

## From street to job: integrating juvenile delinquents<sup>1</sup>

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Since the 1970s, given the transformations of the job market and the changes in “street culture”, professional morals replace “street morals” less easily than before, and the shop floor is less integrative for juvenile delinquents. In that sense, the importance of the role played by the institutions involved in the process of normalization has grown in proportion. By studying an integration system for juvenile delinquents, in a French *banlieue*, it is precisely that sort of ambition I wished to apprehend. Through the case studies of three young men, I explain the reasons why the young people involved in the system participate in it, and the conditions that need to be met for a street educator’s moral authority to be acknowledged. I underscore the acculturation that takes place at the heart of the system and the type of competences that can be acquired there. I show also, the stigmata linked to a delinquent past can always get in the way of the process and reactivate habits developed in the “street”.

KEYWORDS: Juvenile delinquency, educator’s authority, moral conversion, capital of conformity, stigmata, *banlieue*.

The French State puts money in police precincts and policemen... If they invested more in job training, there’d be less juvenile delinquency. Because after school, there’s many who fall by the wayside. That’s where they start stealing. Kids have to create something for themselves, to see they’re not nothing, that they’re able to do something... I can be honest, earn my living and buy my car honestly. I’ve got to do educational things, to set an example, so they understand what life is about, because there’s many who don’t know what life’s about at all [Walter].

THE SOCIOLOGY OF DEVIANCE HAS SHOWN THAT TURNING DEVIANTS into “conformists”, in the case of many youngsters was partly the result of their “spontaneous” adaptation (i.e. without institutional interference), “street” ethics being comparable to those encountered in the shop floor (Willis 1978;

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Mauger and Fossé-Poliak 1983). In most cases, as growing up and settling down with a partner influenced their lifestyle, their anti-school culture progressively gave way to the ethos of the group of workers, moral education being ensured by the adults among them. But since the 1970s, given the transformations of the job market, the rising rate of unemployment among unskilled youth and the changes in “street culture”, “spontaneous” adaptation has been compromised: doubtless, professional morals replace “street morals” less easily, and the shop floor is less attractive and integrative than before (Bourgois 1995). In that sense, the importance of the role played by the institutions involved in the process of normalization has grown in proportion.<sup>2</sup>

The various instances charged with integrating unskilled youth all work at changing the systems that deal with the “unemployables”. By studying an integration system for juvenile delinquents, it was precisely that sort of ambition I wished to apprehend.<sup>3</sup> How can those systems be changed, particularly in regard to time and *hexis*? Should one try to make individuals switch worlds and be socialized elsewhere? Can the realm of possibles be expanded, so as to intervene in the “causality of the probable”, thus engendering a different outlook on the future?

2 Contrary to what is currently expressed in France by politicians and the press, deviant behavior in young people is often connected to specific morals such as defending their honor or “reputation” (Bourgois 1995; Lepoutre 1997; Sauvadet 2006). Since the underlying norms and values are borne – and disrespect for them punished – by their peers, mainly (but not exclusively) in the “street” (the actual street sometimes, but also building entrances, outdoor benches, bus-stops...), they are said to reflect “street culture”, and a “street ethos”. That ethos is decipherable in a whole set of formulas: “keep up one’s guard”, “being the aggressor rather than the victim”, “not squealing on anyone”, “don’t be a buffoon”, “trust nobody”, etc. My survey does not allow me to say whether, in the examples at hand, one or several sets of street moral(s) are at play; in the same vein, I do not dispose of enough elements allowing me to define one or several street culture(s). Research on youth in the public areas of a housing development (Marlière 2005), as well as the words of the young people I interviewed, who condemn certain practices as immoral (stealing an old lady’s purse, for example), let one suppose nevertheless that several moral codes exist. The universe of rap, too, bears witness to the opposition between various moral positions, which all however refer to “street culture”. By speaking of a “street ethos”, we mean to show that the young people interviewed were socialized in worlds that are not anomalous; we do not wish to pass moral judgment on their values and acts, as one is sometimes tempted to do, even in the social sciences (Wacquant 2002). In the wake of other research, one of the ideas that underpinned our own is that street culture was radicalized after 1970, and that it became autonomous with regard to working-class culture, due to urban segregation and the increasing precariousness of the underprivileged classes.

3 At the beginning of the years 2000, choosing this subject was not disconnected from the public debates that shook France at the time. The question of how to deal with juvenile delinquency was then at the core of political discussions and the news. During the 2002 Presidential campaign, the theme of insecurity, blamed on the young people’s behavior in the derelict neighborhoods, was omnipresent, and politicians were fascinated by the “zero tolerance” discourse imported from the United States (Wacquant 1999). What was said then suggested that part of the youth were “irretrievable”, and social workers and educators were disavowed, even by left-wing parties.

After a rapid presentation of the system under study and the on-going survey, I will explain, first, the reasons why, from their point of view, the young people involved in the system participate in it, and the conditions that need to be met for a street educator's moral authority to be acknowledged. Through the case studies of two young men, Walter and Frederick, I will then underscore the acculturation that takes place at the heart of the system and the type of competences that can be acquired there. I will end, however, with the case of a third teenager, Kamel, which illustrates the degree to which the stigmata linked to a delinquent past can get in the way of the process and reactivate habits developed in the "street".

#### A SYSTEM FOR INTEGRATION

Given the difficulties it faces in integrating its "clients", the *Protection judiciaire de la jeunesse* (PJJ, the Young People's Legal Protection Department),<sup>4</sup> in cooperation with an organization for grass-roots education, set up a specific program to train counselors specialized in school-leavers aged sixteen to twenty-one. The latter had left school unskilled and been under the supervision of educationalists for several years. Situated in the Northern part of the Paris Region, this program brings together a dozen trainees five days a week during six months. Pascal, an educator of about thirty, coordinates and follows up the program for one year, the idea being to accompany the various steps of occupational integration. Theoretically, he is the only one who knows the young people's stories. The other participants in principle do not know if the others are classified as endangered youth or juvenile delinquents; they know nothing of the petty crimes they may have committed, except that none of them had ever been pulled in for a sex offense. Pascal refuses to cooperate with the leisure centers or neighborhood houses who ask to see their police records. In that way, he hopes to be able to help the youngsters marked as delinquents by the law rid themselves of that label while in training. That discourse is also meant for the trainees themselves, who know that their record and their opinions are safe with him and will remain confidential.

