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Presentation title: Pushed out of the education system: using a natural experiment to evaluate consequences for boys

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In this paper, we examine the short-term effects of grade-specific admission requirements for upper secondary vocational education and training (VET) on enrollment and criminal offending among academically low-achieving boys. We apply multi-group difference-in-differences models to full population data and analyze an educational policy reform in Denmark (N = 60,759). The results show that the reform caused a 16 percentage points lower enrollment in VET among academically low-achieving boys, and their risk of being charged with a crime increased by up to two percentage points 9 months after the end of compulsory school. However, after 12 months, the effect on criminal charges disappeared. We conclude that in the education-crime nexus, educational enrollment in upper secondary education is an understudied margin, which has important implications for both scholars and policy-makers. Limitations include the short follow-up period. When a longer follow-up period becomes available, further subgroup-analyses will be possible. For example, Danish registries will enable analyses that distinguish between crime committed on weekdays and during weekends, thus examining whether education incapacitates adolescents, thereby preventing them from committing crime. Moreover, it will be possible to restrict the sample to adolescents who applied for VET and thereby empirically test general strain theory. Because applicants most likely will have higher expectations for enrollment than non-applicants will, applicants may experience more strain of not achieving the positive valued goal, enrollment in VET, which may lead to criminal behavior. Thus, such subgroup-analyses have the potential to improve our understanding of not only how education may prevent crime, but also of why education may prevent crime.