

# **A Muslim School Advantage?**

Evidence from a Natural Experiment

Said Hassan

Nuffield College, University of Oxford

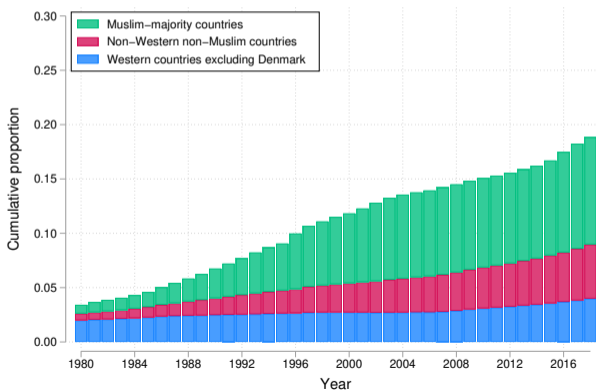


# Motivation

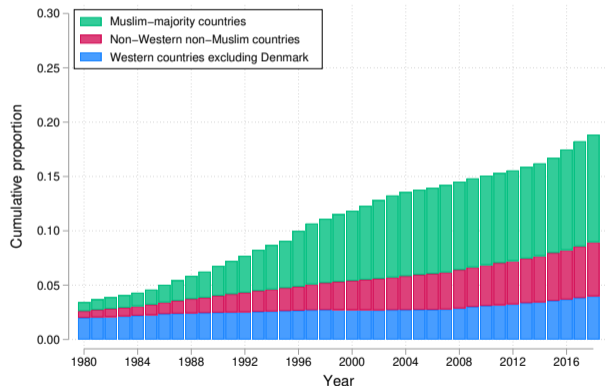
**Do Muslim schools improve the academic performance of Muslim children?**

# Motivation

Figure: School-aged children (5–15 yrs) by ethnic background in Denmark.

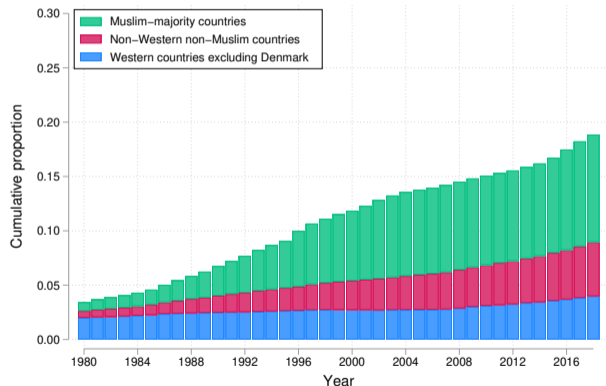


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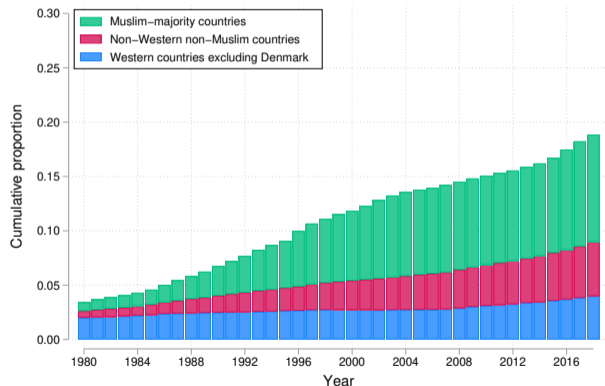
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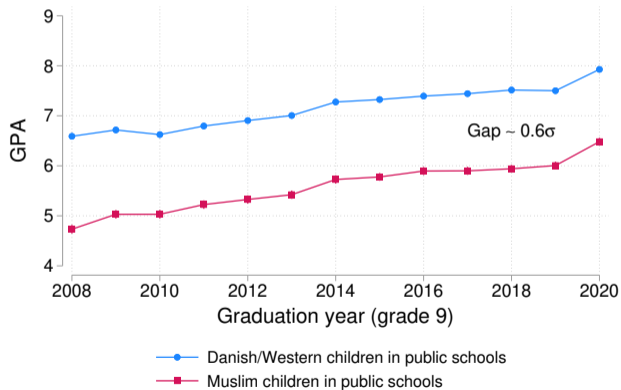
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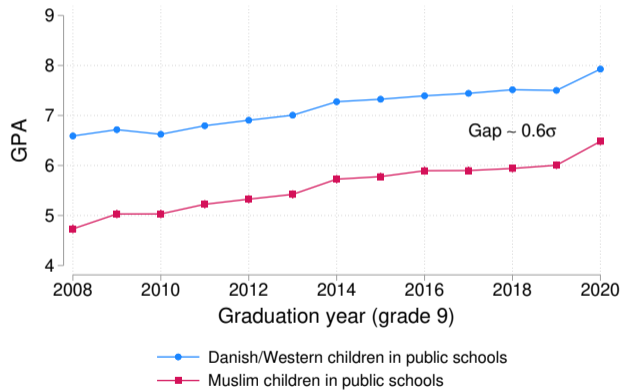
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- Socioeconomically disadvantaged (vs natives/Western immigrants)  
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- Concerns regarding “parallel societies” and social integration  
(Heath and Demireva, 2014; Hilbig and Riaz, 2022)

