

16

Writing for Applied Audiences

SOLUTIONS

1. Write the specified components of a two-page policy brief.
 - a. Title: “Moving to Low-poverty Areas Improves Outcomes for Families in Public Housing”
 - b. Charts of key results; same as figures 15M and 15N.

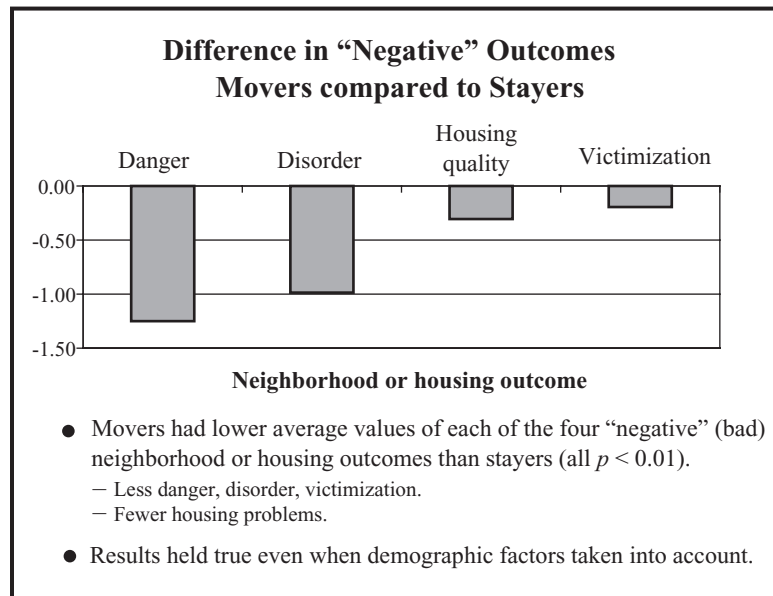


Figure 16A.

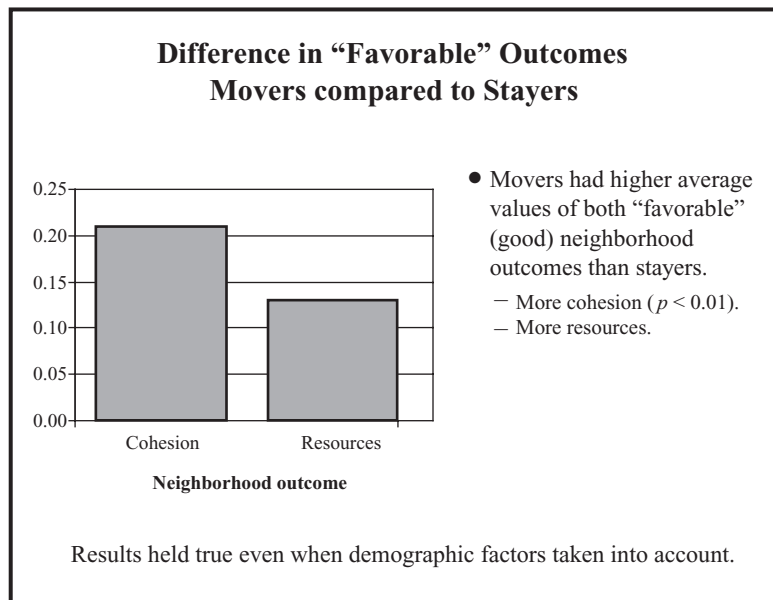


Figure 16B.

- c. “As shown in figure 16A, low-income families who moved into low-poverty neighborhoods showed appreciably lower levels of danger, victimization, disorder, and housing problems than those who remained in their original, high-poverty neighborhoods, even when demographic characteristics were taken into account. Likewise, the favorable outcomes were better among movers than stayers, with higher levels of cohesion and resources (figure 16B).”
- d. “Low-income residents of public housing should advocate for more public housing in low-poverty neighborhoods, and should apply for such benefits when they are available.
- “Housing experts are in the best position to organize grassroots efforts to identify locations for public housing in low-poverty areas, and to enroll eligible persons in those programs. They should lobby for additional public housing in low-poverty areas and should disseminate information about available opportunities to low-income families who are eligible for such housing.
- “Policymakers are in the best position to develop legislation on these topics and to seek funding to support public housing. They should support legislation to fund and maintain public housing in low-poverty areas.”
- e. Sidebar: In the Yonkers Residential Mobility Program, low-income residents of public housing were randomly assigned to either move to a low-poverty neighborhood or stay in their current high-poverty neighborhood. The statistical analyses shown here correct for slightly more favorable age, educational attainment, and household composition among movers than among stayers.

