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Educational Outcomes of Muslim High School
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Abstract

This research examines the academic achievement and post-secondary enrollment of Muslim high school students in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) in comparison to students from other religious counterparts. Using the student Census of four pooled Grade 9 student cohorts from 2013 to 2016 and segmented assimilation theory and frameworks of social and cultural capital, we assess whether religion is associated with educational achievement in the Canadian context. Our findings show that Muslim students generally fall in the mid-range of academic performance, with lower average grades than some groups but outcomes comparable to others, particularly Christian students. However, after controlling for demographic, socioeconomic, and academic factors, these differences largely diminish, and the predicted performance of Muslim students aligns with most religious groups. Muslim students show relatively higher odds of college enrollment, but somewhat lower odds of university enrollment compared to certain groups, though these patterns are mediated by control variables. Overall, religious identification is not a strong independent predictor of educational outcomes once broader determinants are considered, underscoring the importance of structural context in shaping student trajectories.

In this paper, we explore the educational outcomes of Muslim students in the Toronto District School Board compared to their counterparts from other religious groups. The existing literature in Canada demonstrates various determinants of academic achievement, which include gender, parental education, socioeconomic background, race, immigrant status, and various forms of capital. Religious identification, however, is not often presented as a potential factor that is examined in terms of its relationship with educational outcomes, although findings from outside Canada have demonstrated that religious characteristics of students are associated with academic achievement. Our paper contributes to the gap in Canadian literature on educational outcomes and its association with religion. While our focus is on Muslim students, we do compare these outcomes with other religious affiliations, and how religious affiliation is associated with academic achievement and confirmed enrollment in either college or university after high school completion. Our findings demonstrate that Muslim students are not only academically engaged and want to succeed throughout their high school education, but also want to pursue post-secondary education, regardless of whether it is a college or university education. These religious differences suggest that while Muslim students are successfully navigating secondary education and accessing post-secondary opportunities, there may be structural, institutional, or contextual factors influencing their overall educational experiences, such as socioeconomic status, access to resources, and support systems within their communities.

THE FORMS OF CAPITAL AND ASSIMILATION

Before presenting our literature review, we first outline the theoretical framework of our study. Segmented assimilation theory seeks to understand the different trajectories that second-generation immigrant children assimilate into the host society they live in. The assimilation trajectories can take three different directions: selective acculturation (second-generation youth who maintain their country's culture and language while also absorbing the host country's culture), dissonant acculturation (second-generation youth fully adopting the host country's culture and language, losing their parents' language and ability to communicate with their children), and consonant acculturation (the difficulty both first- and second-generation immigrants experience in the host society with no support from their ethnic communities) (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Warner 2007).

In addition to segmented assimilation theory, we also consider the roles of the different forms of capital in the trajectory of students' educational pathways. Parents who have higher levels of human capital are better able to support their children's education, and their children, as a result, will face less second-generation adaptation challenges. In addition, a family's characteristics play an important role alongside the socioeconomic resources they possess. The ethnic and immigrant community can also have an impact on students' success, for it can influence the social capital and networks that immigrant families will have and increase parents' access to better economic opportunities (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In relation to what roles ethnic communities play, Warner (2007) proposes that religion should be an important factor to be considered when looking at immigrant families and

their children's journeys into assimilation into a host society. In the American context specifically, he argues that religion can be a factor that protects them against the isolation they might experience from the host society, and it is especially a measure of protection for youth. Since religious institutions play an important role for many ethnic immigrant communities, they should be considered part of the assimilation process, and these religious communities are prime locations for social capital accumulation and developing parents' social networks further (Warner 2007).

In the Canadian context, the assimilation process may prove to be different, in particular through the Canadian multicultural context, which does not block immigrants and visible minorities from achieving upward mobility to the extent that race and racialization are structural barriers to success in the American context (Karimi, Thompson, and Bucerus 2023). For example, Boyd (2002) found that second-generation immigrant adults do not have lower educational achievements than their parents; rather, they exceeded those educational attainments. In Karimi et al.'s study (2023), they explored Somali-Canadians' assimilation trajectories, and found that their identification with their ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds as well as Canadian national identity, despite experiencing racial discrimination, proved to have high levels of educational attainment as well as occupational aspirations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The association between religion and education outcomes

"Religiosity" refers to the degree of one's religious beliefs and commitment to the religion they follow and identify with (i.e., the intensity of practice), while "religious affiliation" simply refers to one's identification with a religious group. The literature on religion and academic achievement looks at both ways of understanding how religion can influence educational outcomes.

Religiosity has been found to be associated with academic achievement among American adolescents, which can be explained, according to McKune and Hoffmann (2009), by differences in family capital and community capital. They argue that students with higher grades also tend to have positive family environments, favorable community backgrounds, and higher religiosity. Student religiosity is directly affected by their parents' religiosity levels and the type of environment that youth socialize in and learn the practices and values of their religion (McKune and Hoffmann 2009; Park 2001). Youth's religiosity is affected by their parents' religiosity, and having family social capital, which allows them to practice this religiosity, has a positive impact on their educational achievements (McKune and Hoffmann 2009).

Youth can also gain skills through religious involvement which can assist them with school performance. In other words, the skills that are acquired through the observance and practice of religion can be positively associated with school-related behaviors and outcomes. For example, relevant skills gained from religious practice include self-discipline and respect for authority, as well as the honing of

leadership skills (Horwitz 2021; McKune and Hoffmann 2009). Religious practice also lends itself to social connections with other members of their religious communities which can help in their education through positive social capital. Religious groups also have leaders which students can use as role models or mentors (McKune and Hoffmann 2009). When youth surround themselves in nurturing and supportive environments outside of their school, they can cultivate certain skills and levels of discipline, and even form friendships with other youth with similar belief values and level of discipline. Indirectly, the skills and values learned in religious practice can enhance students’ academic performance in school.

Religiosity has also been found to be important for the socialization of minority youth, guiding and helping to shape their behaviours in the host country (Kogan, Fong, and Reitz 2020). Religious beliefs and practice have been shown to increase ethnic minorities’ internal locus of control and study motivation (Van Praag, Agirdag, Stevens, and Van Houtte 2016). Glanville, Sikkink, and Hernández (2008) discussed the relationship between belonging to religious communities and its positive impacts on educational achievement, as well as the positive impacts of the social networks that adolescents form on their studies. They also highlight that intergenerational closure through participation in one’s religious community allows for certain norms to be upheld and applied in spaces of secondary socialization, and foster better parental relationships with youth. Religiosity and connection to the religious community allows youth to befriend other youth with similar norms, values, and successful academic trajectories, creating a sense of community closure that helps foster better educational achievements, and lowers chances of dropping out of high school (Glanville, Sikkink, and Hernández, 2008). While these studies specifically focus on American adolescents who identified as Catholic, it seems tenable that similar associations would be found in Canada and within other religious communities. Belonging to and participating in a religious community can help foster norms that are advantageous in the socialization of children, shaping into the behaviors and practices associated with favorable educational outcomes.

Religiosity not only has the potential to have a significant positive impact on academic achievement for practicing youth—it is also mediated by other factors, such as self-control and locus of control (Park 2001). These personality characteristics can be developed through the social networks created within religious practice. For instance, parents and children who attend religious congregations together tend to have a close network of friends and other parents, which promotes relationship-building with other families and creates networks of shared cultural and moral values. Having such networks allows youth to have a supportive environment that encourages culturally normative behaviour and greater discipline, which can be positively associated with their academic performances. Youth who are more religious have higher grades and are less likely to engage in risky or rebellious behaviours (Horwitz, 2021). The social capital developed in the relationships between youth and their religious community, and the discipline practiced within the somewhat closed social networks help explain these associations (Horwitz 2021).

It is important to note that while the articles cited above provide key evidence on the association between religiosity or religious identity and academic

achievements, there is an absence of inclusion of Muslim youth and their experiences of religiosity. Some authors note that while their studies specifically look at students of Christian faith, there needs to be further research looking at other religious groups (Horwitz 2021; Park 2001).