# Motivation

Figure: Test score gap: Muslim vs. non-Muslim students in **public schools**

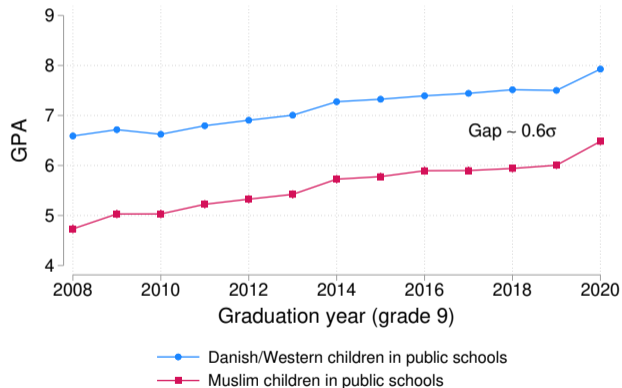


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➤  $\approx$  Black-White achievement gap in US (Reardon, 2015)

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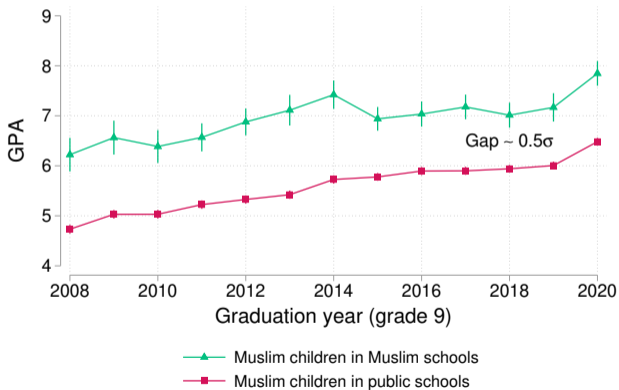


➤  $\approx$  Black-White achievement gap in US (Reardon, 2015)

➤ Muslim schools  $\Rightarrow$  negative peer effects? (Sacerdote, 2011)

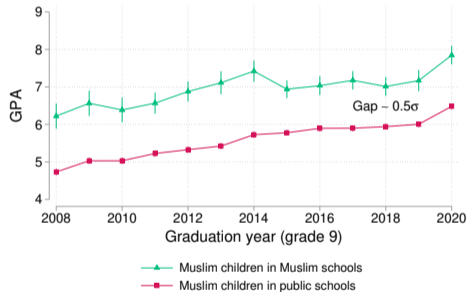
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Figure: Performance of **Muslim kids** in public vs Muslim schools



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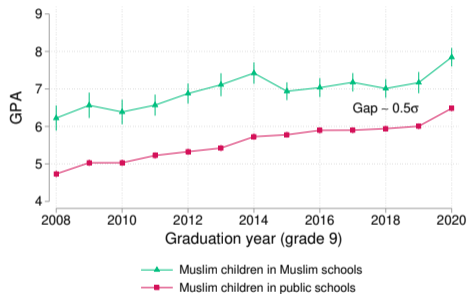
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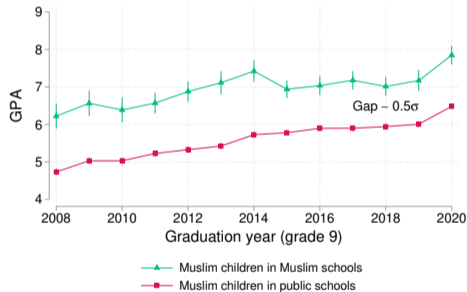
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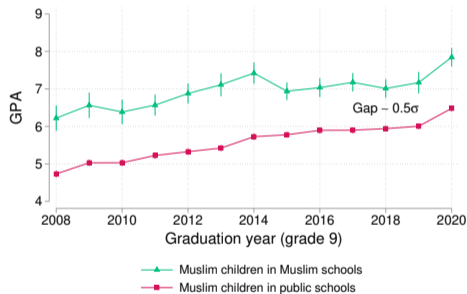
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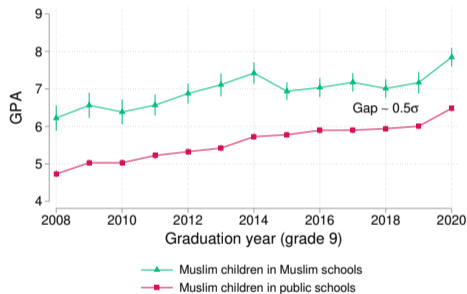
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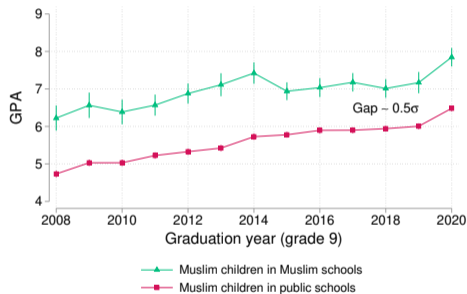
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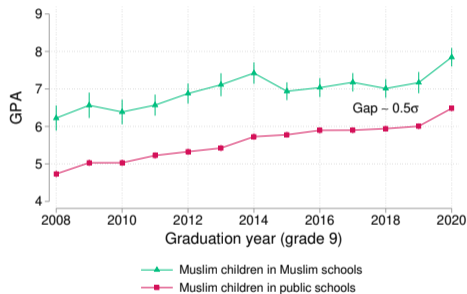
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- Discrimination/teacher bias (Bates et al., 2013)

Roadmap: Remainder of this talk

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5. Long term outcomes and social integration