3. Design a research poster.

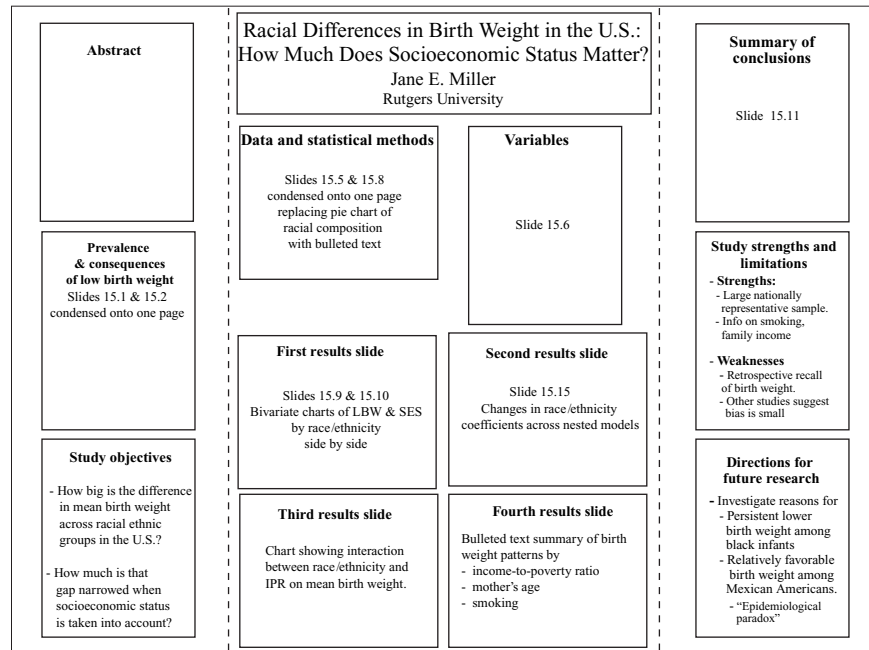


Figure 16C.

5. Executive summary of the study by Zimmerman (2003)

Background

- Peer effects have been observed in many issues related to higher education.
- Students' attitudes, values, and academic performance may be affected by peers.

Study Objectives

- To measure peer effects on academic performance, taking into account other possible determinants such as demographic attributes.

Data and Methods

- Data are from 3,151 students from the Williams College classes of 1990 through 2001.
- Information was collected on student's own math and verbal SAT scores, roommate's math and verbal SAT scores, student's grade point averages (GPA), and roommate matching preferences for freshman year.
- Multivariate regression was used to estimate association between own and roommate's SAT scores on GPA, taking into account gender, race, class year, and type of major.
- Models were estimated for all students combined and separately for students with combined SAT scores in the bottom 15%, middle 70%, and top 15% of the class.

Key Findings

- Mean combined (verbal + math) SAT score for the study sample was 1,396 points, with a standard deviation of 123.
- Students' own SAT scores were positively associated with cumulative GPA at all levels of combined SAT scores. Effects were smaller for math (less than one-tenth of a point increase in GPA per 100-point rise in math SAT) than verbal scores (one-tenth to two-tenths of a point increase in GPA per 100-point rise in verbal SAT).
- Roommate's SAT scores were associated with student's GPA, but the effect was statistically significant only in the middle 70% of the SAT range.
- Roommate's verbal SAT had a modest positive effect on student's GPA—equivalent to a rise of four-hundredths (0.04) of a grade point per 100-point increase in roommate's verbal SAT.
- In contrast, roommate's math SAT had a small negative effect on student's GPA—equivalent to a drop of two-hundredths (–0.02) of a grade point per 100-point increase in roommate's math SAT.

Conclusions

- Peer effects on grade point average appear to be minimal, at least in the context of an elite, four-year private college.