber (2000) and Vanderlinden et al. (2018) only refer to "grounded theory" as their methodology and do not specify which type has influenced their work.

[3]Hard-copies of the original texts were provided by a methodology research professor at the University of Regina.

[4]This occurred a handful of times as there were researchers who expressed a desire to base their conclusion on a "theory grounded in the data". Some search queries picked up on the phrase and include the article for its similarity. In other search queries, specifically those which included the original authors' names, these types of articles would be included as they were lightly influenced by this premise and, rightfully so, added the source(s) to their reference list. These however were vetted and subsequently omitted as they did not entirely acknowledge or apply in full any type of grounded theory.

[5]Both the third edition from 2008 and the fourth edition from 2015 were included as Juliet Corbin included invaluable insights and clarifications in each edition.

arate editions[5] of *Basics of Qualitative Research*), seven articles and one book as added material by the original authors, and twenty-four supplementary articles were included in this research analysis.

## Division of the Methodology

A professional difference of opinion between Glaser and Strauss may have been inevitable as the former was educated by the positivist paradigm whereas the latter openly aligned himself with interpretivism. Following the division between the original authors, they would come to elaborate on their original work in separate, opposing, ways. Picking up where Strauss departed, Glaser continued writing on classical grounded theory (GT) and proclaimed that his interests were formalized prior to his partnership with Strauss (Charmaz, 2014; Holton & Walsh, 2017). Glaser went on to further clarify his position and teach those willing to learn about GT through many journal articles, presentations and books (Glaser, 1992; Glaser, 1999; Walsh et al., 2015).

In the 1990s, Strauss began to work alongside Juliet Corbin, applying a more interpretivist approach to the methodology, to address previous concerns of rigid structure and clarity in its flexible nature. Strauss and Corbin continued to work alongside each other until Strauss' passing in 1996, constantly improving and clarifying interpretive grounded theory (IGT). Strauss (posthumous) and Corbin's most recent 4th edition of *Basics of Qualitative Research* (2015) includes a reflection on how far IGT has come as well as conveying anticipation for how new grounded theorists may use IGT in the future.

Following an influence by the original authors, Kathy Charmaz, a student of both Glaser and Strauss, began applying a more modernized and constructivist approach towards grounded theory. This modernized approach includes acknowledging the "interaction between the 'viewer' (researcher) and the 'viewed' (subject of the research)" (Farragher & Coogan, 2018, p. 5; Lian, 2016; Martin & Barnard, 2013). This said, Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory (CGT) does remain true to some of the key tenets of the original grounded theory articulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), particularly interpretive understanding and iterative logic (Charmaz, 2014).

Throughout many changes and interpretations between GT, IGT and CGT, the constant comparative method has remained one of the original and most important criteria. As discussed by Holton and Walsh (2017), "[the] constant comparative analysis is a strategy for directing the collection and analysis of data in tandem with theoretical sampling as a means of guiding the direction of further data sampling" (p. 34). This method allows for primary data to emerge – or, in the case of CGT, to be constructed – as patterns that lead to substantiated theoretical understandings.

This said, there are still several distinct alterations that have occurred within the conceptual tenants of any grounded theory research (see Figure 1). The following discussion will provide succinct overviews of the central tenets (philosophical influence, prior knowledge and experience, as well as data coding and analysis) and how they are diversely interpreted within GT, IGT, and CGT.

## Findings

### Philosophical Influence

Many GT researchers assert Glaser follows a positivist ontological approach, influenced in part by his time at Columbia University when positivism was at its height of study (Bruscaglioni, 2016; Charmaz, 2014). However, it is also argued, Glaser may not adhere publicly to any philosophical or ontological perspective (Bottcher Berthelsen, Lindhardt, & Frederiksen, 2017; Holton & Walsh, 2017). Bottcher Berthelsen et al. (2017) suggest Glaser emphasized GT as "free from ties to any theory of science and [tried to avoid] philosophical conceptions of what is 'truth'" (p. 414). Therefore, GT should remain as a purely inductive and flexible methodology (Glaser, 2013).