Most research on the association between religion and overall academic success has focused primarily on Catholic students, with few studies examining high school students and even fewer looking at university students. Li and Murphy's (2018) study was focused on college students in the United States from a variety of religious backgrounds, and they found that Christian students had a strong positive association between religiosity and academic performance, while there was no positive association between religiosity and academic performance across students who are Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist. For Muslim students, however, they found that there was a negative association between high levels of religiosity and academic achievement. The authors predicted that the reason behind Christian students' positive association between religiosity and academic achievement is due to the support they receive for their religious practices on campus, so they can continue publicly committing to their religion, which creates a positive impact on their academics. On the other hand, Muslim students are usually facing more challenges than students from other religious backgrounds, specifically the ones who identify a higher level of religiosity in comparison those who simply identify as Muslim. The context after 9/11 has created a much more difficult environment for Muslim students and many feel isolated on campus, which as a result, negatively affects their educational experiences (Li and Murphy 2018). While these findings are strictly related to college environments, we can understand these findings to be related to Muslim high school students as well.

Muslim religious affiliation and educational outcomes

We now turn to studies that focus on Muslim adolescents. Oberoi and Trickett (2018) found that Muslim students in a Midwestern state were doing very well academically and had reported lower levels of psychological distress, which stemmed from their strong commitment to Islamic beliefs and practices. They concluded that there was a positive association between Muslim identity and academic performances. In particular, the higher the Muslim identity reported by youth in their study, the higher the educational achievement and the lower the psychological distress was reported. They also discussed the concept of "acculturative hassles" when discussing Muslim youth identity formation, psychological distress, and academic performances (Oberoi and Trickett 2018). "Acculturative hassles" refer to disturbances that immigrant youth deal with in their interactions between the dominant cultural status and the demands of various parts of Muslim youth's lives, such as their family or their community (Oberoi and Trickett 2018). For Muslim youth specifically, it refers to the various pressures they feel in maintaining their cultural as well as Islamic identities. The authors gave the example of Somali Canadian and other diverse Muslim youth regarding this process, highlighting the various pressures they received from their parents, their peers, and the Muslim community to maintain both their native language and

culture and their religious identity. Among the Muslim youth in their study who had lower levels of native culture acculturation, they reported higher acculturative hassles and lower levels of educational aspirations, while the Muslim youth who had experienced more acculturative hassles had higher levels of psychological distress. In other words, the type of environment that Muslim youth are surrounded by; the amount of pressure they face in their day-to-day lives across various social spaces, as well as the availability of support they receive in school for religious practices, all have an impact on not only their academic performances but also their psychological distress.

Evidence suggests that Muslim youth consider religious activities and overall religious involvement to aid in the creation of social capital, which further reinforces Islamic values and principles that bolster educational achievement and lower likelihood of deviant behaviour (Carol and Schulz 2018). Religious social capital, according to Carol and Schulz (2018), helps better educational achievements among religious youth, where having a higher religious orientation leads to lowered risks of dropping out of school and allows for social control through following moral codes and behaviours. Social capital, according to Stokes (2008), stems from religious organizations; these organizations expose youth to an inspiring role model, can provide emotional and intellectual resources, and can delineate positive behaviors for youth. Practicing religion also allows for structure and developing habits, such as “self-discipline, positive intergenerational interaction, and organizational attachment,” which are all positive contributors to youth’s educational achievement (Stokes 2008, 3).

As our literature review demonstrates, research on religion and educational outcomes in this context is still emerging. Our study takes an exploratory approach, examining the various associations between religious identification and educational outcomes, with the aim of understanding Muslim students’ overall educational outcomes relative to other religious affiliations, with the goal of providing foundational evidence for future empirical work on this topic.

DATA & METHODS

The data for our analyses consists of using four pooled cohorts of Grade 9 Toronto District School Board (TDSB) students. Specifically, the four cohorts of students consist of TDSB students who started Grade 9 in Fall 2013, Fall 2014, Fall 2015, and Fall 2016. The first cohort of students who started Grade 9 in 2013 graduated high school in 2017. The second cohort of students who started Grade 9 in 2014 graduated high school in 2018 and were in Grade 11 when the census was administered. The third cohort of students who started Grade 9 in 2015 graduated high school in 2019 and were in Grade 10 when the census was administered. And the fourth cohort of students who started Grade 9 in 2016 graduated from high school in 2020 and were in Grade 9 when the census was administered. By combining all of these pooled cohorts of Grade 9 students from 2013 to 2016, we can better understand their educational experiences and outcomes throughout their high school years, and with a larger sample at hand, we can compare the averages of students from the different cohorts. This approach also allows us to maximize

the number of Muslim students (and students of other religious affiliations) that we can analyze in our study.

This student census is one of its kind because up until recently, no other school boards have collected information on the religious affiliations of their students. TDSB schools began collecting the identity-based data through the Student Census starting from 2006 in order to point out any systemic barriers that could have an impact on students' educational achievements and well-being. It was the first school board in Ontario to collect data on religious identities. Since 2017, under Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan, all school boards were mandated to collect identity-based data to determine the systemic barriers in place that affect students' success (Ontario Ministry of Education 2017).

Independent variable

In this paper, our main independent variable of interest is religious identification. This variable in the census was framed as the following: "What is your faith/religion/creed?" and students were given the following options to select from: Agnosticism (Agnostic), Atheism (Atheist), Buddhism (Buddhist), Christianity (Christian), Hinduism (Hindu), Indigenous spirituality, Islam (Muslim), Judaism (Jewish), Sikhism (Sikh), Spiritual, More than one faith/religion, and No religion.²

Dependent variable

Our dependent variable measures educational achievement in high school, and this continuous variable is the average (mean) mark of all grades 9 to 12 courses, (the entirety of high school in Ontario). This variable is the sum of students' averages from all courses that they have taken from Grade 9 all the way to Grade 12 from the administrative records and is calculated by averaging the final percentage grades from students' report cards across all their courses.

Lastly, we measure if a student by the end of Grade 12 has accepted an offer of admission from an Ontario college or an Ontario university. In Canada, there are two different post-secondary options for students after high school, which are college and university. Canadian colleges are post-secondary institutions mainly focused on practical skills and offer shorter programs such as vocational and trades programs, diploma and advanced diploma programs, and career-related certificates (International Language of Academy in Canada 2024). Canadian universities, on the other hand, offer bachelor's programs across numerous disciplines as well as graduate programs (master's and doctorate). An accepted offer means that a student

² We retained the categories of "Agnosticism", "Atheist," and "No Religion" as separate religious categories to preserve the principles of self-identification in data collection, as guided by the Province of Ontario Data Standards. Data Standard 16 around the collection of religion in Ontario strongly suggests retention of self-identification categories (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/data-standards-identification-and-monitoring-systemic-racism/collection-personal-information>).

has applied to a college or a university, the student has received an offer, and they have also accepted that offer. This information was collected from the Ontario Universities’ Application Centre (OUAC) and the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS).

Control variables

Graduation outcome

The graduation outcome of TDSB students is a categorical variable and it is the status of Grade 9 students five years after they start grade nine, and the different categories in the Census are: “graduated high school in 2020 or had completed 30+ credits”, “still in TDSB in Year 6”, “transferred to another board or school”, or “dropped out of high school.”

Grade 9 absenteeism

Grade 9 absenteeism is calculated by taking the number of days absent from school out of the number of days registered in the school for the regular academic year for Grade 9. This is an important variable to consider, as high absenteeism will have a negative impact on a student’s academic achievement (Klein, Sosu, and Dare 2022). In the Ontario context, Grade 9 credit accumulation measures the number of courses completed by the end of Grade 9 (Year 1 secondary), with students, on average, having completed at least 8 credits. Students with below-average credit accumulation are generally at risk of failing their high school program as well as delaying their graduation (Anisef et al, 2010; Anisef, Brown, and Sweet 2011).

Grade 9 credit accumulation

Grade 9 credit accumulation represents the number of courses that were completed by students during Grade 9 (Year 1 secondary), with the average number of credits completed being 8 credits.

Racial identification

For student’s racial identification, the following question was asked in the Census: “Which of the following best describes your racial background?” and students from the following racial categories: Black, East Asian, First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit, Latin American, Middle Eastern, Mixed, South Asian, and Southeast Asian and White. Due to very low numbers, the category of Indigenous identification was not included. The reference category for our racial identification variable is White students.