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## Danish context

- 150 year tradition of independent schools  
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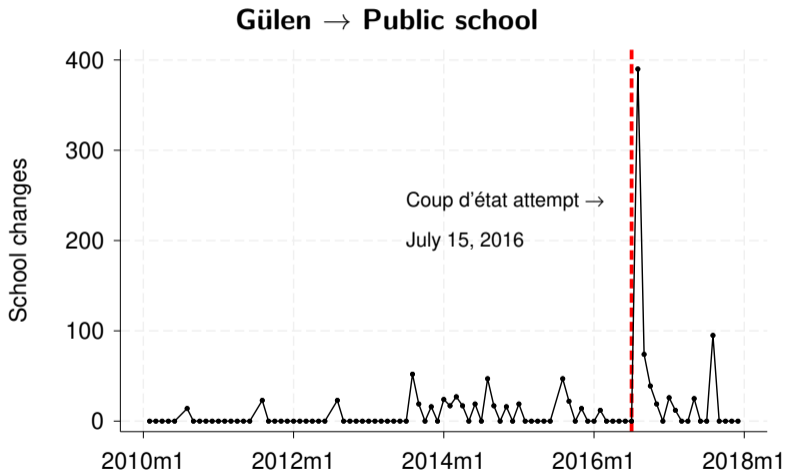
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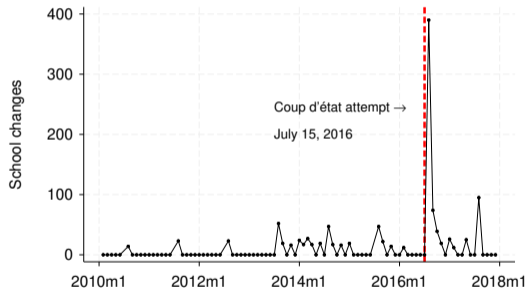
- Precise educational records/history
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- Test scores in grade 9 (but no panel data!)
- Reading and mathematics
  - Main: written externally evaluated
  - Supplementary: teacher evaluated

# Natural experiment



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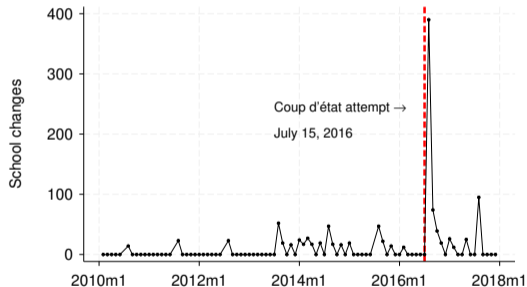
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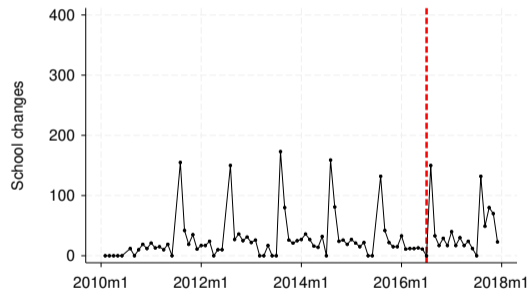
- **TR:** 80,000 arrests; 160,000 layoffs
- **DK:** 3 out of 9 schools closed
- **DK:** > 500 school changes

# Natural experiment

## Gülen → Public school



## Muslim (non-Gülen) → Public



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$$y_{it} = \rho D_i + x_i' \beta + \alpha_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

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## Stricter setups:

- Remove “stayers” ▸ Results without stayers
- Gülen school closures only vs control ▸ Closures
- Gülen → Other Muslim schools ▸ Other Muslim schools

## Covariate balance

	Treatment		Control		Difference	<i>p</i> -value
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Female	0.563	(0.496)	0.488	(0.501)	0.075	0.086
Age	16.153	(0.653)	16.226	(0.501)	−0.073	0.182
Both parents born in DK	0.815	(0.388)	0.774	(0.420)	0.041	0.236
Birth weight (kg)	3.412	(0.548)	3.413	(0.645)	−0.001	0.978
Parents divorced	0.080	(0.271)	0.071	(0.258)	0.008	0.726
Parental education (years)	12.823	(2.605)	12.644	(2.549)	0.179	0.436
Parental income	71.059	(30.889)	73.088	(25.237)	−2.028	0.438
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	Reading			Math		
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	OLS	OLS	IPTW	OLS	OLS	IPTW
Muslim school	0.345** (0.115)	0.319** (0.103)	0.322** (0.123)	0.319** (0.110)	0.283** (0.094)	0.319** (0.112)
Constant	-0.250 (0.158)	-0.202 (0.151)	-0.520*** (0.116)	-0.388*** (0.107)	-0.137 (0.119)	-0.694*** (0.096)
<i>Observations</i>	660	660	660	644	644	644
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.056	0.175		0.060	0.137	
Covariates	No	Yes	Yes <sup>†</sup>	No	Yes	Yes <sup>†</sup>

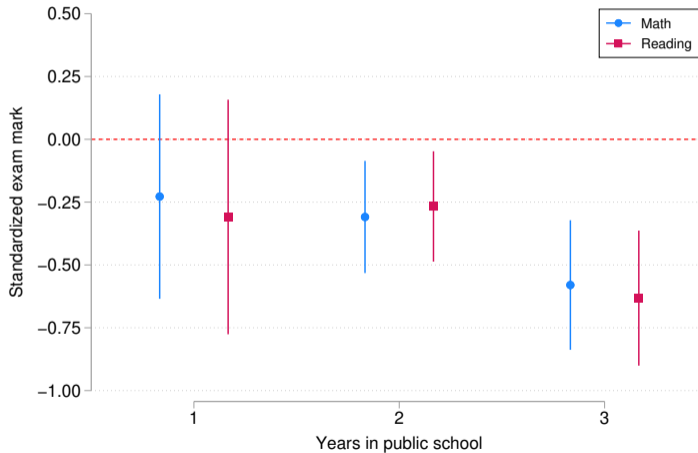
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- **How much is driven by disruption?**