Strauss and Corbin have previously identified interpretivism as their ontological influence for IGT (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). In this paradigm, emphasis is placed on individual perspectives as they contain valuable data for the development of a theoretical understanding (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). IGT researchers acknowledge theories can be subject to various interpretations as well as limited in two ways: (1) "they are always provisional," such that others may elaborate or refute the theory's claims; and (2) "theories are limited in time," such that they are influenced by a particular era or society (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 279). Therefore, Strauss and Corbin have encouraged and applauded researchers for their continued adaptation of IGT. One such adaptation is the argument of IGT allowing for an abductive reasoning influence rather than being purely inductive (Bruscaglioni, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Charmaz (2017a; 2017b) proclaims CGT has a pragmatist ontology with a relativist epistemology. Further, CGT's approach includes the notion of many constructed realities, such as "situating [the] research in

**Figure 1:** *Illuminating the Types of Grounded Theory*

| | GT (Classical Grounded Theory) | IGT (Interpretive Grounded Theory) | CGT (Constructivist Grounded Theory) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Philosophical Influence** | (Attempts to be) free from influence | Interpretivism | Constructivism and Pragmatism |
| **Role of the Researcher** | The researcher is *distant* and *detached*. | The researcher is *engaged* with and *actively interprets* the data. | The researcher *constructs* rather than *discovers*. |
| **Allowance of Prior Knowledge** | No, the researcher and research must remain neutral. Only the information provided by the collected data should influence the progress of the research. Prior knowledge could negatively influence the direction or quality of the concluding theory. | Yes, it can be used to strengthen the overall research and data collection. Referred to as '*sensitivity*' and includes having insight on relevant issues. | Yes, it is understood that one cannot escape prior knowledge. Examine and understand how it influences the researcher and research; do not ignore, erase or let it control the direction of the research. |
| **Literature Review** | To be conducted following data analysis. | Allowed prior to and during the data collection process. Can be used for data comparisons, enhance sensitivity, stimulate observations, and confirm or explain results. | There is no prescribed location; it is up to the decision-making process of a given researcher. If written early, it should be revisited to critique and confirm it aligns with the research's conclusion. |
| **Research Question(s)** | There should be no pre-set or vaguely established questions prior to data collection. Questions should become clear during data analysis. | Kept partially vague for flexibility; will become clearer as data emerges. Each additional question can reference another topic of interest. | Influence how data is collected. Can and should be altered if more significant or pressing questions arise. |
| **Data Coding and Analysis** | (1) Substantive coding, and (2) Theoretic coding (TC) Focuses on patterns or trends within the data. Includes the Constant Comparative Method and use of a core category. Includes TC to merge categories together into a substantive theory. | (1) Open-coding, (2) axial-coding, and (3) selective-coding Allows for single occurrences within the data to be coded and analyzed for significance. Includes the Constant Comparative Method and use of a core category. Have broken down and rebuilt codes to create more significant and descriptive categories that lend themselves to a substantive theory. | (1) code everything, and (2) group all data around the most predominant codes (includes focused coding) Purports these as flexible guidelines rather than strict rules. Allowance of more than one core category. |
| **Theory Creation and Verification** | There is a distinct separation between theory generation (primary) and verification (secondary). Creation of a substantive or formal theory is central to the completion of a research study. Verification can only occur afterwards by quantitative analysis. | Creation of a substantive or formal theory is central to the completion of a research study. Verification occurs through multiple perspectives confirming the same data. | The constructed theory is an interpretation rather than an exact representation. The theory is dependent upon the researcher's view and cannot occur or stand without it. |

the historical, social, and situation conditions of its production" (Charmaz, 2014; Charmaz, 2017a, p. 299; Kean, Salisbury, Rattray, Walsh, Huby & Ramsay, 2016). These realities can also include how a researcher's status (i.e., their "background, values and actions, [and] situation") should not be thrown aside (Charmaz, 2017a p. 299; Lian, 2016). For example, as per Farragher and Coogan (2018), a researcher's connection and ability to "understand the meanings that the research participants made of their experiences... [may lead to] generating theories that may have usefulness when transferred across contexts related to the area of interest" (p. 6). Therefore, the researcher's status should be acknowledged, applied appropriately (only when necessary and not to a point where it steers the research), and addressed within the research they conduct (Charmaz, 2014).