Gender

Students were asked about their gender identity in the survey and were asked to pick from the following options: female, male, genderfluid, nonbinary, gender queer, transgender, and two-spirit. The gender variable was recoded as a binary variable, with the reference category being male due to the very small number of students choosing outside of the gender binary.

Parental socioeconomic status (SES)

The SES variable represents parents' occupation. This variable was recoded into three categories: the first category, representing the "Upper class," was based on parents whose occupations were in the high professional and senior management positions; the second category, representing the "Middle class," was based on parents who are in the skilled, semi-skilled clerical and trade and semi-professional and middle-management; and the third category, representing the "Lower class," is based on parents who are in the unskilled clerical and trades or hold non-remunerative positions.

Median income

The median household income variable represents the median neighbourhood income, which is derived through a process of matching students' postal codes to geographic census units, the Dissemination Areas (DAs). The DAs are then linked to the corresponding median household income data from the 2016 federal Census. Students are therefore assigned the median income value of the neighbourhood they live in based on their postal code. We recoded this variable into three categories: low income (parents with median income ranging from \$0 to \$50,000), middle income (parents with median income ranging from \$50,001 to \$150,000), and high income (parents with median income ranging from \$150,001 and up), with high income being the reference category.

Parental education

The parental education level that students were asked for each of their parent/caregiver(s) was what their highest level of education completed was, and they could pick from the following options: elementary school, high school, college, university, none, and not sure. We then recoded this variable into three categories: college/university, elementary/high school, and unknown, with college/university being the reference category.

Family composition

The family composition was asked about through the following question: "Who are the adults you live with at home most of the time?" and participants could pick whether or not they were living with two parents, mother only, father only, or some other custodial arrangements (such as grandparent(s), foster parents, other adult relatives or guardians, or group home caregivers). We categorized this variable in two categories only, with the reference category being having two parents and the "Other" category combining students with a mother only, a father only, or those who selected the other option.

Cohort year

The cohort year variable includes the four pooled cohorts of Grade 9 students from 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 (the year indicating when they entered grade 9). This variable was included to account for the potential differences among cohorts and to account for the fact that high school grade inflation and increased

enrollments to postsecondary institutions in Ontario overall have occurred in this time period.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

We first examine the means and, where appropriate, standard deviations of the variables in our study to better understand the sample we are analyzing. In order to understand the differences that exist between Muslims’ overall academic standing in the TDSB compared to their counterparts from other religious identifications, our analytic strategy was to compare group differences in various educational outcome measures. We conducted an ordinary least square regression of the Grades 9 to 12 course average by religious identification alongside a number of control variables to better understand the potential impact of personal and structural factors on the educational performance of Muslim students compared to non-Muslim students (Pevalin and Robson 2001). We also conducted two different logistic regressions to determine the predicted probability of university and college enrollments by religious identification and control variables.

RESULTS

Univariate analysis

We first present all the means and/or proportions for our study variables. We notice the diversity in religious identification at the TDSB: around 4% of students identify as agnostic, 7% identify as atheist, while 4% identify as Buddhist. There are around 31% of students who identify as Christian, 8.5% identify as Hindu, and around 18% identify as Muslim. There are 2.5% of students who identify as Jewish, 1% identify as Sikh, and 1% identify as spiritual. Lastly, just over 1% identify as having more than one faith, 19.6% with no religious identification, and less than 1% as other. Around 28% of students identify as White, around 11% identify as Black, around 15% identify as East Asian, around 2% identify as Latin American, just over 5% identify as Middle Eastern, around 11% identify as mixed, around 22% identify as South Asian, and lastly, 5% identify as Southeast Asian.

The majority of the parents in this dataset identify with the middle-income bracket (around 65%), while around 20% are from the lower income bracket and around 15% are from the higher income bracket. Around 71% of students have parents who earned a college or university education, while around 12% of students had parents with only elementary or secondary school education, and around 16% indicated that their parents’ education was unknown. The gender distribution in this dataset is nearly equal, with 49.5% of students identifying as male and 50% of students being female.

Table 1: Mean/Proportion and Standard Deviation of all Study Variables (N=41,989)

Variables	Mean/Proportion	Standard Deviation	Total
Religious Identification			
Agnosticism	0.036		1,754
Atheism	0.070		3,377
Buddhism	0.042		2,021
Christianity	0.312		15,039
Hinduism	0.085		4,120
Islam	0.184		8,861
Judaism	0.025		1,237
Sikhism	0.011		554
Spiritual	0.011		552
More than one faith	0.014		720
No religion	0.196		9,436
Other	0.008		399
Racial Identification			
White	0.276		13,275
Black	0.118		5,686
East Asian	0.148		7,115
Latin American	0.019		927
Middle Eastern	0.054		2,617
Mixed	0.108		5,192
South Asian	0.224		10,793
Southeast Asian	0.050		2,416
Median Income			
Low income	0.203		9,749
Middle income	0.648		31,148
High income	0.148		7,106
Parental Education			
College/university	0.714		33,973
Elementary/secondary school	0.122		5,821
Unknown	0.162		7,730
Gender			
Male	0.495		24,241
Female	0.504		23,829
Family composition			
Two parents	0.788		37,876
Other	0.211		10,150
Cohort			
2013	0.199		9,603
2014	0.248		11,955
2015	0.264		12,734
2016	0.286		13,778
Parental SES			
Lower class	0.202		8,540
Middle class	0.475		20,057
Upper class	0.322		13,588
Educational Outcomes			
Grades 9 – 12 Course Average	74.925	12.58	
Graduated in 5 years	0.886		42,632
Did not graduate in 5 years	0.113		5,438
Grade 9 Absenteeism	4.176	5.018	
Grade 9 Credit Accumulation	7.989	1.137	
Graduation outcome			
Confirmed college enrollment	0.174		8,407
Did not confirm college enrollment	0.825		39,663
Confirmed university enrollment	0.570		27,409
Did not confirm university enrollment	0.429		20,661

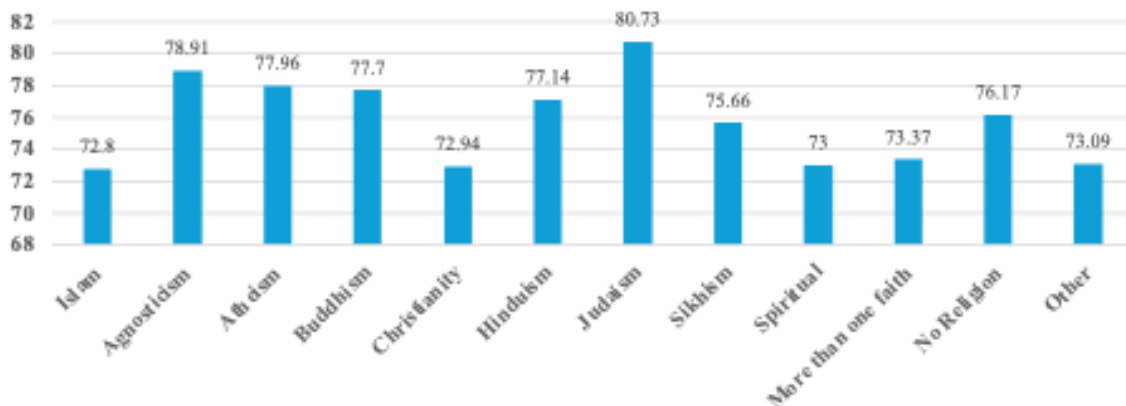
Our dataset also includes family composition, with around 79% of students living in two-parent households, while 21% live in other family structures. This dataset is divided into four cohorts (2013 – 2016), with each cohort making up approximately a quarter of the sample, with around 29% of students making up the 2016 cohort. Almost half of the parents in this dataset come from the middle class (47.5%), while 20% are from the lower class, and around 32% are from the upper class. The course average between grades 9 and 12 is close to 75%, and the majority of students graduated after five years (around 89%). The Grade 9 absenteeism rate is around 5 recorded absences, and the average number of credit accumulations in Grade 9 is around 7 credits.