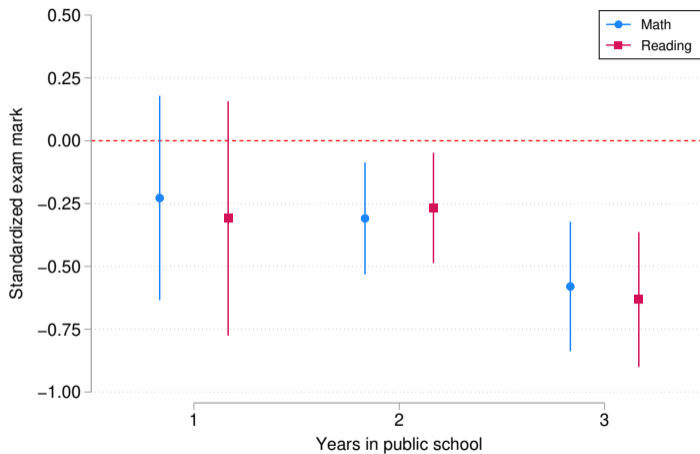
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# Disruption I



## Disruption II: Gülen → other Muslim schools

	Reading		Math	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Movers	−0.184 [ −0.525,0.156] (0.264)	−0.018 [ −0.348,0.312] (0.910)	−0.088 [ −0.469,0.292] (0.624)	0.065 [ −0.357,0.488] (0.743)
Constant	0.095 [ −0.211,0.402] (0.514)	0.108 [ −0.210,0.427] (0.476)	−0.069 [ −0.148,0.010] (0.080)	0.124 [ −0.009,0.258] (0.066)
<i>Observations</i>	663	663	649	649
$R^2$	0.022	0.144	0.015	0.089
Covariates	No	Yes	No	Yes

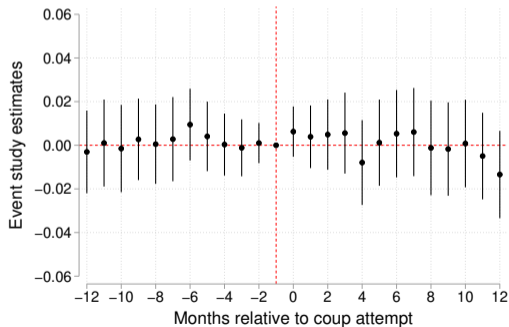
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**Figure:** Event study: parents with children in Gülen vs non-Gülen Turkish Muslim schools

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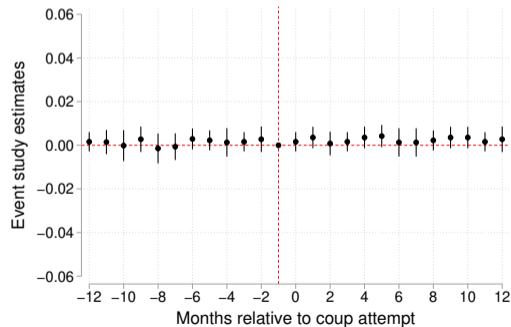
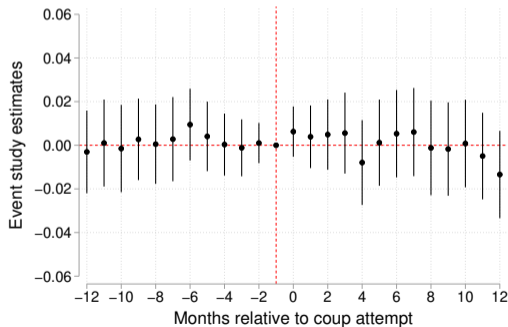


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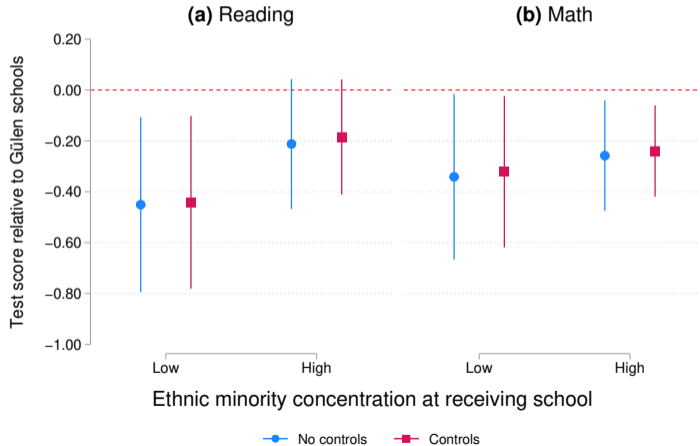
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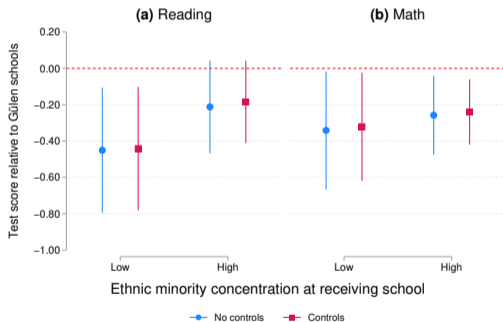
(b) Divorce