The educational team<sup>5</sup> sees its mission as allowing these young people to pass more easily from the universe of the "high-rise block" to the workplace and aspires to give them the tools they will find useful if they decide to "settle down". As in all vocational training systems, working on normalizing one's language and clothes, as well as one's behavior is very important, as is being

4 The Young People's Legal Protection Department, PJJ, federates all the educators working for the Ministry of Justice, who, as such, are in charge of young delinquents.

5 Aside from this educator (Pascal), the team includes two trainers, and to a lesser degree, three other educators, employed by the structure that houses the training center.

assiduous and punctual. The trainees sign a “contract” at the beginning of their training session, by which they accept these conditions; in exchange, the educational team is bound to find them places to carry out the on-the-job training that follows.

The trainees began their formation in January 2001. Pascal explained to them that I was a sociologist, that I would be present regularly and wanted to interview them. Two or three days a week, I attended sessions and sat in on educational interviews. The first phase of my survey consisted in trying to distinguish myself from the other adults, whom I strongly resembled, especially in age, physical appearance and speaking style. But I had to install a specific relationship with those youngsters who were wary of me. For them, the word “sociologist” was similar to “psychologist” or “doctor”, i. e. being interested in them as a “social case”: my presence made them feel like “circus animals”. I took advantage of rest periods and trips to the cafeteria to strike up conversations, but that did not make me much different from the trainers. I then began to drop them off at the station at the end of the day, and started interviewing them informally in my car. Encouraged by a few trainees, I also decided to take the First Aid examination, which meant participating in various sessions in January and February. Finally, it seems to me that, from the moment I began interviewing them, during the month of March, my work became more transparent and my presence more legitimate: the narratives collected in the course of the interviewing allowed me to “see” many more things during my observations.<sup>6</sup> Above all, while I had difficulty in explaining to the teenagers what exactly it was I wanted to do and what sociology is, my experience as interviewer seems to have clarified my role in their eyes, as well as reassured them: they were not being judged or assessed, they were not mice in a laboratory or guinea-pigs; they were partly able to get involved in the survey, and realized that their opinion of the program could be useful in my research.

What remained difficult to obtain, from those who were most wary – as well as from those who had been excluded – was their opinions of the trainers and educators (since I was perceived as their ally). I tried to get around that hurdle by interviewing former trainees. That is how I met Patrick, who had trained in 2000 but left without a certificate, and Souad, a trainee in 1999, who had been excluded for having attacked another girl with a knife during the session. Interviewing former trainees was also a way of checking what becomes of the young people when they enter the job market and the way they perceive the training period once it is over and they are no longer subject to being evaluated.

6 Though Jean Peneff prefers observation to interviews, he notes that everything is not observable: “Accounts of observations seem less pertinent when relationships are not very close-knit; results are impalpable, because what they produce are convictions or symbols” (1992: 233-234).

## THE REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM

Part of the young people I spoke with felt that the training took place at a time of transition in their own lives when they were on their way to becoming adults: they were beginning to imagine what it was like to leave the “street” and the way it functions, where they sometimes felt trapped. In that sense, they were probably more receptive than before to the injunctions surrounding occupational integration: several of them saw that opportunity as being their “last chance”. For many – who meanwhile had taken stock of the little value they represented on the job market due to their lack of a diploma – training for a job was a way of going back to school after having wandered off the beaten track for a while. But if training attracted them, it was also because it is a way of avoiding boredom (*“la galère”*), being stuck at home or in their neighborhood with nothing to do, aimlessly turning around in circles, and getting into more scrapes. Besides, the atmosphere was good: the training center meant togetherness, and a “soft” way of entering a new referential universe. It was a bridge between the former peer groups and a new group made of young people like themselves, but in a context off the street.

Aside from all this, the type of work offered was good for their self-esteem: for these youngsters, it represented an “intellectual” occupation, contrasting with their past experiences: selling, providing services, working in a factory. While the latter was associated with dirt (*“black hands”*), and services bore them, being a counselor meant responsibility, autonomy, usefulness. The trainees were welcomed with open arms by the trainers, predisposed to be tolerant and positive if only because the young people volunteered to take part in the program. The youngsters discovered social working relations to which they were unaccustomed: everyone said *“tu”* and called each other by their first names, including the directors, as is usual in this milieu.

The young people I met were also sentimentally attached to their job-training because they identified it with a particular person: to them, it was “Pascal’s training program”. Identifying the system to a person was partly the result of the educator’s personal involvement: the program was “his baby”, as he said during one interview. He had spent a year getting the project ready, on top of his work at the community youth residence. He had to defend it in front of several authorities: the Young People’s Legal Protection Department (PJJ), the townships, the European Social Fund, the ministries in charge (*Ministère de la Ville, Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports*), in order to get much-needed institutional backing, partners and subventions. Each year, he must renew his decision to repeat the experience. More than all the others, he “believes” in it.<sup>7</sup> That belief, partly due to his own values and personal history, produces a

7 Durkheim thought that believing in the “grandeur of the task” at hand was an essential part of the educator’s moral authority (1974 : 130-131).

commitment that the young people notice because of several indicators: he gives them the number of his cell-phone, can be reached at any time when needed, and takes an active part in looking for companies or other places for their on-the-job training.

WALTER: FORMER “TOUGH GUY” ON THE WAY TO BEING “CONVERTED”

Before contacting Walter, I had heard the educators talk about him several times: he had been a trainee the year before and was held up as an example of “success”: a former tough guy converted to other values and a different way of functioning, thanks to his training as counselor. Pascal spoke about him in the following manner:

The most interesting one is him: he’s one of the guys from the ZAC...<sup>8</sup> and I think – touch wood – I think that everybody who worked with him thinks we got him out of a hell of a spot. We got him out of a way of functioning. He’s still in it, but now he knows it, he’s lucid and I think – the summer allowed us to measure it – I think he’s capable of getting out of the scrapes [*galères*] at the right moment, and not push it too far.