Lastly, the average enrollment in college programs is around 17%, while confirmed university enrollment is 57%.

Bivariate analysis

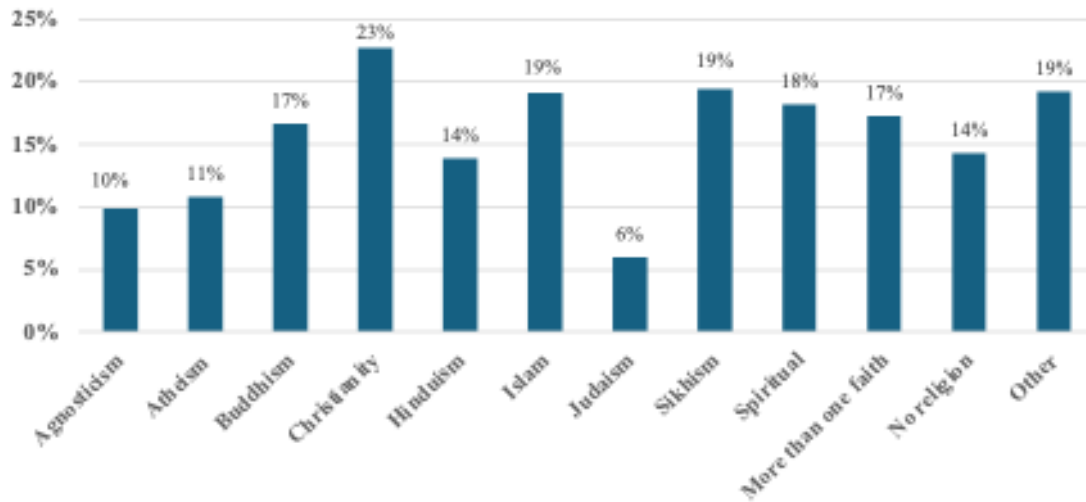
We present the course grades average by religious identification (Figure 1). Students who had the highest average course grades were Jewish students, with around an 81% average, and the second highest average course grades were among agnostic students with a close to 79% average. Atheist, Buddhist, and Hindu students are all around the 77% average, while Sikh students are around the 76% average. Lastly, the lowest recorded course grade averages can be seen among Muslim and Christian students (around 73%) and students with other religious identifications, such as spiritual students, students with more than one faith, and students from other religious backgrounds (73%). We also conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test to determine the extent of the difference between religious identification and course average, and our results show a clear statistical significance ($F(11, 48,057) = 151.92$ ($p < 0.000$)) between the average course grade and student’s religious identification.

Figure 1: Grades 9 to 12 Course Grades Average by Religious Identification (N = 48,069)



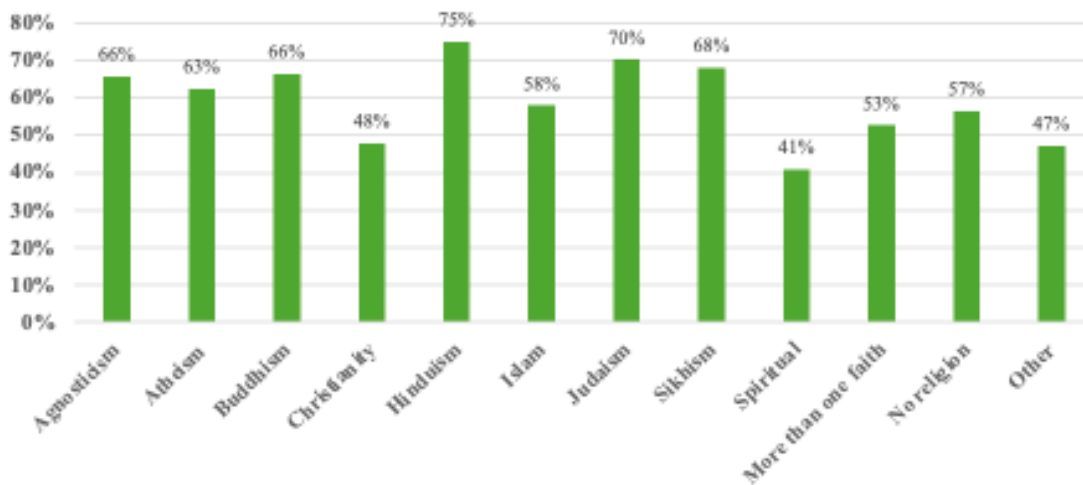
When looking at college enrollments (Figure 2), Christian students had the highest level of enrollment at 23%, followed by Muslim students, Sikh students, and students from other religious identifications, each at 19%.

Figure 2: College Enrollment by Religious Identification (N = 48,070)



University enrollment rates are a lot different compared to college enrollments (Figure 3). The highest levels of university enrollment are among Hindu (75%) and Jewish (70%) students. Across other groups rates are also high among agnostic students (66%), Buddhist students (66%), and Sikh students (68%). Muslim students had close to a 60% university enrollment rate, while Christian students (48%), spiritual students (41%), and students from other religious backgrounds (47%) had the lowest university enrollment rates compared to all other groups.

Figure 3: University Enrollment by Religious Identification (N = 48,070)



To summarize, the differences among course averages shows a diverse range of educational outcomes across the religious groups under consideration, with the highest course averages among Jewish students (81%) and agnostic students (79%). Atheist, Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh students also had similar averages around the 76% - 77% mark. In comparison, the lowest course grade averages were recorded among Muslim and Christian students (around 73%). When

examining college enrollments, Christian students had the highest enrollment (23%), followed by Muslim, Sikh, and students from other religious identifications (19% each). The latter group is followed by Buddhist students and those with more than one religion, both at 17%. Students with no religion and Hindu students had slightly lower rates at 14%, while Jewish students had the lowest college enrollment overall at 6%. In contrast, Hindu (75%) and Jewish (70%) students had the highest levels of university enrollment, and similarly, agnostic (66%), Buddhist (66%), and Sikh (68%) students also showed relatively high enrollment rates. Muslim students had close to a 60% university enrollment rate, whereas Christian (48%), spiritual (41%), and students from other religious backgrounds (47%) had comparatively lower university enrollment rates.

Multivariate analysis

Now we turn to our multivariate analysis. In order not to overstate and simplify the association between religion and educational and graduation outcomes, we will add our set of control variables to account for the wide range of factors that explain academic achievement and post-secondary pathways.

Table 2 presents the findings of our ordinary least squares regression of course grade on religious identification. Model 1 in our table is a regression of grade average by religious identification and cohort, while Model 2 adds key determinants of education as control variables.

In Model 1, we observe that agnostic students had closer to 6 points higher course averages compared to Muslims, while atheist students had around 5 points higher course averages compared to Muslims. Buddhist students also had a higher course average of nearly 5 points compared to Muslims, while Christian students only showed a very slight increase in course average by around 0.6 points. Hindu students also showed a higher course average by 4 points compared to Muslims, while Jewish students had the highest course average compared to Muslims, increased by 7 points. Sikh students and students with no religious background had 2 points and 3 points higher course averages compared to Muslim students. Lastly, the spiritual, more than one faith, and students from other religious backgrounds cells were not statistically significant compared to Muslim students.