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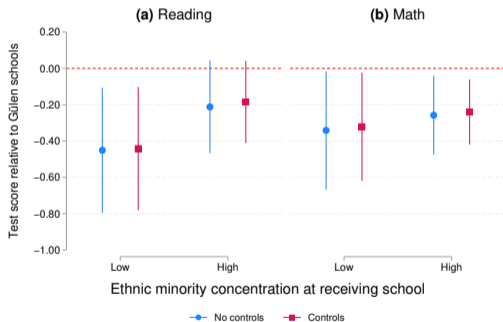


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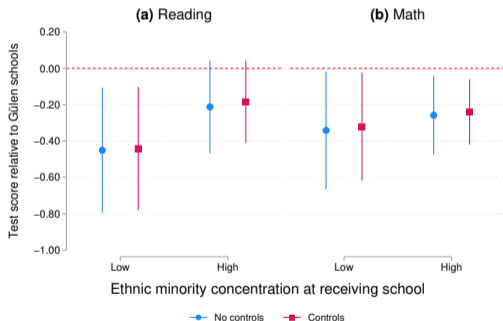
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▸ Ethnicity definitions

▸ Percentile cutoffs

➤ **Not** driven by SES

▸ Control for SES

➤ Aspirations play a role

▸ Aspiration results

## Mechanism I: Ethnic similarity – School and teacher characteristics

	Low Ethnic Concentration		High Ethnic Concentration		<i>t</i> -test	
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Difference	<i>p</i> -value
<b><i>School and peer characteristics</i></b>						
Ethnic minority	0.274	(0.094)	0.603	(0.174)	−0.329	0.000
School GPA (std)	−0.130	(0.267)	−0.347	(0.248)	0.217	0.000
School cohort size	188.013	(50.768)	167.988	(56.120)	20.025	0.019
Paternal income	59.919	(9.740)	47.384	(6.937)	12.535	0.000
Maternal income	47.152	(4.703)	38.164	(4.241)	8.988	0.000
Paternal education	13.969	(0.920)	13.020	(0.500)	0.949	0.000
Maternal education	13.793	(1.003)	12.495	(0.910)	1.298	0.000
<b><i>Teacher characteristics</i></b>						
Ethnic minority	0.053	(0.050)	0.115	(0.076)	−0.062	0.000
Age	42.541	(2.716)	42.289	(1.702)	0.252	0.481
Certified	0.801	(0.093)	0.795	(0.087)	0.006	0.677
Experience (years)	12.678	(2.350)	12.566	(1.735)	0.111	0.733
Experience ≥ 3 years	0.887	(0.064)	0.879	(0.057)	0.008	0.390
<b><i>Observations</i></b>	77		83			

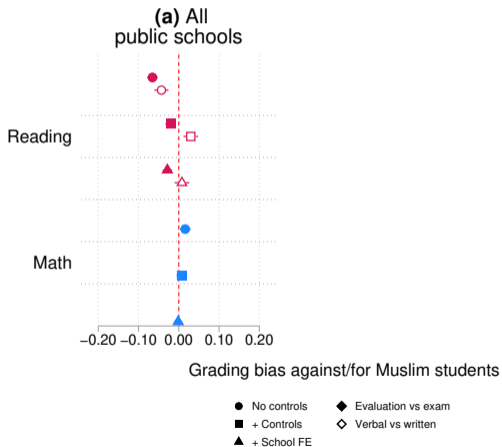
## Mechanism I: Ethnic similarity – School and teacher characteristics

	Low Ethnic Concentration		High Ethnic Concentration		<i>t</i> -test	
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Difference	<i>p</i> -value
<b><i>School and peer characteristics</i></b>						
Ethnic minority	0.274	(0.094)	0.603	(0.174)	-0.329	0.000
School GPA (std)	-0.130	(0.267)	-0.347	(0.248)	0.217	0.000
School cohort size	188.013	(50.768)	167.988	(56.120)	20.025	0.019
Paternal income	59.919	(9.740)	47.384	(6.937)	12.535	0.000
Maternal income	47.152	(4.703)	38.164	(4.241)	8.988	0.000
Paternal education	13.969	(0.920)	13.020	(0.500)	0.949	0.000
Maternal education	13.793	(1.003)	12.495	(0.910)	1.298	0.000
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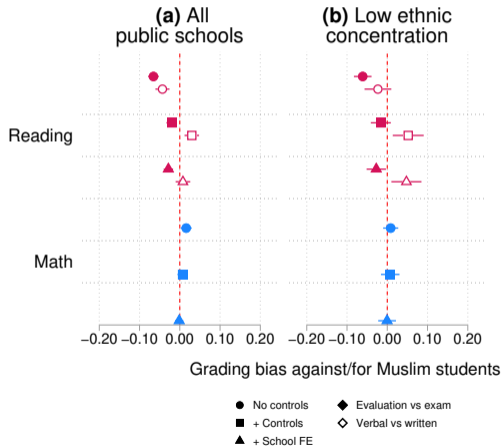
## Mechanism I: Ethnic similarity – School and teacher characteristics

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	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Difference	<i>p</i> -value
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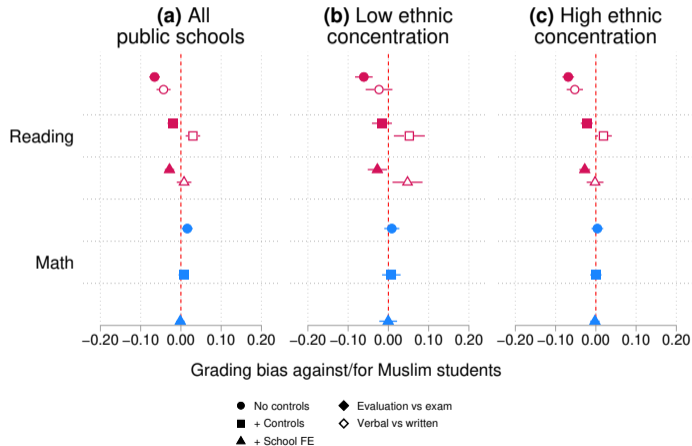
## Mechanism II: Grading bias and discrimination



