

ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL

Poverty Action Lab



TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO ACTION

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# Getting parents involved

## A field experiment in deprived schools

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# Motivation

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- ▶ Significant differences in parental involvement across families with different social status
- ▶ Any **causal** relationships between the relatively good performance at school of pupil from rich families and the relatively strong involvement of their parents?



# Questions

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- ✓ Is it really possible to improve parents' involvement ?
  - ✓ Has increased parental involvement any effect on children?
  - ✓ Does the effect on program participants spread out on other families?
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- ▶ Specific importance of spillovers as only a minority of families volunteer to participate in such a program



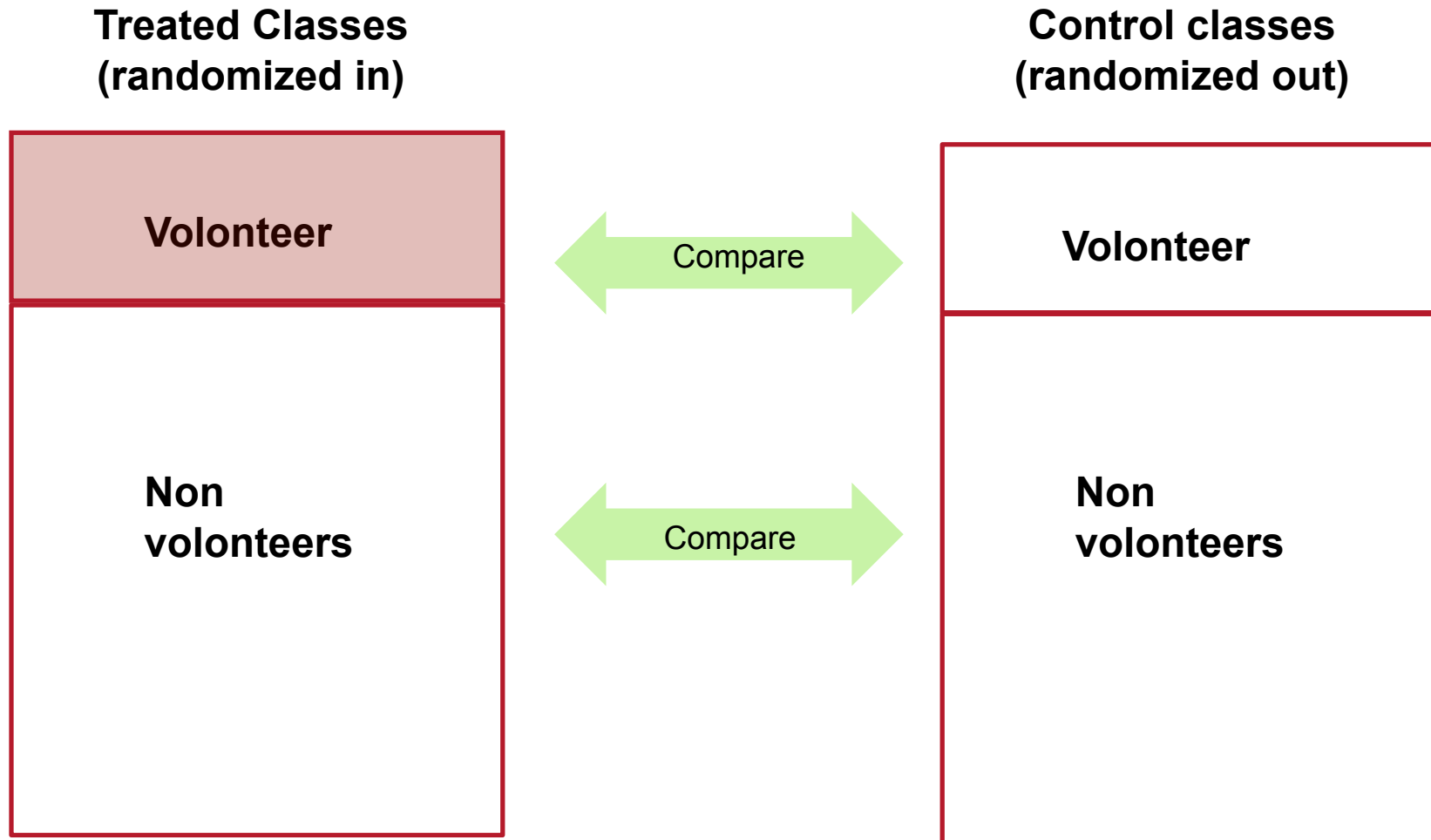
# A randomized evaluation

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1. Identify volunteer parents in all the schools
  2. Within each school, randomize half classes
  3. Only **volunteer** parents in **treated** classes are invited to the meetings
- ▶ Ensures that families in treated and control classes are similar
  - ▶ Significant differences by the end of the year are surely attributed to the intervention      Impact causal des débats



# Protocol: Four groups



# Sample

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- ▶ 37 middle schools, 200 classes, 5,000 6<sup>th</sup> grade pupils
- ▶ 20% volunteers (slightly higher social background)
- ▶ Among volunteers, actual take-up rate 57%



# Data

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- ▶ **Parents:** year-end survey (response rate 80%)

*Individual appointments with teachers, participate in parental organization, understand local school, etc.*

- ▶ **Pupils:** Normalized tests beginning and end of year + school level information



# Parental involvement

## ONLY PARENTS WHO ATTENDED MEETINGS HAD MORE INTERACTIONS WITH SCHOOLS

source: Getting Parents Involved, September 2010, Table 8





# Parental involvement

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- ▶ Increase about 10% to 30% of a standard-deviation
- ▶ Same order of magnitude as between white-collar and blue-collar families
- ▶ Effect on parents translates into significant improvement in pupils' behavior



# Pupils' behavior

## ALL CHILDREN IN SELECTED CLASSES REDUCED ABSENTEEISM

source: Getting Parents Involved, September 2010, Table 11



# Pupils' behavior and cognitive outcomes

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	VOLONTEERS		NON-VOLONTEERS	
	Treated	Control	Treated	Control
Discipl. sanctions	7.0%	10.6%	8.9%	11.0%
Honors	37.2%	34.5%	38.9%	34.1%

- ▶ French: +7% of s.d. for teacher marks and +8% of a s.d. for easiest items of external test
- ▶ No impact in Maths



## Take away

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- ▶ The programme has demonstrated effects on parental involvement and child behavior – to a smaller extent on cognitive achievement
- ▶ The behavior of all students in the selected classes improved, including those whose parents did not participate



# Policy implication

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- ▶ Important issue but limited political action
- ▶ Simple and inexpensive program
- ▶ Rigorous evaluation: can convince schools or governments that such action is worth taking
- ▶ Generalization going on in France