## Prior Knowledge and Experience

GT suggests the inclusion of a researcher's influence, knowledge, or experience would add a significant bias towards the data and negatively impact the overall quality of the study. Categories and concluding theories should emerge from the data, rather than being assumed or prescribed based on preexisting ideas (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Holton & Walsh, 2017). Therefore, the researcher must remain a neutral observer whose main priority is to report on naturally occurring and emerging data. This said, GT acknowledges that prior knowledge can be useful, but only when attempting to apply a formulated substantive theory towards a more meta (formal) theory.

IGT, however, recognizes that a researcher cannot be fully blind or ignorant to prior literature on their area of study (Holton & Walsh, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Strauss and Corbin suggest researchers become aware of and acknowledge such influences so that they do not negatively impact or steer their research focus, data collection or categorization. Such information can be used to strengthen the overall resolve and quality of the research, creation of data categories and, finally, theoretical assumptions.

CGT, being aligned with IGT's principles but with GT's concerns, concedes that previous knowledge can strengthen a research project, provided that it does not define the project (Charmaz, 2014; Farragher & Coogan, 2018; Rand, 2013). Additionally, CGT researchers are to carefully navigate and control their perspectives rather than attempt to erase or forget their knowledge or experiences. Charmaz (2014) suggests preconceived ideas

or areas to examine can be used "as tentative tools, rather than definitive concepts...they open up inquiry rather than shutting it down" (p. 31). Therefore, these ideas or areas of inquiry can allow for development to occur in the initial stages of a study.

## Data Coding and Analysis

GT's coding of data focuses on two flexible steps: (1) substantive coding, and (2) theoretic coding (Bruscaglioni, 2016; Holton & Walsh, 2017). Essentially, substantive coding occurs throughout the initial analysis of emerging data; it is tied to the premise of allowing all data to be included in the coding process of categories. GT warns there may be too many descriptive codes available to apply towards potential categories that may distract from the emerging theory. Therefore, Glaser suggests researchers should not waste too much of their time on the descriptive codes, but rather focus on saturation to guide their research towards the core category (Glaser, 2016). Saturation should occur through the constant comparative method as data are being compared against one another and certain incidents or themes continually appear.

The emphasis of a core category within GT includes denoting the main phenomenon connecting all other categories together. Following the discovery of the core category, the researcher will begin to make theoretical hypotheses regarding its relationship with the remaining categories. This theoretic coding stage additionally includes "coding families" that are available to assist with the process (Bruscaglioni, 2016, p. 2014). Glaser refers to these "coding families" as theoretic codes (or TC's) and describes them as abstractions which are used in merging categories together and towards the final goal of a substantive theory (Glaser, 2013).

IGT, emphasizing a more structured approach, has three main steps to the data coding and analysis process: (1) open-coding, (2) axial-coding, and (3) selective-coding (Bruscaglioni, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest beginning open-coding by breaking down and questioning a particular observation, event or piece of information. Throughout this process many concepts may be created, eventually grouped together around commonalities, which will then influence the development or discovery of significant subcategories. The next step, axial-coding, connects the subcategories and rebuilds the concepts within them into larger and more focused categories. It is through these more focused categories that selective-coding will begin and the researcher will select a core

category as their primary focus. The use of a core category dates to grounded theory as a unified methodology and therefore is also significant for the IGT coding process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Through the selective coding process, by which a core category emerges, theoretical conceptualization can begin, and the researcher can attempt to verify any assumptions that they may have (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Whether their assumptions are proven or disproven, they will have newly acquired information that will aid in a concluding theory on their research topic.

Continuing the constant comparative method, originally introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967), IGT specifies that the researcher should move between the open-coding and axial-coding processes many times before moving onto selective-coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This interplay between steps allows for strong statements or concepts to emerge as well as allowing the researcher to verify the quality or overall importance of a potentially significant core category.

