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## The Use of Life Narrative and Living Standard Measurement Survey Data in the Study of Poverty in the Caribbean: A Resolution of Conflicting Epistemologies

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### ABSTRACT

The paper examines the compatibility or usefulness of fit between epistemologically disparate quantitative survey data and qualitative life narrative data gleaned in the study of poverty in the Caribbean. It aims to find out whether or not the different approaches to the understanding of "reality" on which the two methodologies are based preclude the integration of their findings as a means of furthering understanding of the dynamics of Caribbean poverty. The analysis draws on Country Poverty Studies conducted in the territory of Grenada in the Eastern Caribbean. It is centered on the demographic measure of fertility, a measure of chronic illnesses by socioeconomic status and life narrative interviews conducted around the themes of poverty, family and life experiences with select poor households across the country. Fertility was measured using parity of women aged <15 - 30+. Statistical analyses were done using cross tabulations. The findings indicate that the hermeneutic understanding of the life narratives, and the causal explanatory accounts provided by the positivist quantitative data, allow for understanding of negative health seeking behaviour on the part of the poor, not provided by the quantitative data by themselves. They also provide insight into the synergy between family, reproductive behaviour, labour market status and chronic poverty in the Caribbean region that would not have been possible through the use of the positivist quantitative method by itself.

### KEYWORDS

Quantitative Data; Life Narrative Data; Epistemology; Caribbean Country Poverty Studies; Living Standard Measurement Surveys

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