When I phoned Walter, saying Pascal had given me his number, he suggested I come see him at the small supermarket in his neighborhood where he worked as security guard. I went a few days later, at 7 p.m., before the store shut. We sat down in a nearby telephone-and-fax locale. Other young people who were hanging around watched us, half curious, half amused. When I took the tape-recorder out of my bag, Walter looked both surprised and flattered. He turned to one of his buddies and said not to wait for him because he was being “interviewed”, that he’d see him later on at the gym. Since the ones who stayed were making noise, making recording difficult, he got annoyed and complained to the manager. The manager then offered us the basement. We ended up in an empty, concrete room, each on a chair. The interview lasted over three hours, and only stopped at 10.30 p.m. because the manager was closing the shop.

Born in 1979, Walter grew up in a polygamous family from the Ivory Coast, in the high-rise blocks of Montverny (North of Paris). His father, retired today, was a chauffeur at the embassy of the Ivory Coast. After trying to achieve his Certificate (*CAP, certificat d’aptitude professionnelle*) as an auto mechanic for three years, Walter quit school in 1996 without a diploma. Deeply immersed in delinquent activities, he was finally incarcerated for a month by a youth court.

8 ZAC stands for *zone d’aménagement concerté*, a legal French procedure based on a 1967 law to facilitate cooperation between public and private groups and loosen State control in city planning in under-privileged urban areas.

After an orientation period (*plate-forme de mobilisation*), from September 1998 to March 1999, during which he divulged his idea to become a sports monitor (he loves boxing and is a pillar of his gym), the local Mission (a Youth Employment Agency) directed Walter towards a training program to prepare the BAFA.<sup>9</sup> When he started that in January 2000, he was twenty. At that moment, the affair for which he had already spent a month in jail had not yet come to trial. It is likely that the “sword of Damocles” over his head incited him to show his good will, i. e. that he wanted to be “integrated”. Pascal showed me the official paper issued by the judge of the children’s court in June 2000, notifying Walter of his probation; the trial took place in May 2000 (while he was in training) and he was then sentenced by the children’s court to three years imprisonment with thirty-five months reprieve, and two years probation (until May 2002).

When I met him, in May 2001, he was therefore obliged to submit to a certain number of constraints, or risk losing his reprieve: he had to respond to the summons of the children’s judge, provide the documents permitting the court to control his means of subsistence, tell them if he changed employers, or if he left town for more than two weeks, and he had to get a job or register at a training centre. It is important to keep this context in mind when interpreting his interview. The fact that Pascal was the go-between in our interview relationship meant that I represented the legal institution. But Walter seemed surprised by the interview situation and, though no doubt behaving the way he thought the legal institution would expect him to, he let himself get caught up in the game. He liked being asked to give his opinion about “suburban [*banlieue*] youth”. As the interview advanced and the themes developed, from being perceived as a representative of the legal institution, I got to be seen more as a sort of field reporter. Besides, the trust he had in the educator was to some degree transferred on to me. At the end of our talk, he thanked me and said he was pleased with the interview, and surprised to have spoken about himself so easily. The interview must be analyzed as the result of different strategies of self-presentation, oscillating between controlling the image one wishes to produce in front of a potential ally of the Law, the temptation to brag about being a (former) “tough guy” in front of a pseudo-journalist (the fact I was a woman probably compounded his tendency to show off) and having the lucky chance to look back and reflect on his own itinerary.

#### ACKNOWLEDGING A MORAL AUTHORITY

Walter underlines his respect for the various institutional actors in charge of the socio-educational guidance of young deviants, who “do everything” while

9 BAFA stands for *brevet d’aptitude à la fonction d’animateur*, a State diploma for counselors working with children and teenagers in a camp or leisure center.

“politicians” do nothing. The fact the educators and trainers are so committed and stubborn is what little by little forged Walter’s respect for them: “They so wanted us to succeed”, he repeated several times, as if to communicate his astonishment in the face of a determination that in a certain sense he didn’t comprehend. But giving the proof one deserves their trust, “not letting go”, does not mean accepting anything and everything, either. The pedagogical relationship described here is also a showdown. The “tests” are meant both to show the strength of the ties that bind them and to try the “strength of character” of the other person. One must be able to react but still defend the principles one has expressed. When he recalls how his training period unfolded, Walter explains with a smile that he had first “tested” the educators, and that he decided everything was “OK” only after two months:

I did stupid things just to see what he’d say, how he’d react. To see if he’s going to let it pass or not, and if he did then I’d take advantage of it. If he tries to prevent me, I’ll stay calm. But if he doesn’t do anything, I’ll walk all over him, I’ll take advantage.

Those tests are a sort of bedlam in which the group of trainees learn things about themselves, even as they put the trainer’s “strength” to the test. In these confrontations, women don’t dispose of the same arms as men: they don’t have the same attributes of authority vested in a man by street culture (physical power, virility, tone of voice). They must therefore use other wiles: psychic power – i. e. the fact of not “breaking down” in spite of the “tests” – makes or breaks their reputation. Frederick (cf. *infra*) also tells how, during his first year, one of the trainers had to be replaced at the end of two months, and how the woman who came to substitute for him had to make herself felt:

One of us came stinking of alcohol. After that, they put Sandrine there, but [giggle] you know, we were kids from the housing projects... she was tiny... and the kids never let up! But she managed to impose herself anyway, really well, that’s why I liked her, too, because in spite of everything, she managed to impose herself. She proved that even if she was small, she had lots of things to teach us. She showed she had character.

In their eyes, moral superiority (*versus* alcoholism), strength of character (*versus* psychological “weakness”) and professional competence can be guarantees of authority, and certain qualities compensate for the handicaps (such as a physical inferiority, for example).<sup>10</sup>

10 The dealers studied by Philippe Bourgois also express admiration for the sociologist who, unlike them, doesn’t take drugs. Though far removed from the image corresponding to the [continua]

If a man imposes thanks to his physical prowess, this remains mainly virtual. In practice, imposing one's authority in an "authoritarian" manner, in public at any rate, is inefficient because it instantly throws the relationship back into the reference to "street culture". In order to impose oneself while preserving the conditions that allow one's message to be received, a person must save the adolescent's face and not address him or her in any haughty way. While vertical imagery ("high-and-mighty", "grand statements") is associated with negative judgments, the vocabulary of horizontality takes on a positive connotation. "Face-to-face" talks, "one-to-one" discussions, are moments often mentioned during the interviews as times of a very special exchange.