CGT has two main phases towards coding and analysis: (1) naming all pieces of data from the interview, document, or however else researcher collects data; and (2) taking the most used codes and organizing the remaining data around them (Charmaz, 2014). The first phase allows for the possibility of many potential theory directions and is accomplished through several possible coding styles, such as word-by-word, line-by-line and incident-by-incident (Charmaz, 2014; Martin & Barnard, 2013). This is a step away from IGT and GT as they are skeptical of too many codes or descriptions. However, CGT does include the constant comparative method, as Charmaz suggests including note-taking or memos as part of the cyclical process to help construct the primary categories (Charmaz, 2014; Martin & Barnard, 2013). This process allows the researcher to code data as actions rather than participant characteristics to allow for the analysis and categories to become much stronger. Unlike the use of a "core category", Charmaz suggests that more than one central category or theme is allowed (Berthelsen et al., 2016). Although these categories are to be constructed from the data rather than being influenced by pre-conceived notions, Charmaz argues that escaping prior knowledge is nearly impossible and thus cautions CGT researchers to keep an open mind and be flexible (Charmaz, 2014).

CGT takes coding one step further by reiterating the interactive practice that allows for the understanding of "participants' views and actions from their perspectives" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 115). It is within the second phase where the previously constructed theoretical assumptions are tested against the remaining data and the researcher's own influence can be included. CGT refers to this as focused coding, in which the researcher actively chooses which codes are most significant to carry on with towards theoretical conceptualization (Charmaz, 2014; Lian, 2016). These chosen codes will have specific analytical strength behind them and can provide insights that can be seen nowhere else in the data.

## Practical Application

Researchers who utilize GT, IGT, and CGT come from many focused backgrounds, such as nursing and health (Glaser, 1999; Farragher & Coogan, 2018; Kean et al., 2016; Li, Turale, Stone & Petrini, 2015; McCallin, 2011), socio-ecological studies (Apostolopoulou, Drakou, Santoro & Pantis, 2012; Endl, 2017; Eriksson & Emmelin, 2013; Faehnle, Backlund, Tyrvainen, Niemela & Yli-Pelkonen, 2014; Hansson, Pedersen & Weisner, 2012; Wuelser & Pohl, 2016; Vanderlinden et al., 2017), education and learning (Rand, 2013; Smith-Sebasto & Walker, 2010; Taber, 2010), digital archival (Lian, 2016), and gender diversity in the workplace (Martin & Barnard, 2013). They choose grounded theory based on several factors, the most important of which is to discover a theory rooted in the data. But with three leading perspectives incorrectly labelled, it has proven difficult for researchers to acknowledge or confirm which type has influenced a study and whether or not it was correctly applied (Holton & Walsh, 2017).

Unfortunately, due to the contentious and confusing nature of the blanket title "grounded theory" there are instances (Endl, 2017; Norton et al., 2013; Smith-Sebasto & Walker, 2010; Taber, 2010) wherein researchers have co-applied techniques from two or more types. Due to this oversight, and the "picking-and-choosing" of distinct characteristics, there may be considerable flaws within a research analysis that has not effectively applied either GT, IGT, or CGT as a singular methodology. For example: a researcher stating an influence of GT towards their study but allowing for an influence of prior knowledge (associated with IGT and/or CGT) and more than one core category (associated with CGT).

## Discussion

With distinguishable methodological titles, researchers can begin to clearly understand what separates the distinct types of grounded theory and more easily debate which may be more suited towards a

given study. Not only will researchers be able to correctly identify which grounded theory they hope to use, but they will also be able to apply its methodological assumptions properly in an attempt to effectively uncover and apply a significant theoretical conceptualization towards a given phenomenon.

Many researchers who have read discussions on grounded theory have heard the phrase "research grounded in data"; however, this may not necessarily mean a researcher has effectively used GT, IGT, or CGT. As Glaser states, "it is [classical] grounded theory only when it follows the grounded theory methodological package" (Glaser, 1999, p. 836). Overall, this sentiment is shared with Strauss and Corbin (1990), as well as Charmaz (2014), who additionally emphasize the importance of their own methodological completion, which primarily rests of theoretical conceptualization.

