Abstract

There is a limited understanding of protective factors that act on adolescent boys and preventative measures that can be applied to help these adolescent boys reject gang lifestyle. This qualitative study explored the lives of young men, who as adolescent boys were interested and beginning to engage in gang-like activities. They were asked to recall their experiences in rejecting gang lifestyle. An Enhanced Critical Incident Technique guided this exploration as the participants were asked to respond to questions guided by the inquiry, “What helped and what hindered adolescent males to choose not to join gangs when they were at the verge of falling into a gang?” The responses of the participants produced many examples of turning points that helped them. Analysis of these turning points show that both protective factors and experiential gang deterrence factors play a role in the process of rejecting gang lifestyle by at-risk adolescent boys.

Keywords: adolescent boys; at-risk youth; gang; prevention; protective factors; experiential gang deterrence factors