Everything points to the first interaction as being the moment to size up both the commitment and the solidity of the other person. To decide what "line of action" to follow, the young persons evaluate that of the institutional actor facing them. If that actor gives sufficient proof of the sort expected, he or she may reap trust in return. Walter insists on the idea that if the team of trainers keep their promises, they must be given an equivalent gift in return (as in potlatch):

Everything they said really happened. They put us in a good light, they trusted us. *You're the one who has to manage your group, and show your stuff, develop your experience.* That's what I like, because they really put a lot of trust in us. In the morning, we came and had breakfast. 'Cause we'd asked for breakfast. We asked for a radio, we got a radio. They kept their promises, we had to keep ours. I saw it was really serious and when it was over, I was happy.

Symbolic credit (being shown in a good light) is as important as actual presents (breakfast, a radio). A former trainee who came to share his itinerary with them, also stressed the material dimension of the gifts: the salary, the camp that lets you learn to navigate, the canoe. He told them: "You'll see, everything they say is really true." The fact they are so agreeably surprised shows the novelty of the experience, as if up till then they had felt somehow cheated. In certain cases, it was as if finding oneself in a situation where others show they trust you and keep their word, partly defused the suspicion which is part of the way they have built their Self, with regard to the institutions as much as to their peers, following the well-known street rule that says "be careful, keep your guard up".

The pedagogical relationship thus seems better suited to a training program than to a school context, to the extent that it allows a relationship of trust to grow up progressively. The ambiance is good, everyone says "*tu*", normalization takes place through one-to-one discussions, and in private, as Walter tells us:

"virile" street ethos, his or her moral superiority commands respect (1995: 73-74).

During the session, they come to talk to you; if you have a problem, he talks to you one-to-one... In school, if you don't want to work, they'll put you in the back. For instance, in class, when some of them raise hell, the five of them'll be put together, told stay in the back, there, let the others work... You don't want to work? It doesn't matter! The teacher's not going to try to explain things to you, or talk to you in private...

When the educator's moral authority is acknowledged and if the framework for an interaction is appropriate, words can have a certain impact, especially if they are meaningful within the "native" ethos. Walter explains that his parents' injunctions remained a dead letter for a long time, as if they weren't in the best position to make him "understand the facts of life", insufficiently armed to counteract the pull of the "street" on their son: "When I was young, my father talked to me, my mother talked to me, everybody gave me advice. But it went in one ear and out the other. My head, my brain, was somewhere else. That's what people don't understand." Pascal, on the other hand, succeeded in throwing him off: he talked to him "between four walls", and raised arguments that carried because they showed he knew the native ethos: "I saw I had to grab my chance... That's when I really started to change. I didn't change on the outside, but in my head, I really changed." Before those one-to-one talks, Walter would be late or absent all the time; he sometimes had trouble conciliating his two lives: his life as a trainee and his life in the *banlieue*.<sup>11</sup> Little by little, he adapted to his trainers' expectations, even though he continued to live his double life.

Since Walter couldn't find the words that would have allowed him to "understand", I talked to Pascal about it a few days later. "At first, Walter was really taking me for a ride", Pascal told me. For instance, though he had forbidden him from bringing his buddies to the training center, he had made an appointment with one of them one evening and met another one the next day at noon to smoke pot in his car. Pascal had lectured him that very evening, alone, as was his habit: "I told him, if you want to make it, and you've got a good chance to succeed, don't bring your pals here, where you can play another game, where you can be somebody else." Pascal tries to remember the different discussions they had together, between threats (shutting the doors on his new future) and the slow inculcation (brain-washing) of a different self-image:

I must have told him that he could continue to shut himself off, to mistrust the Law, then in five years he'd end up in jail for a long haul; or he could try to drop the mask, play a different role and have a chance of

11 The *banlieues* are the poor suburbs on the outskirts of large urban centers like Paris, which concentrate the poorer populations in low-cost housing projects or high-rise blocks.

avoiding the can... I told him you're always going to be just a little bit on the wrong side of the law, always... but at least it'll be acceptable. I told him something else, which is maybe what got to him... I told him you're big and strong, you play the tough guy, you like being taken for a leader, but I think you're a follower... you let yourself get manipulated... You're not the big shot you think you are. And there, I had a baby across from me. You'd've seen the colossus! He shrank to nothing... I told him, for me there are two solutions: either he went on playing me for a fool and I'd take him nowhere, or else he accepted to lower his guard, to play the game, he'd make progress and get what he had come for in the bargain. And he went for it. I told him: is it the first time somebody tells you what they think? And he said: "Yeah... I think people are afraid of me..." So I told him: "Listen, I'm not afraid of you. At least you'll have heard that once in your life."

The educator tried to show Walter that he would benefit on all accounts if he played the game expected of him. He drew the perspectives of a smooth transition, wanted to convince him it's possible to change boats according to the situation, to play different roles on the different stages:

There was also a discussion during camp about his whole relationship to the law. I explained that it was OK for him to go on pulling off his little deals in his *banlieue*, it wasn't serious; if he doesn't want to lose face, he's forced to. I told him I understood one is prisoner of a system but what I explained to him is that when you're not in your high-rise, it no longer works like that. That he had to learn the rules outside to be able to adapt. And that outside, his buddies weren't there, he didn't have to play the same ballgame. Which is why I thought he should work away from Montverny. I think it's things like that that finally got to him.

These discussions, during which Pascal gave Walter glimpses of how to play on the various stages, while chipping away at his image of tough guy that would carry no weight outside the *banlieue*, were also reinforced by other forms of support, i.e. acts that backed up his words. In May 2000, Pascal, though he was under no obligation to do so, accompanied him to the trial. But in the eyes of the Law, his very presence vouched for Walter, proved he was making an effort to conform, so that the fear of prison receded somewhat. He also spoke with the officers at the Montverny precinct, to get Walter off the hook: they wanted to oblige him to become a police informer in exchange for not communicating his new misdemeanors to the prosecutor.

Thus, the value of the words spoken by the educator depends on the youth's acknowledging his moral authority. That means empathy, consideration, personal implication and tenacity, the capacity to translate morals into the "native"

ethos (implying knowledge of living conditions and “street” values that allow adapting the pedagogical message), i. e. a whole set of implicit and often little-publicized bits of know-how. Such are the qualities that prove the educator’s dedication to the young people, triggering the potlatch system in which every gift must be returned in kind: since the educator gave signs of being independent vis-à-vis his own “people”, one can in return trust him, and take one’s distance also from one’s own groups. Therefore, the moment a relationship becomes personal and personalized, instead of anonymous and bureaucratic, a real exchange becomes possible. The interlocutor acquires a “social physiognomy”, is no longer simply an institutional “other”,<sup>12</sup> but stimulates a progressive acceptance of the values he or she embodies, to the point that most of the young people we met aspired to become educators themselves.