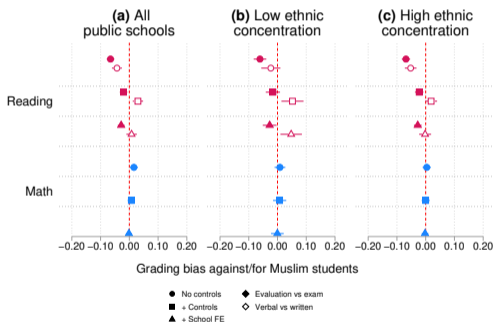
## Mechanism II: Grading bias and discrimination



## Mechanism II: Grading bias and discrimination



## Mechanism II: Grading bias and discrimination



► Robust to different models, samples, measures

► Conditional vs difference

► Comparison groups

► Sample periods

## Mechanism II: Grading bias and discrimination

**However, what happens if you ask teachers to *evaluate* students?**

## Mechanism II: Grading bias and discrimination

	<i>Dep. var.: Teacher-evaluated student readiness for high school</i>					
	Academic readiness		Social readiness		Personal readiness	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Muslim student	−0.154*** (0.008)	−0.030*** (0.008)	−0.133*** (0.009)	−0.041*** (0.009)	−0.181*** (0.009)	−0.057*** (0.009)
Constant	0.829*** (0.003)	0.784*** (0.003)	0.892*** (0.003)	0.832*** (0.004)	0.831*** (0.003)	0.746*** (0.005)
<i>Observations</i>	94,992	94,992	73,830	73,830	73,830	73,830
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> adj.	0.012	0.240	0.016	0.106	0.020	0.149
Covariates	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

## Long-term outcomes and integration

## Long-term outcomes and integration

	High school outcomes			Social benefits recipient	
	Admission (age 18)	Completion (age 20)	Standardized GPA	Ever	Weeks
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Muslim school	0.113** (0.037)	0.122* (0.058)	0.355* (0.149)	−0.048 (0.033)	−6.397 (4.828)
Constant	−0.172*** (0.048)	−0.163 (0.082)	−1.175*** (0.185)	0.029 (0.038)	3.024 (3.930)
<i>Observations</i>	720	720	514	720	720
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> adj.	0.078	0.118	0.125	0.041	0.019
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## Conclusion

**Muslim schools improve minority students' achievement and integration**

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- Driven by **ethnic homophily**  $\implies$  alienation in mainstream schools
- Not explained by grading bias
- ... but subtle biases persist

# Conclusion

## Muslim schools improve minority students' achievement and integration

- Driven by **ethnic homophily**  $\Rightarrow$  alienation in mainstream schools
- Not explained by grading bias
- ... but subtle biases persist

## Policy

- Assimilationist policies come with costs to important outcomes
- Limitation: no data on values, norms, etc.

**Thank You!**

`saidhassan.net`

## Comparing movers to stayers

	Stayers		Movers		Difference	<i>p</i> -value
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Female	0.562	0.497	0.488	0.501	0.074	0.126
Age	16.121	0.748	16.226	0.501	-0.105	0.105
Both parents born in DK	0.776	0.418	0.774	0.420	0.002	0.958
Birth weight (kg)	3.407	0.553	3.413	0.645	-0.006	0.917
Parents divorced	0.094	0.292	0.071	0.258	0.022	0.411
Parental education (years)	12.962	2.629	12.644	2.549	0.318	0.209
Parental income	73.764	33.797	73.088	25.237	0.676	0.821
Parent unemployed	0.182	0.387	0.263	0.442	-0.081	0.040
<i>Observations</i>	299		168			

# Disruption: Benchmark VA estimates [▶ Back to robust](#)

	Full sample			Muslim children		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Disruption ( $\delta$ )	−0.104*** (0.010)	−0.096*** (0.009)	−0.080*** (0.008)	−0.080*** (0.022)	−0.068** (0.021)	−0.063*** (0.019)
$\alpha$	0.683*** (0.003)	0.615*** (0.003)	0.601*** (0.003)	0.544*** (0.006)	0.504*** (0.006)	0.493*** (0.006)
$\gamma$			0.381*** (0.008)			0.338*** (0.018)
Constant	0.001 (0.004)	1.721*** (0.057)	1.791*** (0.057)	−0.183*** (0.010)	2.086*** (0.149)	2.221*** (0.150)
Observations	373,576	373,575	373,575	35,076	35,076	35,076
$R^2$	0.431	0.496	0.510	0.365	0.421	0.437
Covariates	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

## Disruption: Transition analyses [▶ Back to robust](#)

	From public school			From private school		From Muslim school	
	To public (1)	To private (2)	To Muslim (3)	To private (4)	To public (5)	To Muslim (6)	To public (7)
Move	-0.166*** (0.011)	0.039 (0.027)	0.163* (0.077)	-0.189*** (0.028)	-0.368*** (0.021)	0.043 (0.123)	-0.489*** (0.086)
Constant	-0.166*** (0.007)	-0.182*** (0.006)	-0.180*** (0.006)	0.101*** (0.016)	0.080*** (0.016)	-0.163 (0.124)	-0.153 (0.112)
<i>Obs. (total)</i>	256,697	265,828	265,828	43,223	47,647	1,566	1,837
<i>Obs. (movers)</i>	33,827	9,072	113	2,132	4,476	45	269
$R^2$ adj.	0.189	0.185	0.185	0.142	0.158	0.064	0.113
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## Ethnic similarity - Alternative definitions [▶ Back](#)