Table 2: OLS Regression of Course Grade on Religious Identification and Control Variables (N=41,989)

Unstandardized Coefficients	Model 1	Model 2
Religion (ref. Islam)		
Agnosticism	5.854***	2.158***
Atheism	4.890***	1.298***
Buddhism	4.771***	0.509*
Christianity	0.671***	-0.534***
Hinduism	4.012***	-0.451**
Judaism	7.404***	2.527***
Sikhism	2.255***	-0.904**
Spiritual	0.512	.761*
More than one faith	0.443	-1.411***
No religion	3.391***	216

Other	0.575	.140
Year of TDSB Cohort Study (<i>ref.</i> 2013)		
2014	0.436**	0.468***
2015	0.156	0.751***
2016	0.334**	1.527***
Graduation outcome (<i>ref.</i> did not graduate)		
Graduated in 5 years		12.56***
Grade 9 Absenteeism		-0.477***
Grade 9 Credit Accumulation		1.946***
Racial Identification (<i>ref.</i> White)		
Black		-5.465***
East Asian		3.502***
Latin American		-2.965***
Middle Eastern		-1.725***
Mixed		-1.677***
South Asian		0.302
Southeast Asian		-0.694***
Gender (<i>ref.</i> Male)		
Female		3.969***
Parental SES (<i>ref.</i> Upper class)		
Lower class		-3.083***
Middle class		-2.214***
Median income (<i>ref.</i> High income)		
Low Income		-2.251***
Middle Income		-1.590***
Parental education (<i>ref.</i> College/University)		
Elementary/Secondary School		-2.413***
Unknown		-3.060***
Family composition (<i>ref.</i> Two parents)		
Other		-1.699***
Constant	73.27***	52.51***
Observations	41,989	41,989
R²	0.030	0.472
Adjusted R²	0.029	0.472
Likelihood ratio	25589.41	

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

After controlling for key determinants of educational achievement, we notice a decrease in almost all the religious identification coefficients, showing that religious identification's impact on academic achievement is strongly mediated by our control variables. Relative to Muslim students, agnostic students had a 2-point higher course average, while atheist students had around a 1.3-point higher course average compared to Muslims. Buddhist students went from having close to 5 points higher of a course average before controlling for variables to only 0.5 points higher in course average after controlling for variables. Christian students had an average 0.5 points lower, while Hindu students had a 0.4 points lower course average, and Sikh students had closer to 1 point lower in their average compared to Muslim students. Jewish students continue to have a higher course average in comparison to their Muslim counterparts, specifically 2.5 points higher. Lastly, spiritual students and students with more than one faith had around 0.76 and 1.4 points lower in their course average, respectively, compared to Muslim students.

The cells for students with no religious background and those from other religious backgrounds were not statistically significant.

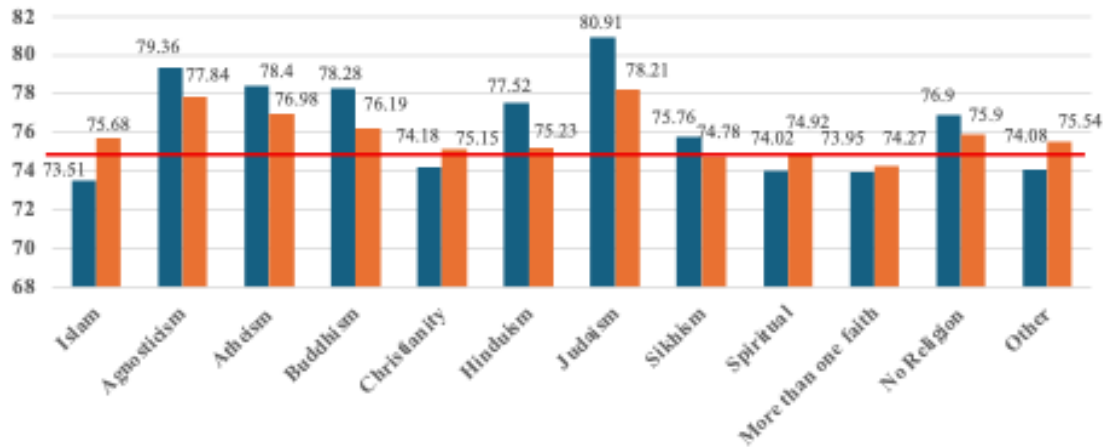
In terms of the control variables, we notice that students who were in the 2014 cohort had around a 0.47 higher course average compared to students from the 2013 cohort, while students from the 2015 cohort had a 0.75 higher course average, whereas the 2016 cohort had a 1.53 higher course average, all compared to the 2013 cohort. Students who graduated from high school after 5 years compared to students who did not graduate had closer to a 13-point higher course average. In terms of Grade 9 absenteeism and Grade 9 credit accumulation, we notice that with each recorded absence, there was nearly half a point lower score in the course average. In contrast, with every increase in a Grade 9 credit, there is close to a 2-point increase in students' course averages.

Turning to racial identification, Black students scored a much lower course average compared to White students by close to 5.5 points, while East Asian students had a 3.5 points higher course average. Latin American students had close to 3 points lower course averages compared to White students. Middle Eastern students had nearly a 2 points lower course average compared to their White counterparts. Mixed students had around a 2 points lower course average, while the South Asian group did not show any statistical significance in our dataset relative to White students. Lastly, Southeast Asian students scored around 1 point lower in their course average, only compared to White students. Female students had a much higher average in comparison to male students, scoring close to 4 points higher.

As predicted, parental SES significantly predicted academic performances, with students who came from the lower SES background having a lower course average compared to students from the upper SES background, and students from the middle SES range had a lower average compared to students from the upper-class background. Similarly, students' parental income also significantly predicted academic performance in the expected direction. In addition, parents' educational backgrounds had a significant impact on their children's educational performances; students whose parents only have an elementary education or an unknown education status scored lower on average compared to students whose parents have a college/university education. Lastly, students who do not come from two-parent households scored around 2 points lower in their averages compared to students who come from two-parent households.

Looking at our adjusted R^2 in Model 1 (0.029) and Model 2 (0.472) shows us a very clear difference in both models, meaning that adding our control variables explain the significant variance in result outcomes.

Figure 4: Graph of Predicted Course Grade Average by Religious Identification Before and After Controlling for Variables (N=41,989)



To aid in the interpretation of the results, we include illustrations of the predicted margins of course average by religious affiliation, before and after the addition of control variables (Figure 4). The red line in the graph represents the mean average (74.92%) of the course average.

We observe that Muslim students had a course grades average of 73.5%, which is very close to Christian students' course average of 74%. In comparison, agnostic students had a course average of 79% course average and atheist students had a 78% course average. Jewish students had the highest course average of close to 81%, while Buddhist, and Hindu students were around the 78% and 77% average respectively. Sikh students were around the 76% average while students with no religious identification were around the 77% average, while students who identify as spiritual and students with more than one faith recorded around the 74% course average. Lastly, students from other religious identifications had close to a 74% course average.

After adding a host of factors, we observe that there are certain increases and many decreases in the predicted course averages. Muslim students' course average increased by 3%, with a 76% predicted course average, slightly higher than Christian students' course average of around 75%. Agnostic and atheist students' course averages went down slightly, with around a 78% and 77% predicted course average, respectively. Jewish students, despite having a lower average after controlling for variables (78%), they continue to hold the highest average compared to all other religious groups. Buddhist and Hindu students had slightly lower averages, 76% and 75%, respectively. Sikh students, spiritual students, and students with more than one faith all had a predicted average of 74%, while students with no religious identification had a slight decrease in their predicted average before controlling for variables (75%), while students from other religious identifications saw a slight increase in their course average to around 75%.

We now turn to the multivariate estimations predicted post-secondary transitions. We conducted two separate logistic regressions of confirmed college enrollment and university enrollment by religious identification and control variables. When the odd ratios are below 1, it means that the odds of college or

university enrollments by religious identification is lower compared to that of the reference category, and when the odd ratios are above 1, it means that the odds of college or university enrollments by religious identification is higher compared to that of the reference category.

Table 3 presents the odds ratios from the logistic regression of college enrollment on religious identification and control variables. First looking at our independent variable of religious identification, we observe in Model 1 that almost all religious groups had lower odds of enrolling in college compared to Muslim students. Agnostic students had around a 56% lower odds of enrolling in college compared to Muslim students, while atheist students' odds of enrolling in college were around 49% lower compared to Muslim students. Next, Buddhist students' odds of college enrollment were around 16%. In contrast, Christian students' odds of enrolling in college were 24% higher compared to Muslim students. Next, Hindu students' odds of college enrollment were 35% lower, while Jewish students' odds were 72% lower compared to Muslim students. Lastly, students from no religious backgrounds had around 28% lower odds of enrolling in college compared to Muslim students. Looking at the cohort year, the cohort year that had the lowest odds of college enrollment was the 2014 cohort year (14.6%) compared to the 2013 cohort year; the 2015 cohort year had lower odds of college at 21%, while the 2016 cohort year had around 32% lower odds of college enrollment.