#### BECOMING AN EDUCATOR

In and of itself, the function of educator can prolong the process of normalization, in the sense that the youngsters must learn to harmonize contradictory roles. Counselor work calls for self-control, one’s behavior must be an “example” for the children, one has to teach them how to manage their conflicts, etc.; all these and other elements are in total contrast with the street ethos. The role also leads to internalizing pedagogical norms, to developing a conception of childhood that is closer to the one held by the middle and upper classes than to the one prevalent among the lower classes. That is achieved by having to absorb a new vocabulary, with new relational norms which are regularly recalled in case one lapses into the vernacular. The fact of being “foul-mouthed” in the presence of the children or their parents, or during a session, may be sufficient reason for failing. Nicolas, one of the trainees I met in 2001, insisted on how interacting with the children had been instrumental in changing his speaking habits: “Counseling helped me see how I spoke before: ‘your mother the whore’, ‘your mother this or that...’, it was every other word... with the kids, you can’t allow yourself to talk like that. You think before you open your mouth.”

Frederick explains that as he spent more and more vacations working as a counselor, little by little he gave up the “tenement mentality”. Big and strapping, he claims he always wanted to be the “strong arm” in the schoolyard, until he was expelled after being sent up before the high-school’s board of discipline. Since at the time he was living in a *banlieue*, he considered himself a “neighborhood hoodlum” because he spent all his time in a neighboring high-rise. His size gave clout to his reputation and he started up a business, dealing

12 Like the family doctor in the poorer classes described by Richard Hoggart in the 1950s (Hoggart 1957).

in cannabis with a pal of his. For him, his experiences as counselor and the progressive transformations of his ethos are linked:

When I became a counselor, I completely forgot all about being the strongest or not the strongest... When I have a fight it's because I don't have a choice. If not, I wriggle out of it. When I started working with kids I started to realize I was barking up the wrong tree. When you're a parent or a brother, you don't want your kids getting into trouble and I didn't want them to do what I did. So how can you tell people not to do what they see you do yourself? It's completely contradictory. So the more you talk and tell people what to do, the more you start applying it to yourself. So from one thing to another, you start building yourself up.

What Frederick is saying seems to indicate that there should be some external sign announcing the passage towards adulthood, giving a person a chance to “break” with their marginal lifestyle. Placed in the position of educator, confronted with the obligation to make and implement the rules, he found himself in a dilemma: the conflict between contradictory norms led him to revise his vision of the world in order to harmonize his different social roles.

Like Frederick, Walter suggested that a counselor's position in itself induced changes in style. To throw him off balance, Pascal had made him work with the littlest kids, aged between three and six, in a residential commune, hoping the “cultural shock” would make him change his ways. By working with the little ones, Walter “calmed down”, he was forced to watch his language and tone of voice:

I was with the kindergarten kids, they were really tiny... Take a good look at me: me with tiny kindergarten kids! At first I told Pascal, “Stop it, I'm not staying here!” I told him, “you're crazy, what you put me there for...” But then after that, I'm the one who caught on! At first, I wanted to be with the teenagers but he said, “No, I'm going to put you with the kindergarten kids”.

— *Why do you think he put you with the littlest kids?*

— To make me understand. To make me change my ways, 'cause I changed. To be nicer, warmer. [...] It was a really good experience for me. As if it calmed me down.

Going from one universe to the other throws him off balance, however. The image of the “mixture in the head” illustrates the effects of the double bind he found himself in because of his double membership: he must constantly change labels, between being in the “street” and being a counselor. He stopped smoking cannabis the days he had to work with the children.

His new socialization also gave him a new vocabulary. Walter played the game, started imitating his trainers, doubtless attracted by a form of cultural capital he knew he didn't possess: "The trainer talks to you... and you feel like imitating him so you start talking like him, you start writing the sentences... Two or three months later, you got it, you got a very polished language..." But Walter also played along because there was a benefit in it for him in his own neighborhood; he could adopt certain elements of the new culture and import them into his relations with his peers. For these acquisitions are apparently transferable into the "street culture". He reutilized the terms and formulas learnt during his training and reinvested them in a strategy of distinction as efficient as any pair of Cartier spectacles:

Before, I spoke *banlieue*. In six months, I learned too many words! In only six months! If I'd stayed one or two years more...

— *What kind of words did you learn?*

— "Specific"... One day, we get there and Pascal comes and gives us a speech. He says: "If you have any problems with some specific project..." I didn't know what 'specific' meant... I said: "Wait, wait... drop everything!" I say: "Wait a minute, what does specific mean? Sometimes you come up with these words!", and he'd explain... I learned lots of words.

— *You have more examples?*

— "Lucrative"... "Membership"... What else? "Skilled", "unskilled". There are more words, but I forget. Sometimes, I even come out with whole sentences: "Excuse me for bothering you", "your vocabulary is a bit... would you please be so kind as to speak on a higher register?" All that, it's they who taught me. You see, I can come out with sentences like that. Whole sentences! It's they who taught me. If you write and listen all the time, it finally enters your thick head. I liked talking like that, it was a gas, I really went at it. I talked like that! [...] Sometimes we all talked like that. The women really exploded! We talked like this: "Excuse me, dear sir...". It's beginning to be a fashion in the *banlieue*, in my town at any rate, it's starting to be fashionable for a juvenile delinquent to talk right.

The educator's presence turned out to be indispensable the day Walter got into trouble in his place of work. Just one month before the end of his on-the-job training, the directress told him she would not be able to validate it. Walter was petrified, unable to respond, apparently not possessing the codes that would have allowed him to find an answer, as if he had not really understood what was happening. He interpreted the directress' attitude the way one would in the "street", wondering if she was trying to "test" him, but he did not know how to respond to that sort of test. He was not yet "acculturated" to that work

universe. So the educator played the part of translator, explaining the sort of reaction that was expected in that sort of situation, and Walter was able to face his directress the next day:

The directress where I worked, she didn't want to give me the diploma. It was about a month before the end. I went to see her and she said, "I can't give you the diploma..." That day I didn't say anything. I went home. I thought, it's bizarre; I just didn't get it... Maybe she'd done that to test me, to see what I'd say. I said nothing. When I got home, I told Pascal, because it was about my problem of always being late or absent. Pascal said: "you should have spoken up!" Even me, in my head, I thought I should have talked. So the next day, when I got there, I said "listen, you said that, but I was somewhere else..." I told her "I want that diploma 'cause I think I can handle a group of kids, I can be responsible, I can be trusted", I let her have it, it all came out. And she said, "yes, I'm not sure..." After that, I got there every day in time [amused], I really worked well, well, well...