	A. Main results: Any minority		B. Alternative measure: Muslim		C. Alternative measure: Turkish	
	Reading (1)	Math (2)	Reading (3)	Math (4)	Reading (5)	Math (6)
<i>Ethnic concentration</i>						
Low (below median)	−0.441*	−0.321*	−0.397*	−0.278	−0.452***	−0.339***
	(0.171)	(0.150)	(0.165)	(0.144)	(0.118)	(0.099)
High (above median)	−0.185	−0.240**	−0.224	−0.280**	−0.206	−0.236
	(0.114)	(0.090)	(0.117)	(0.088)	(0.146)	(0.123)
<i>Observations</i>	655	639	655	639	655	639
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.168	0.128	0.166	0.127	0.168	0.128
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

# Ethnic similarity - Alternative pctile cutoffs

[▶ Back](#)

	Reading			Math		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>Ethnic concentration</i>						
Low ( $< P_{25}$ )	−0.509*** (0.128)			−0.321 (0.163)		
High ( $\geq P_{25}$ )	−0.269* (0.119)			−0.271** (0.101)		
Low ( $< P_{50}$ )		−0.445* (0.175)			−0.329* (0.153)	
High ( $\geq P_{50}$ )		−0.187 (0.112)			−0.235* (0.089)	
Low ( $< P_{75}$ )			−0.334** (0.122)			−0.296** (0.104)
High ( $\geq P_{75}$ )			−0.221 (0.190)			−0.222 (0.139)
<i>Observations</i>	655	655	655	639	639	639
$R^2$	0.166	0.168	0.164	0.127	0.128	0.127
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## Ethnic similarity - Correlation between measures [▶ Back](#)

Variables	A. All Schools			B. Receiving Schools		
	1.	2.	3.	1.	2.	3.
1. % Muslim	1.000			1.000		
2. % Any non-western	0.962	1.000		0.980	1.000	
3. % Turkish	0.631	0.586	1.000	0.645	0.599	1.000

# Ethnic similarity - Control for SES [▶ Back](#)

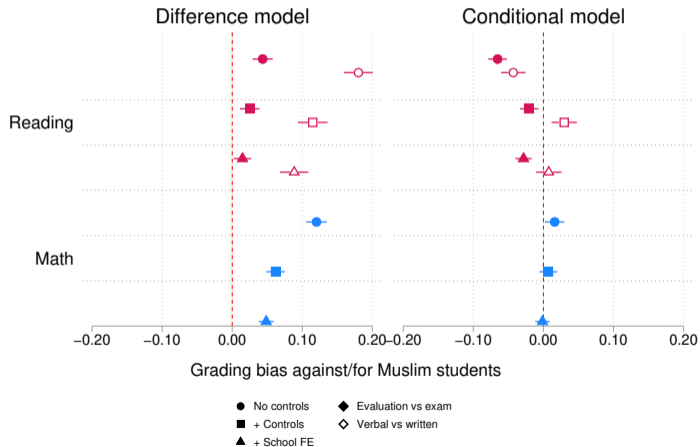
	Reading				Math			
	Main				Main			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
<i>Ethnic concentration</i>								
Low	-0.441*	-0.444	-0.331	-0.459*	-0.321*	-0.573	-0.288	-0.329*
	(0.171)	(0.250)	(0.389)	(0.179)	(0.150)	(0.298)	(0.379)	(0.163)
High	-0.185	-0.185	-0.117	-0.192	-0.240**	-0.335**	-0.220	-0.193*
	(0.114)	(0.125)	(0.223)	(0.163)	(0.090)	(0.125)	(0.220)	(0.092)
<i>School variables (average in <math>t - 1</math>)</i>								
Parental income		0.000				0.000		
		(0.000)				(0.000)		
Parental education			-0.049				-0.015	
			(0.126)				(0.129)	
School GPA				0.020				0.143
				(0.323)				(0.203)
Observations	655	655	655	637	639	639	639	621

## Ethnic similarity - Aspirations [▶ Back](#)

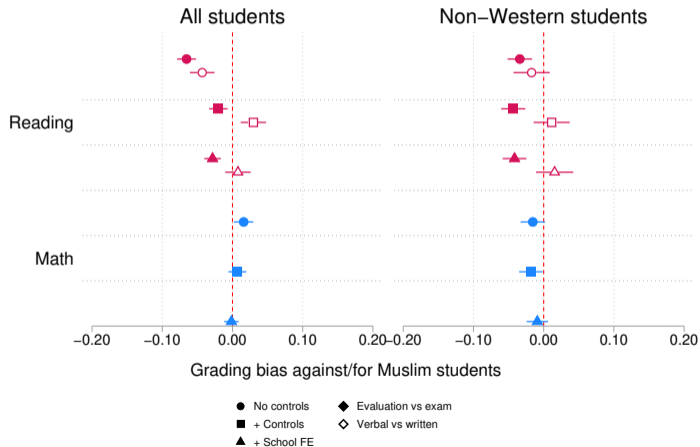
	<i>Dep. var.: Educational aspirations</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Minority student	0.006 (0.012)	0.097*** (0.018)	0.108*** (0.022)	0.075*** (0.020)
% Minority in school			0.000 (0.000)	
Minority student × % Minority in school			−0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.000)
Constant	0.794*** (0.005)	0.748*** (0.005)	0.741*** (0.007)	0.749*** (0.003)
<i>Observations</i>	46,988	44,105	36,212	36,209
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> adj.	0.000	0.197	0.198	0.251
Covariates	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
School fixed effects	No	No	No	Yes