After we controlled for variables in Model 2, agnostic students had 34% lower odds of enrolling in college compared to Muslim students, while atheist students' odds of enrolling in college were around 21% lower compared to Muslim students. Next, Christian students' odds of enrolling in college increased from the first model from 24% to 38% higher compared to Muslim students. Next, Hindu students' odds of college enrollment were around 23% lower than Muslims, while Jewish students' odds of college enrollment were 45% lower compared to Muslim students. Lastly, Sikh students had 24% higher odds of enrolling in college compared to Muslim students. What we notice is that all these percentages are lowered significantly after we control for variables, showing the effects of religious identification on college enrollment, and that this relationship is further mediated by the various control factors we included, which we will discuss next below. Among the different cohort years, the cohort year that had the lowest odds of college enrollment was the 2014 cohort year (12%) compared to the 2013 cohort year, while the 2015 cohort year had 21% lower odds of college enrollment, and the 2016 cohort year had 32% lower odds of college enrollment.

Table 3: Logistic Regression of College Enrollment by Religious Identification and Control Variables (N=41,992)

Odds Ratios	Model 1	Model 2
Religion (<i>ref.</i> Islam)		
Agnosticism	0.443***	0.656***
Atheism	0.511***	0.791***
Buddhism	0.844**	0.885
Christianity	1.241***	1.384***
Hinduism	0.647***	0.771***
Judaism	0.277***	0.551***
Sikhism	1.065	1.241*
Spiritual	0.923	1.187
More than one faith	0.937	1.171
No religion	0.724***	1.071
Other	1.017	1.265
Year of TDSB Cohort Study (<i>ref.</i> 2013)		
2014	0.854***	0.883***
2015	0.786***	0.791***
2016	0.684***	0.680***
Racial Identification (<i>ref.</i> White)		
Black		1.668***
East Asian		0.506***
Latin American		1.282***
Middle Eastern		1.026
Mixed		1.255***
South Asian		0.952
Southeast Asian		1.943***
Gender (<i>ref.</i> Male)		
Female		0.729***
Parental SES (<i>ref.</i> Upper class)		
Lower class		2.079***
Middle class		1.875***
Median income (<i>ref.</i> High income)		
Low Income		1.695***
Middle Income		1.678***
Parental education (<i>ref.</i> College/University)		
Elementary/Secondary School		1.390***
Unknown		1.715***
Family composition (<i>ref.</i> Two parents)		
Other		1.117***
Constant	0.279***	0.083***
Observations	41,992	41,992
Pseudo R²	0.0192	0.0756

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

In terms of self-identified race, Black students' odds of enrolling in college are around 67% higher compared to White students, while the odds of college enrollment for East Asian students are close to 51% lower compared to White students, while for Latin American students, the odds of college enrollment are 28% higher. Mixed students' odds of college enrollment are around 26% higher compared to White students, and finally Southeast Asians' odds of college enrollment are 94% higher compared to White students. For Middle Eastern and South Asian students, the odds ratios were not statistically significant.

Female students had 27% lower odds of enrolling in college compared to their male counterparts. Next, students from lower class had around 108% higher odds of enrolling in college compared to students from the upper class, while middle class students had an 87% higher odds ratio of enrolling in college compared to students from the upper class. Students from lower-income families have a higher odds ratio of around 70% of enrolling in college compared to students from higher income, while middle-income students' odds of enrolling in college are around 68% higher compared to higher income. Looking at parental education, students whose parents have an elementary/secondary school education only had 39% higher odds of enrolling in college while students whose parental education is unknown have around a 72% higher odds ratio of enrolling in college compared to students whose parents have a university or college education. Lastly, students who come from other family compositions have close to a 12% higher odds ratio of enrolling in college compared to students who live in two-parent households.

Moving now to university enrollments, Table 4 presents the odds ratios from the logistic regression of university enrollment on religious identification and control variables. In Model 1, agnostic students had 26% higher odds of enrolling in university compared to Muslim students, while atheist students' odds of enrolling in university are around 15% higher compared to Muslim students. Next, Buddhist students' odds of university enrollment are around 41% higher, while for Christian students, their odds of enrolling in university are around 31% lower compared to Muslim students. Next, Hindu students' odds of university enrollment are 187% higher, while Jewish students' odds are 60% higher compared to Muslim students. Sikh students' odds of enrolling in university are 42% higher compared to Muslim students. For spiritual students, their odds ratio of enrolling in university is 50% lower, while students with more than one faith had 20.5% lower odds of enrolling in university. Lastly, students with no religious background had only an 8% lower odds ratio of enrolling in university compared to students from other religious identifications, who had a 36% lower odds ratio of enrolling in university compared to Muslim students. The cohort year with the lowest odds of university enrollment was 2014 (around 4%), which was not statistically significant when compared to the 2013 cohort year; in contrast, the 2015 cohort year had 13% lower odds of university enrollment, and the 2016 cohort year had around a 19% lower odds of enrolling in university.

Table 4: Logistic Regression of University Enrollment on Religious Identification and Control Variables (N=41,992)

Odds Ratios	Model 1	Model 2
Religion (<i>ref.</i> Islam)		
Agnosticism	1.263***	0.954
Atheism	1.145***	0.855***
Buddhism	1.412**	1.101
Christianity	0.689***	0.690***
Hinduism	2.187***	1.464***
Judaism	1.604***	1.123
Sikhism	1.421***	0.953
Spiritual	0.498***	0.438***
More than one faith	0.795***	0.656***
No religion	0.919***	0.652***
Other	0.638***	0.589***
Year of TDSB Cohort Study (<i>ref.</i> 2013)		
2014	0.964	0.913***
2015	0.870***	0.836***
2016	0.811***	0.775***
Racial Identification (<i>ref.</i> White)		
Black		0.672***
East Asian		3.547***
Latin American		0.482***
Middle Eastern		1.063
Mixed		0.840***
South Asian		1.844***
Southeast Asian		0.941
Gender (<i>ref.</i> Male)		
Female		1.610***
Parental SES (<i>ref.</i> Upper class)		
Lower class		0.489***
Middle class		0.657***
Median income (<i>ref.</i> High income)		
Low Income		0.632***
Middle Income		0.746***
Parental education (<i>ref.</i> College/University)		
Elementary/Secondary School		0.593***
Unknown		0.495***
Family composition (<i>ref.</i> Two parents)		
Other		0.661***
Constant	1.679***	3.091***
Observations	41,992	41,992
Pseudo R²	0.0211	0.1112

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Moving to Model 2, agnostic students had around a 5% lower odds of enrolling in university compared to Muslim students even though this value was not statistically significant. Atheist students' odds of enrolling in university were around 15% lower compared to Muslim students. Next, Buddhist students' odds of university enrollment relative to Muslims dropped from statistical significance. Christian students' odds of enrolling in university were 31% lower compared to Muslim students, while Hindu students' odds of university enrollment were 46% higher. Jewish students' odds of university enrollment were 12% higher compared to Muslim students, while Sikh students' odds relative to Muslims dropped from statistical significance. Spiritual students' odds of university enrollment increased to 56% compared to Muslims. Students with more than one faith (34%), students with no religious background (35%), and students from other religious backgrounds (41%) all had lower odds of enrolling in university compared to Muslim students. Looking at the cohort year, the 2014 cohort year continues to have the lowest odds ratio (8.7%) compared to the 2013 cohort year, while the 2015 and 2016 cohort years (16.4% and 22.5%, respectively) also have lower odds ratios of enrolling in university.

Black students' odds of enrolling in university is around 33% lower compared to White students, while the odds of university enrollment for East Asian students was over three and a half times higher compared to White students, while for Latin American students' odds of college enrollment was 52% lower. Mixed students' odds of university enrollment were around 16% lower compared to White students', and finally South Asians' odds of university enrollment were 84% higher compared to White students. For Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian students, the odds ratios were not statistically significantly different from White students in this model.