— *Did it help that Pascal told you to react?*

— Yes, it really helped, 'cause I hadn't reacted at all, I hadn't said a word... Maybe I didn't dare. Maybe I was somewhere else, I don't know.

The interactions imposed by one's function thus are instrumental in deeply modifying one's relationship to the world. Olivier Schwartz has hypothesized the fact that contact situations with the public (the result of service jobs developing among the lower classes) generate a "communicational capital", "interactive competences", and "a greater aptitude for making contacts in the outside world" (Schwartz 1998).

#### FORMER "TOUGH GUYS" BECOME "ETHICS" EXPERTS: THE CONVERSION OF A MORAL CAPITAL

The way Walter and Frederick describe their new educator's role with the children and teenagers they come across, sheds light on the social conditions required for moralistic arguments to carry any weight. Given their deviant itineraries and past resistance to warnings (alternating with violence), Walter and Frederick are convinced it is useless to hit a child if one wants to have any sort of pedagogical impact. Their status as former tough guys lends them a particular authority and they are intimately acquainted with the reasoning most apt to find its mark. As an example, Walter mentions the relationship he established with a youngster in his neighborhood: the kid told his high-school principal, who wanted to call in his family because his results were so bad and his behavior problematic, that Walter was his big brother. Walter then thought he had to convince that boy to change his attitude:

I told him: when you're in school, don't talk to anybody. The teachers, don't bother about them. 'Cause he likes to clown around, have people notice him... the same as I used to do. I told him: don't pay attention to anybody, just work and stop fooling around. Try to concentrate. Normally, he should have repeated the class, there were five months to go... Well, he did as I told him, he worked and didn't fool around... I told him: even if the teach congratulates you, don't say anything. If she says: "you've changed", don't say anything, just stay the same. He did what I said, he's in 6<sup>th</sup> grade now and everything's OK; if he hadn't, he'd have been put in some vocational high-school and that's *not* OK, that means the street. But he listened to me, and he's in 6<sup>th</sup> grade now.

Since Walter became aware of what had given him the same sort of attitude towards school, he's able to see the stakes and find the appropriate arguments. His lesson in ethics is doubtless all the more persuasive as it fits in with the local ethos and as, at the same time as he gives the arguments, he is providing the youngsters with the right tools to carry out his prescriptions: these are not general statements or values so much as concrete advice, which may appear anecdotal here, but are apparently essential in allowing a young person to modify his/her behavior without losing face, without looking like a "buffoon" or a traitor and thus saving their reputation. Frederick also describes how he addresses the children he works with:

I try to explain to them what I didn't want to understand myself. I say: "what I'm telling you, it's not to drive you crazy. It's because later on you've got to think of your future. OK, they may respect you, but they don't like you. That's the difference. I mean, sooner or later, everybody's going to gang up against you. You may be strong, but you're not Superman."

As counselor, he thinks that, since "his experience" conveys a certain form of authority to his words, his role is to transmit his "ethics" to the children, to give them a "framework" in which to function. Like Walter and probably for the same reasons, he feels it is important not to wield his authority in the same way that they themselves found unbearable in school. Though he insists on the importance of rules, he puts more stock in lending a sympathetic ear. Accustomed to handling kids in the street, the aptitudes acquired in their gang are thus converted or transferred onto a different register. They become "ethics salesmen", as it were, for their juniors.

## FAILING AND GIVING UP: THE PULL OF “STREET CULTURE” AND THE FORCE OF STIGMATA

Strategies for introducing oneself, ways of playing with norms and adaptation vary according to the moment one’s training began, and follow a not necessarily linear process afterwards. Though the youngsters do not always completely live up to the legal institution’s expectations, they nevertheless acquire a certain “capital of conformity”.<sup>13</sup> The cases of exclusion or auto-exclusion we are going to examine now demonstrate in reverse the importance of that “capital of conformity”: in particular, it would seem that the ability to master the image one gives of oneself and the divulgence of information about one’s past are not evenly shared by the subjects.

Souad was excluded from the training center in June, shortly before taking her BAFA exam, because she attacked another girl with a knife. She explained that the other young woman owed her money for a cell-phone she had sold her. After repeated warnings, she issued an ultimatum. In the end, all this being fruitless, she decided to defend her honor with the help of a knife: thus it was her reverting to street values that caused the conflict. Souad understood of course the pedagogical team’s decision, but nevertheless bitterly regretted having been excluded, which she felt to be an injustice, especially since it occurred just when she thought she’d made it, one month before the end: “Five months [in training], for me, it was a miracle! I wept...” She later thought she might have settled the conflict differently, by appealing to the educator. But that solution was impossible for her at the time, because it contradicted “street ethics”: “I should have spoken to Pascal but for me, before, doing a thing like that meant squealing. In my block, the rule is ‘work it out for yourself’; that’s our law.” Talking to a third person would have meant she had converted, that her values had changed; but that was not completely the case at the time.

Some trainees may be tempted to stick to their “street culture” because they feel left out or stigmatized in the midst of the group. That, for example, was the case with Kamel. There was a place in the program that hadn’t been filled, so he was admitted in February, and started training a month after the others. He is 17 and lives in a reputedly difficult block of high-rises. He looks older than his age (his face is scarred, yellowish, hollow-eyed), always needs a shave, wears a sunhat, old clothes, a threadbare jacket that is oily and black at the seams. He has been followed-up as an “endangered youth” for quite a while, and has been in trouble with the law on several occasions.

13 We have come forward with the term in the course of a previous research (Coutant 2000): it designates both economic, social and cultural resources and strategies for introducing oneself which, together, constitute proof of conformity in the eyes of those who represent the “dominant” moral code. One might call it the sort of capital one needs to accumulate for one’s “clients” in the field of social work.

