

Exploring the wider consequences of fuel poverty

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Presentation overview

- Key background points
- Research aim and methods
- Three areas of research
- Conclusion

Key background points

- Evidence of two main pathways between fuel poverty and other forms of disadvantage (Anderson et al. 2010; Beatty et al. 2014)
 1. Fuel costs are considered a financial burden and this may reduce resources available for other essentials (Preston et al. 2014; Grey et al. 2017)
 2. Coping behaviours and strategies are often adopted to mitigate aspects of fuel poverty (Gibbons & Singler 2008)
 - *Efficiency strategies* i.e. ways of preserving heat (Brunner et al. 2012)
 - *Sufficiency strategies* i.e. rationing fuel use (Brunner et al. 2012)
 - Debt accrual (Gibbons & Singler 2008)

Research aim and methods

- **Research aim:** To explore the relationship between fuel poverty and other forms of disadvantage in UK households:
 - Food insecurity
 - Material deprivation
 - Social isolation
- Use of national survey data:
 - *Living Costs and Food Survey*
 - *Understanding Society* survey
- Two expenditure-based fuel poverty measurements incorporating all domestic fuel expenditure

Fuel poverty and food insecurity

- Evidence of a *Heat or Eat* trade-off (Bhattacharya et al. 2003; O'Neill et al. 2006; Beatty et al. 2014)
- Not always a direct trade-off
 - Rationing fuel AND food (Gibbons & Singler 2008; Lambie-Mumford et al. 2015)
 - Reducing the variety and quality of food (Anderson et al. 2010; Brunner et al. 2012; Lambie-Mumford et al. 2015)
- Data source: *Living Costs and Food Survey*
 - Cluster analysis to determine food expenditure patterns
- **Key result:** Fuel poor households adopt food expenditure patterns that place less of a burden on income

Fuel poverty and material deprivation

- Fuel costs may consume a significant proportion of income
 - Inability to afford other essential items (Anderson et al. 2010)
- A particular focus on the order of curtailment of items:
 - Which items do households forgo first and what impact might this have?
- Data source: *Understanding Society* survey
- Item Response Theory (possibly!)

Fuel poverty and social isolation

- Linked to the impacts that fuel poverty can have on the home...
 - Too cold to invite friends and family over (Anderson et al. 2010)
 - Presence of damp and mould (Baker 2001)
 - Rationing lighting (Day & Hitchings 2009; Brunner et al. 2012)
- ...and also on personal hygiene
 - Lowering the temperature of hot water (Day & Hitchings 2009)
- Data source: *Understanding Society* survey
- Different levels of social isolation:
 - Individual, group, community, and the larger social environment (Zavaleta et al. 2014)

Conclusion

- There is a need to consider all forms of domestic fuel use to fully understand fuel poverty and its consequences
- It is important to continue research into how fuel poverty is experienced and coped with, and the outcomes of this
- This research may provide further avenues to identify and eradicate fuel poverty
 - May help to develop appropriate policy responses to assist those living in fuel poverty

Thank you for listening!

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