In terms of gender, female students had a 61% higher odds of enrolling in university compared to their male counterparts. Next, students from the lower class had a 51% lower odds of enrolling in university compared to students from the higher class, while middle-class students had a 34% odds ratio of enrolling in college compared to students from the upper class. Students from lower-income families have a lower odds ratio of around 37% of enrolling in university compared to students from the higher income, while middle-income students' odds of enrolling in university are 25% lower compared to students from the higher income bracket. Looking at parental education, students whose parents have an elementary/secondary school education have 41% lower odds of enrolling in university, while students whose parental education is unknown have a 50.5% lower odds ratio of enrolling in college compared to students whose parents have a university or college education. Lastly, students who come from other family compositions have close to a 34% lower odds ratio of enrolling in college compared to students who live in two-parent households.

To aid in the interpretation of findings, we present figures of predicted college and university enrollment by religious identification, representing the before and after adding control variables. In Figure 5, the orange columns represent the predicted probability of college enrollment before controls, while the blue columns represent the predicted probability of college enrollment after applying

our controls. The red line in the graph represents the mean average of college enrollment (17.48%), and we notice at first glance that students from several religious groups, before and after controls, have low college enrollment rates compared to the average.

What we notice is a decrease in the probability of Muslim students enrolling in college; however, agnostic and atheist students' probability of enrolling in college increases after controlling for variables. For Buddhist students, this probability increases very slightly; for Christian students, this probability decreases slightly, while for Hindu students, there were no differences in the probability of college enrollment before or after control of variables. Jewish students' probability of college enrollment increases significantly, while for the rest of the categories the probability of college enrollment increases very slightly. Overall, despite the increase in probability being small, we can still note that this general increase in enrolling in college across almost all religious groups can be explained by parental SES (socioeconomic status), parental education, median income, and family composition.

Figure 5: Predicted College Enrollment by Religious Identification Before and After Controlling for Variables (N=41,992)

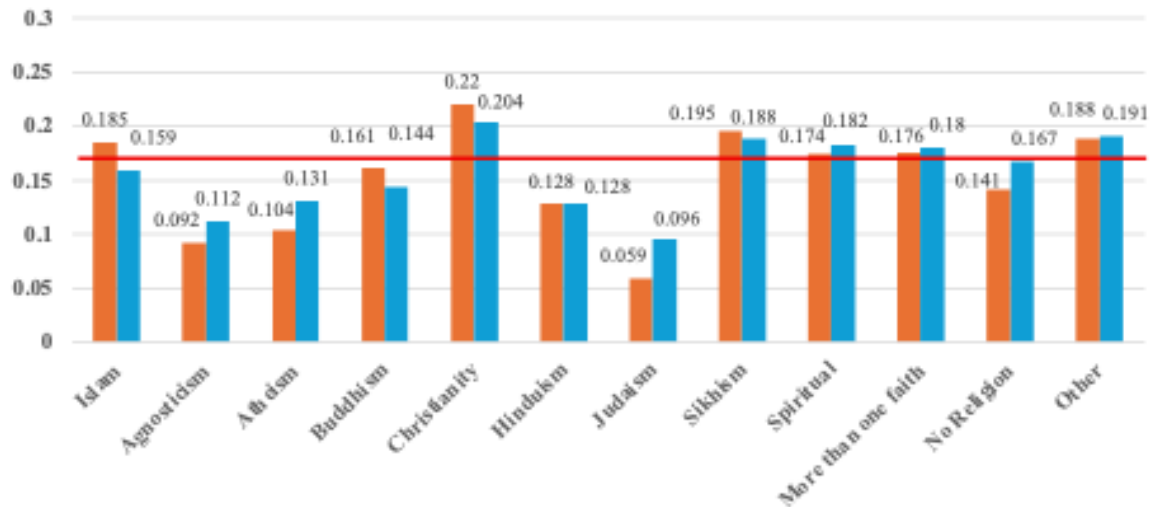
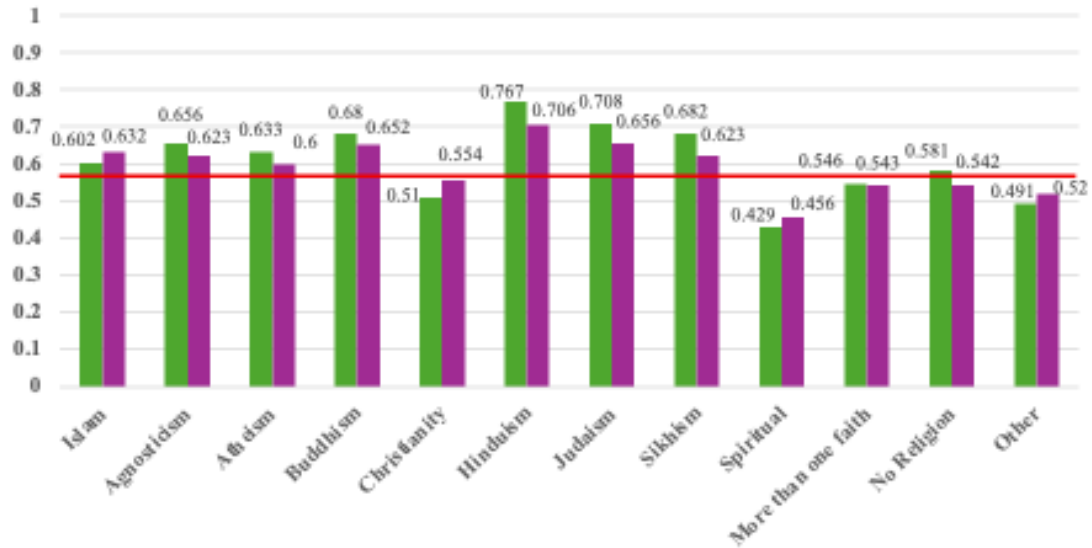


Figure 6 presents the predicted university enrollment by religious identification, representing the probability of enrolling in university before and after controlling for variables. The purple columns represent the predicted probability of university enrollment after controlling for variables, while the green columns represent the predicted probability of university enrollment, applying our controls. The red line in the graph represents the mean average of university enrollment (around 57%), and we notice at first glance that students from most religious groups, before and after controls, have higher university enrollment rates compared to the average. What we notice is a very slight increase in the probability of Muslim students enrolling in university, while across agnostic, atheist, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and Jewish students, the probability of enrolling in university decreases after controlling for variables. Similar to Muslim students, Christian

students’ probability of enrolling in university increases slightly. For students with no religious identification, from other religious backgrounds, and students who identify as spiritual, there is a very slight probability increase of enrolling in university. Similar to college enrollments, the slight increase in probability is small for university enrollments; this general increase in enrolling in universities across some of the religious groups can also be explained by some factors we included, such as gender and racial identification.

Figure 6: Predicted University Enrollment by Religious Identification Before and After Controlling for Variables (N=41,992)



To summarize this section, Muslim students tend to fall in the middle compared to other religious groups in terms of their academic performance and post-secondary outcomes. In Table 2, most religious groups (agnostic, atheist, Buddhist, Hindu, and especially Jewish students) had higher course averages than Muslim students, with Jewish students showing the largest gap. However, after controlling for our variables, these differences decrease, where Muslim students perform very similarly to many groups, even slightly outperforming Christian, Hindu, and Sikh students, while Jewish students remain the only group consistently higher. Looking at predicted averages (see Figure 4), Muslim students start with a course average around 73.5%, which is close to Christian students but lower than several other groups. After controls are added, their average increases to about 76%, placing them among the mid-to-higher-performing groups, again with Jewish students remaining the highest.

In terms of college enrollment, Muslim students generally have higher or comparable odds of enrolling compared to most other religious groups. Many groups (such as agnostic, atheist, Hindu, and Jewish students) showed lower odds of college enrollment relative to Muslim students, even after controls were applied. Only Christian and Sikh students show higher odds than Muslim students in Model 2 (see Table 3). It should be noted, however, that in the Ontario context (and Canada in general), this pathway is considered “less prestigious” in terms of a postsecondary pathway. For university enrollments, there remains a noticeable

difference. Muslim students have lower odds compared to Hindu and Jewish students, who consistently show higher likelihoods of university enrollment; however, they have higher or comparable odds relative to other groups such as Christians, spiritual students, and those with no or other religious backgrounds, specifically after controls are added (see Table 4).