The first day, he seemed somewhat intimidated, but showed his good will by trying to answer the questions put by the trainers to the best of his ability. In the weeks that followed, he became more self-assured, participated actively, and was quick to talk back. Quite rapidly, he acquired the vocabulary specific to the job and learned the appropriate legal texts. At the beginning of March, following a meeting with Kamel's woman educator, who informed him of the problems the boy was having, Pascal wanted to talk to him during a break. Since his mother had been put in the hospital, his step-father, who doesn't like him, had thrown him out of the house. His mother was worried and afraid he would quit his training. He had run away and was arrested by the police who found cannabis on him. The educator asked him about it. After speaking with him, Pascal said that Kamel was a "depressive kid", that he had made two suicide attempts the year before. A few days later, another trainer, Bertrand, complained to Pascal about Kamel and Amadou. Pascal supposed the two boys were competing for leadership in the group and answered that they should encourage Kamel. The following week, at the beginning of April, Kamel only showed up one day at noon. Pascal, noting his morning absence, was annoyed and showed it. That afternoon, Kamel fooled around with Neijete. Bertrand once again complained to Pascal, saying he was creating a disturbance in the group. The next day was the day the "basic stage", i. e. the first step to obtaining the BAFA, was to be validated. The evaluation went well for most of the trainees. Then it was Kamel's turn:

David: We're going to ask you to think about the pedagogical and relational aspects of the training period.

Kamel: [...] The relations with the trainers are good.

David: What makes you say they're good?

Kamel: Sometimes, you may make a remark or two, but I don't think I give you too much trouble.

David [drily]: Is that a question? You want me to tell you what I think?

Kamel [uneasy]: I feel a bit blocked, a little stressed out, because you never really made me think about it...

Pascal: How do you see yourself... Do you think your training is going alright...

Kamel: I see myself... not at the top, but I think I can pass... I think I don't have a low level, not a very high level, but I think I've got the average.

Pascal: Is that enough for you? Is that enough for you?

[Then came questions about how he had evolved: he was asked to do a self-evaluation. David, the trainer, was becoming more and more critical.]

Kamel: Don't put me down like that! I know part of it anyway, I've got the basic elements!

David: And from a relational point of view, you talk about the others... You say you've got to calm them down... what about you? Are you *clean*?<sup>14</sup> [alluding to a fight with other trainees during lunchtime]

Kamel: No, it's true I answered a little rough. But somebody put salt in my glass!

Pascal: You shouldn't put yourself in a position to be provoked. You've got to quit playing that game. You've got to know we see through you. [...] The issue is your ability to work in a group. You have nothing to prove. Is this the first time you've been told that?

Kamel: You've vexed me...

Pascal: Is it the first time?

Kamel: A little...

Pascal: Maybe that's why it's hard to accept.

Kamel: Maybe I've got too much pride. Really, believe me, I swear I'll go back to the job, I won't be absent anymore. I really get along well with the counselors. What I don't like is if they don't respect me.

Pascal: That's what I'm trying to tell you. You shouldn't provoke them by the way you behave. Just let it go. The more you react, the more people are going to want to rile you. Put your pride somewhere else. [...] We can help you lower your guard a little. You're going to have to learn that...

Kamel: But I've always been told to keep my guard up.

Pascal: I'm not saying it's not due to something. Believe me, we know all about you. We weren't sure we'd validate you. Not because of your technical competences but because of the relational. You have to stop looking for excuses.

The two weeks following that evaluation, the trainees applied on-the-job what they had learned, by working with the children. Kamel did not show up. Pascal explained to me that he had been absent the first day of his on-the-job training, and that afterwards he had been confronted with a more demanding directress who asked him to prepare certain activities more completely, and to make an effort to speak properly. Kamel said to his mother: "That directress makes me puke", and didn't return.

I was not able to talk with Kamel. At the time he "disappeared", I had not yet begun to establish a relationship with him, or to negotiate for an interview. Pascal heard from him only through his mother: Kamel was no longer living at home, he only went there from time to time to take a shower. At the end of June, Neijete told me she had run into him recently: he was "*shooté*",<sup>15</sup> his nose was broken, his face a mess. I asked her what kind of a relationship she had

14 The word "clean" was said in English.

15 French slang for "shouted up".

with Kamel when he was in the program. And, contrary to what the educators had said, Neijete painted a very different picture of him, saying he was “very motivated”, that he had really been an inspiration for her. She told me he would scold her when she sprawled all over the table or wasted her time reading magazines. That same day, Pascal confessed to me that he had not known how to handle Kamel, he felt he had somehow “missed the boat” with him. He then told me the boy’s story, first asking me not to turn on the recording machine: I discovered that Kamel was born after a rape, that he knew his biological father, a North-African who lived in the same high-rise block, and that he didn’t get along with his step-father, a racist brute.

When Pascal asked me what I thought of Kamel and the situation, after the April evaluation, I did not know what to say. Kamel had seemed sincere and the fact he didn’t understand what he was being reproached with didn’t seem put-on to me. If I was surprised during his interview, it was due to the fact I had the impression that Kamel was being reproached for being rejected by the others. He was held responsible for the hostility he inspired. That impression turned out to be justified: when interviewing the other trainees, it dawned on me that Kamel had not been able to “lower his guard”, as the educators were asking him to, because he had apparently not felt sufficiently safe in the group. Stigmatization and rejection basically emanated from those trainees who found it essential to make a clean break with the past. By his simple presence, Kamel was a blotch on the training session. During his evaluation, Amadou explained why he didn’t like the boy in the following terms:

Kamel’s always trying to get at me. On the way to the cafeteria today, he said to me: “You’re from Paris, you’re a bourgeois.” Before, I was in a tenement in the *banlieue*, and even in Paris, I still live in a tenement... Later, I put him in his place, and he said I was right. But outside, he always wants to control me.

Contrary to Kamel, Amadou is always neat as a pin. He wears designer clothes, as do the others, but his are always practically new, clean and ironed. Since he left the community home to return to his father’s, in Paris, he broke off with all the youngsters he used to hang around with. He’s anxious to please his father, whom he seems to admire in spite of past violence. Amadou thus no longer has the “tenement spirit”, which today he tends to denigrate in order to keep a respectful distance from it. The hostility that Kamel inspired among certain trainees came more from what he represented for them than because he actually provoked them: his *hexis* incarnated everything they tried to free themselves from, a past they no longer wanted any part of.