# Grading bias: Conditional vs difference models

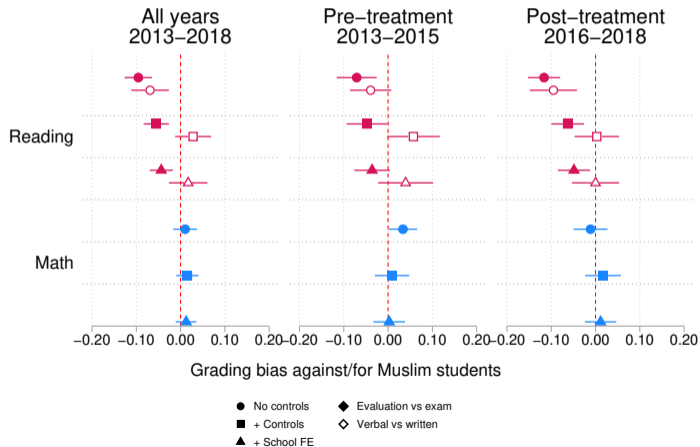
▶ Back



# Grading bias: Comparison groups [▶ Back](#)



# Grading bias: Sample periods (receiving schools) ▶ Back



# Robustness: School closures only

[▶ Back to main](#)
[▶ Back to robust](#)

	Reading			Math		
	(1) OLS	(2) OLS	(3) IPTW	(4) OLS	(5) OLS	(6) IPTW
Muslim school	0.458 (0.285)	0.601* (0.280)	0.226 (0.359)	0.379 (0.272)	0.657* (0.254)	0.123 (0.185)
Constant	-0.226 (0.285)	-0.277 (0.330)	-0.587*** (0.113)	-0.517 (0.272)	-0.529* (0.260)	-0.671*** (0.103)
<i>Observations</i>	148	148	148	148	148	148
$R^2$	0.105	0.259		0.064	0.201	
Covariates	No	Yes	Yes <sup>†</sup>	No	Yes	Yes <sup>†</sup>

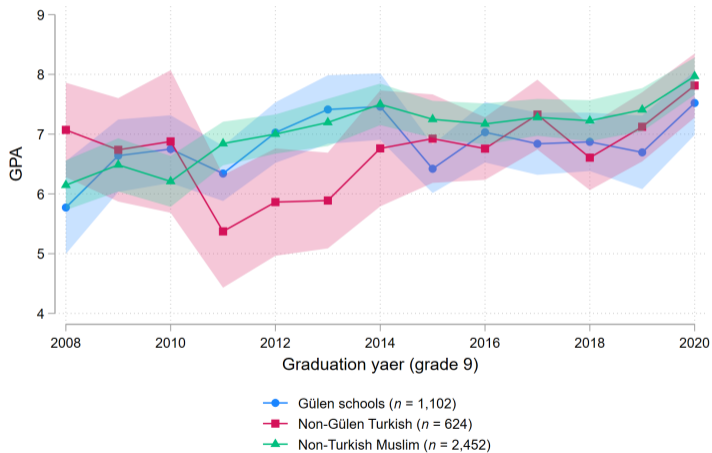
## Robustness: Results without stayers

[▶ Back to main](#)
[▶ Back to robust](#)

	Reading			Math		
	(1) OLS	(2) OLS	(3) IPTW	(4) OLS	(5) OLS	(6) IPTW
Muslim school	0.884*** (0.184)	0.923*** (0.181)	0.469*** (0.123)	0.868*** (0.099)	0.858*** (0.143)	0.465*** (0.119)
Constant	-0.788*** (0.122)	-0.700*** (0.185)	-0.587*** (0.086)	-0.937*** (0.093)	-0.688*** (0.179)	-0.756*** (0.073)
<i>Observations</i>	379	379	379	379	379	379
$R^2$	0.089	0.202		0.090	0.150	
Covariates	No	Yes	Yes <sup>†</sup>	No	Yes	Yes <sup>†</sup>

# Robustness: Gülen vs other Muslim schools - test scores

▶ Back



## SES in low- and high-ethnic concentration schools

	Low Ethnic		High Ethnic		Difference	p-value
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Ethnic minority	0.274	0.094	0.603	0.174	-0.329	0.000
<b><i>School characteristics (peers)</i></b>						
School cohort size	188.013	50.768	167.988	56.120	20.025	0.019
Maternal income	47.152	4.703	38.164	4.241	8.988	0.000
Maternal education	13.793	1.003	12.495	0.910	1.298	0.000
<b><i>Teacher characteristics</i></b>						
Ethnic minority	0.053	0.050	0.115	0.076	-0.062	0.000
Age	42.541	2.716	42.289	1.702	0.252	0.481
Certified	0.801	0.093	0.795	0.087	0.006	0.677
Experience (years)	12.678	2.350	12.566	1.735	0.111	0.733
Experience $\geq 3$ years	0.887	0.064	0.879	0.057	0.008	0.390
Specialized (Reading)	0.436	0.075	0.420	0.082	0.016	0.204
Specialized (Mathematics)	0.241	0.064	0.251	0.069	-0.009	0.372
<i>Observations</i>	77		83			