Most often, researchers in the fields of nursing and health tend to lean purposefully towards GT (Knott, Turnbull, Olver & Winefield, 2012; Li et al., 2015; McCallin, 2011; Norton, Holloway & Galvin, 2013). This is a reasonable finding as the original grounded theory began with nursing and health care studies and Glaser carried on with this in his GT work (Glaser, 1992; Glaser and Strauss, 1965, 1967). However, there are instances in which researchers in this area have utilized CGT (Farragher & Coogan, 2018; Kean et al., 2016). Both socio-ecological as well as education and learning research have included influence primarily from IGT (e.g., Apostolopoulou et al., 2012; Endl, 2017; Eriksson & Emmelin, 2013; Faehnle et al., 2014; Hansson et al., 2012; Wuelser & Pohl, 2016). Newly introduced to grounded theory ideals and research, the fields of digital archival and gender diversity in the workplace have included CGT's modernized approach (Lian, 2016; Martin & Barnard, 2013).

While it is beyond the scope or purpose of this paper to discuss at length how or why certain fields predominantly choose one grounded theory perspective above others, this type of research would be beneficial towards the overall theme and discourse on the distinct types of grounded theory. An extensive literature review and philosophical discussion are required to fulfil such a request. Additionally, further research and specified articles into each type of grounded theory should occur to address their unique presumptions and processes.

## Conclusions

Although there are a few underlying assumptions agreed upon by all three types of grounded theory, many more steps, processes, and philosophical assumptions are subject to disagreement. As GT philosophically aligns with positivist thinking (or is not defined by any paradigm, according to Glaser), IGT emphasizes interpretivism through individual perspectives, while CGT allows for interpretive understandings and iterative logic. With regards to data collection and analysis, GT and IGT are, at the very least, in agreement on the use of core categories but disagree on the use of prior knowledge, literature or experiences. GT suggests that no prior knowledge should influence a research study or its collected data, whereas IGT suggests that these are opportunities that could strengthen the entire project. The outlier would be CGT, as it does not use core categories but emphasizes the assertion that prior knowledge and a researcher's experience can become significant within a research study. Where GT and CGT agree is in the area of saturation of significant categories within the data that is necessary for theoretical development. IGT, on the other hand, suggests for the breakdown and rebuilding of data and categories allowing for the rebuilt categories to try and withstand prior knowledge and either lead into or towards a strong theory.

While Glaser focused more on what he believed GT ought to be, as the original grounded theory established in 1967, Strauss and Corbin appeared more accepting of variations (Charmaz, 2014). It is through Strauss and Corbin's acceptance and encouragement that Charmaz undertook one of the largest leaps towards modernizing grounded theory: an accepted, utilized and distinguished constructivist perspective. As Charmaz was inspired to provide her approach to grounded theory with a unique and specified title, current and future researchers of this once singular methodology should look towards the benefits that this distinction can offer.

Rather than asking "What is grounded theory?" the more appropriate question a researcher should ask is, "What types of grounded theory are there?" From there, the researcher should be able to succinctly outline and discuss classical, interpretive or constructivist grounded theory. They will have the opportunity to properly acknowledge GT, IGT and CGT, and the primary tenets that are attributed to each (Farragher & Coogan, 2018). Therefore, a researcher should be able to clearly identify and be transparent about which type

of grounded theory they are influenced by and, by extension, what type of philosophical interpretation, inclusion of outside information and methods of data collection and analysis have occurred.

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Kailah Sebastian is a graduate student with the University of Regina's Department of Sociology and Social Studies. She is currently completing her Master's thesis entitled *Sources of water conflict: Climate change impacts on riparian communities*. Throughout her research project she has been awarded two research grants and numerous academic scholarships – including the Saskatchewan Innovation and Excellence Graduate Scholarship. Her primary scientific interest centres around socio-ecological impacts on watershed sustainability, such as prolonged and exacerbated flooding events. Kailah currently resides on the Sunshine Coast in British Coumbia.