Overall, our findings suggest that while Muslim students are not the highest-performing group academically and do not have the highest university enrollment rates, they perform relatively well, and these variations between religious groups can clearly be explained by the numerous control factors that we included in our analyses.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of our study was to explore the association between religious identification and educational outcomes among high school students in the Toronto District School Board, with particular attention to how Muslim students compare to students from other religious backgrounds. By using the only known large-scale Canadian datasets that includes religious identity and framing our research through a segmented assimilation and capital framework, our paper contributes to empirical evidence to an underexplored area within the education field. Overall, our findings demonstrate that religious identification is meaningfully associated with academic achievement and post-secondary enrollment pathways. Our results indicate that Muslim students do not outperform students from other religious groups. When looking at Grades 9-12 course averages, Muslim students had some of the lowest course averages alongside their Christian counterparts and students from other religious identifications, compared to for example Jewish, atheist, Buddhist, and Hindu students.

However, after we controlled for multiple variables, such as Grade 9 absenteeism, Grade 9 credit accumulation, parental SES, parental education, median income, gender, and family composition, we observed that Muslim students' predicted course average was competitive (76%) to the other groups. We also observed a decrease in the probability of Muslim students enrolling in college after controlling for a large set of factors, while the majority of other religious groups had a slight increase in their predicted college enrollment. After controls were added for predicted university enrollment, there was a very slight increase in the probability of Muslim students enrolling in university, while the majority of the other religious groups had a decrease in their predicted university enrollment. Similar to Muslim students, Christian students' probability of enrolling in university *increased* slightly. Likewise, the controlling of these factors also decreased the odds of college enrolment among Muslim and Christian students. University, however, remains the dominant pathway for all students choosing postsecondary, including Muslim students. While college is usually considered to be a less prestigious pathway that students choose, close to 16% of Muslim students enroll in college, and this could be explained by numerous factors, such as lower tuition rates, gaining of practical skills that get them into the workforce quicker than the university pathway, or their overall lower course grades. Our results also

showed that Muslims' overall course grade averages are among the lowest compared to other religious groups, even after controlling for variables. Therefore, this could also explain why they enroll in college programs at higher rates than other religious groups, as university programs are not only more competitive but also stricter in acceptance averages.

The relatively lower course averages among Muslim students compared to many religious groups could potentially be explained by factors that are not directly captured in the data we used, such as experiences of Islamophobia in schools. The connection between experiences of bullying in school and academic experiences has shown to impact Muslim youth (Tahseen, Ahmed, and Ahmed 2019). This connection specifically relates to the lack of interest in their studies along with the anti-Muslim stereotyping, leading them to feel misunderstood, unsafe, or even excluded in their schools. Muslim American students have reported experiencing lower levels of feeling welcomed and respected in school in comparison to previous years (83% in 2014). In addition, they are struggling to discern themselves from the negative portrayals of Islam in the curriculum, leading to lower self-perception among Muslim students who are having difficulty in their own self-perception, affecting their GPA levels. Another element that can affect their academic engagement and presence is prejudice that school staff or peers have about Muslims and Islam, leading to difficulties in maintaining their religious and cultural identities, and that in turn affects their academic performances negatively (Tahseen, Ahmed, and Ahmed 2019).

Our findings therefore support the ongoing research that calls for a move beyond simplistic comparisons of religious groups and towards a more intersectional analysis of students' lived high school experiences. We argue that for Muslim students in particular, educational outcomes cannot be separated from broader experiences of Islamophobia and identity negotiation and exploration within Canadian schools. Segmented assimilation theory can help explain this phenomenon, showing us that the various rates of college and university enrollments represent the strong levels of integration of Muslim students as their performance is not so dissimilar to Christians in our data set. And this integration process has been shaped by structural opportunities, family, and cultural expectations, as well as personal educational aspirations.

Taken together, our findings reinforce the idea that religion alone is not enough to understand educational experiences, and other structural and personal factors have to be considered when studying these experiences to highlight the complex and wide range of schooling experiences that exist across all students from different religious backgrounds. While we found that religion is associated with meaningful differences across groups, we note that there is not one distinct religious group that excels or underperforms across educational performance and post-secondary confirmations. What we understand from our results is that cultural capital is a potential determinant of how religious identification is associated with educational outcomes among high school students. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital posits that educational achievement is not merely a function of individual aptitude or effort, but is influenced by access to esteemed cultural resources and dispositions that conform to institutional norms. Cultural capital exists in embodied

forms, such as habits, values, and dispositions toward schooling, as well as in social forms, including networks and relationships that provide support and guidance. As explained above, parents' accumulation of various forms of capital allows them to support their children's education and can be a means of successful post-secondary enrollment.

For many religious communities, including Muslim communities, religious involvement fosters discipline, educational aspiration, and respect for authority and emphasizes strong family and community ties, all of which constitute different forms of capital that are often associated with positive educational engagement (Warner 2007). Within this framework, Muslim students' persistence through high school and continued pursuit of post-secondary education can be understood as outcomes supported by the cultural and social capital cultivated within families and religious communities. These forms of capital shape students' habitus and their internalized orientations toward education, which influence how they navigate schooling and envision future educational pathways. It is recommended that future research examine in more detail how different religious affiliations are able to activate their forms of capital and how that is associated with educational outcomes.

An important and surprising finding from our analyses is Muslims students' very similar overall performance compared to Christian students. Christian students make up the largest percentage of students in the TDSB (31%). While our statistical analyses demonstrated statistically significant differences in the outcomes examined here between Christians and Muslims (lower grades and lower odds of university enrolment and higher odds of college enrolment for Christians), our predicted margins of the outcomes (illustrated through graphs) suggests Muslim students' overall cultural assimilation into Canadian society, which has allowed them to perform in school and pursue post-secondary education at similar rates to the "majority," despite facing potential discrimination due to their ethnic, racial, and/or religious identifications. The ways in which Muslim families have activated their forms of capital has resulted in achievements that are comparable to the "dominant" group in the TDSB. Another potential explanation could be that as a result of the highly diverse environment within the Toronto District School Board, religious identification alone may not represent a strong differentiating factor between these two groups. It is also possible that while Muslim students may benefit from having strong community values and support, these advantages could be offset by experiences of Islamophobia and identity struggles, leading to comparable educational outcomes for Muslim and Christian students, despite clear differences in religious identity and lived experience. With these explanations in mind, we suggest that future research should consider exploring how school environments and institutional practices shape educational outcomes for religious minority students. We assert that qualitative research would be valuable in understanding how Muslim students interpret their educational experiences and their post-secondary decisions.

Lastly, we would like to highlight some of our research limitations. First, our study does not measure religiosity or religious practice and only measures religious identification, which only represents what religion a student identifies with. This measure alone is not enough to determine and understand to what extent

one’s religiosity is and how it impacts (positively or negatively) various avenues of their lives. Second, another important element that was missing from our research is the level of practicing of students from these different religious backgrounds. With different levels of religiosity and levels of practicing, we might assume that Muslims who have a higher level of practicing and religiosity can have an overall positive impact on their grades and overall school performance. A final limitation we wanted to present – as it relates to the two limitations we discussed – involves the substantive significance of our regression results. The R^2 values in our tables (see Tables 2, 3, and 4) suggest that in Models 1, there was a statistical significance between religious identification and the dependent variables of educational outcomes, but religion did not have much of a substantive significance in variations of academic performance. In Models 2, we notice the increase in the R^2 values, meaning that the control variables account for the variations in course average, college and university enrollments. This suggests that although religious differences do exist, religion itself is not a strong predictor when considered alongside other factors and variable determinants of educational outcomes. With this in mind, our results should not be interpreted as reflecting the potential positive effects of Islam or Muslim identity on Muslim Canadian high schoolers, but rather as outcomes shaped by broader structural and social contexts in which Muslim students are, which ultimately impact their educational experiences. We therefore suggest that future research consider exploring how school environments and institutional practices shape educational outcomes for religious minority students. We assert that qualitative research would be valuable in understanding how Muslim students interpret their educational experiences and their post-secondary decisions.

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