

Scared straight



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Critique of the " Scared Straight Program" The program established in the 1970s, called Scared Straight is used throughout the United States as a means of deterring Juvenile crime. This program consists of youth that are at risk visiting adult prisons, the youth then have contact with prisoners to hear about the life and reality of being locked up from inmates (Slowikowski, 2011). The programs can involve tours of the facility, living the life of a prisoner for a full day, aggressive " in-your-face" presentations by inmates, and one- on-one counseling.

However well intentioned these prison visit programs may be, decades of research have shown that this approach is not only ineffective, but possibly harmful to youth (Slowikowski, 2011). Now there was a study done by Anthony Petrosino and researchers at the Campbell Collaboration analyzed results from nine Scared Straight Programs and found that such programs generally increased crime up to 28 percent in the experimental group when compared to a no-treatment control group (Slowikowski, 2011). In another analysis of Juvenile prevention and treatment programs, Mark

Lipsey of the Vanderbilt Institute for public Policy Studies found that youth who participate in Scared Straight and other similar deterrence programs have higher recidivism rates than youth in control groups (Slowikowski, 2011). Also there was a report done in 1997 presented to the U. S. Congress where there was 500 crime prevention evaluations and said the program " Scared Straight" is " what does not work" in preventing Juvenile crime. Yet programs like " Scared Straight" are continuing to be used as an approach in the United States and throughout the world.

On January 13, 2011, A&E Television Networks aired the first of a multiepisode series of reality shows called " Beyond Scared Straight" (Slowikowski, 2011). It had become the most watched show in the United States with having an audience of 3.7 million people (Sullivan, 2011). This then has parents and viewers thinking the " Scared Straight" programs works, which then they do not think of the other possibilities of programs that are proven to work and be more beneficial to at-risk youth in deterring Juvenile delinquency. When I think of the A&E series of " Beyond

Scared Straight" I think of it as showing at-risk youth at home with their parents what it would be like if they were a part of this program. The at-risk youth I think don't take it as serious as the show portrays it to be because in this program your getting yelled at in your face by the inmates, you have a session where the inmates share their stories with the youth and explain how they wish they would taken a different path, the youth will see their parents through video or glass windows, they may spend up to 24 hours in the facility, etc.

With a program like " Scared Straight" there are many things we can critique. First these programs require young people to project into the future. They don't think like that, they don't think logically or long term. That's why theyre kids. They are impulsive, and think short term, espically whenb it comes to punishment (Sullivan, 2011). Kids know how hit and miss the criminal Justice system is. They believe they might not get caught when they think about committing a crime. What young people react to is: How swift is the punishment in terms of the behavior?

How certain is it that a consequence will occur? How severe is the punishment? The extreme nature of the punishment shown in "scared straight" programs doesn't match the expectations of young people. They don't picture themselves locked up (Sullivan, 2011 .) Again a program like "scared straight" is something that was made by adults for young kids, but we need to realize that these young kids don't react the same way as adults do or would in a program like "scared straight. What these at-risk youths need are to be put in activities of everyday life that will keep them from going to prison rather than putting them in a "scared straight" program saying this is where you're going to be if you continue the road your going down. Why not show these at-risk youth what and where you should want to be in life, like a Job show them responsibility and what it is like to earn hard working money to save for something, to be able to afford the things you want, etc.