Fatima made me understand that keeping Kamel at arm’s length was a way for her to protect herself. She had run away for several months, and since

having been put in a psychiatric ward at the behest of her educator, had gone back to her family and broken with all her former acquaintances. Kamel put her terribly ill at ease because he reawakened the anguish associated with that period of her existence.

Amadou and Fatima are similar because they are both living in-between situations. They both experienced the “street” but it was only a parenthesis in their itinerary; they can objectively hope to leave that past behind. Amadou’s father heads a middle-sized construction company and earns a good living. Fatima’s father is a bus-driver, all her brothers and sisters have graduated and work (her sister even has a BTS diploma).<sup>16</sup> Both went back home, and their family relationships are no longer based on violence. For them, job-training represents the possibility of catching up socially, and incites them to put a distance between themselves and whoever they feel is threatening that ambition.

Marginalized in the training session, Kamel felt he no longer had any say in the game and therefore no reason to invest in it any more. The case of Patrick, a trainee of the preceding year, may cast some light on Kamel’s self-exclusion. He did not feel right at the training center because he felt he was being judged: his past had been talked about and had been the object of remarks and comments on the part of trainers and trainees alike. “Annoyed”, he had tried to “keep his calm”: some days, he even preferred not to come. When a radio was stolen, he couldn’t bear the suspicion he felt directed against him, making him relive an old image of himself he had wanted to cast off once and for all. “They’re putting me in a slot I don’t want anything to do with anymore”, he said, “they’re putting a label on me I don’t want.” Patrick did not get all of his BAFA at the end of the session because of having been so irregular. It seems that, for Kamel as for Patrick, reviving the past consecrated their failure and obliged them either to manage their relations with others in a tough, “street culture” style, or to avoid all contact. One of Kamel’s interventions at the beginning of March, during the preparation of a summing-up session, seems to confirm that rapprochement when analyzing the two itineraries. He denounced the curiosity that made some people eavesdrop:

We’re training to become counselors. As a counselor, we’re bound to professional secrecy. If a child is sick, you’re not going to tell the others. If some of my colleagues have their ear glued to the keyhole it’s because they don’t really want to be counselors. It’s unacceptable; afterwards, they judge other people! And they stick a label on people’s backs.

16 BTS stands for *brevet de technicien supérieur*, diploma obtained at the end of a two-year program after the *baccalauréat*.

In spite of everything, he seemed attached to his new identity as trainee, as his calling his peers “my colleagues” would seem to testify.

#### THE PYGMALION EFFECT

The status of “counselor-in-training” instead of “juvenile delinquent” or “endangered youth” exerts a sort of Pygmalion effect on some of these young people, at least as long as the training program lasts, the term referring to the influence of teachers’ expectations on pupils’ performances (Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968). Encouragement and praise are at the heart of Pascal’s pedagogy: his philosophy is that if nobody “believes in them”, they will “never be able to believe in themselves”. In a sense, he is trying to act on the “causality of the probable” (Bourdieu 1974), on the subjective internalization of objective possibilities. The hopes the young people feel are placed on them can affect their attitudes, and that is all the more likely as they are at the opposite pole of the stigmatization experienced previously. That is what Fatima is saying:

Pascal really believed in that. I remember, at first, he talked to me about it and I really believed it, when he said: “you’ll pass your BAFA, you’re going to work...”, I was convinced, I really believed it. I never once doubted his word. That’s what did it, in fact, I really believed it when he told me that... And it all came true.

During the evaluation interview for passing the theoretical part, Neijete, who had almost been excluded at the start of the training session, was praised by everybody: she was able to adapt and apply all the remarks made about her and her work. Very intimidated and ill at ease at the beginning of the interview (she played around with her lighter, rubbed her fingers...), little by little she relaxed when she heard the good things being said about her and talked about what the experience had done for her: she liked having responsibilities, and insisted on the fact that nobody had ever “really trusted” her before. She also felt she had learned to work in a team and to “trust people a little more because before [she] never trusted anyone”:

Frankly, I learned a lot, and not only about being a counselor. Things to do with the group, with your life, with your health... There are too many things I didn’t know. The training session – I’m not saying that to be nice –, it’s made me more mature. At the beginning, I thought the BAFA was a way of whiling away my time. Now it’s become really important. Frankly, I’m proud to be in it. What I like best about it is having responsibilities, that people trust me.

Thus, for some of the young people, job-training represents a form of progressive acculturation, associated with the opening up of a space of possibilities, as the metaphor of the opening door (recurrent in the interviews) illustrates. The system can become a way of acquiring “interactive and communicational competences”, which are then transferable to other segments of the job market and other fields of life. But the Pygmalion effect works both ways, and the stigmata are probably the more unbearable as these young people thought they had somehow gotten rid of them. The situation becomes intolerable when that catches up with them: if they don’t want to be excluded, they have to give up the old reflexes which allowed them to defend their honor in the street, yet they are constantly thrown back on their old identities. The only thing left to them, if they want to save their face, is avoidance or self-exclusion.

Though we have attempted here to pinpoint the potential effects of an educational program, we certainly do not mean to insinuate that this type of action is like waving a magic wand. We are well aware that studying a process of personal conversion within an institution, by placing the accent more on attachments than on resistance, as we have done, necessarily creates biases in the analysis. Besides, an educational program always derives its significance from the other forms of education that surround it (the nuclear and extended family in particular). Also, other systems may have preceded it, and other experiences will follow that will either reinforce or, on the contrary, attenuate its effects. The broader context must therefore be examined to account for the destiny of these young people in the long run. In Walter’s case, for instance, the educational program was but one of several factors: the fear of prison, made more concrete since his three best friends were jailed for gang rape; the influence of an older brother, converted to Islam after having been put away for several years, which is at the root of Walter’s own conversion from Catholicism. One must also evaluate the degree of the changes that have taken place: though Walter now shows off his “capital of conformity”, enjoying a status that allows him to play that game (he has become a packer in his neighborhood supermarket), he probably also rounds out his salary thanks to his “business dealings”. More generally speaking, the process of conversion, which is not necessarily linear, depends on upholding the belief that it was worth the candle, and that depends on the young person’s objective chances of integration: first of all, the available academic, family and social resources that can be called upon, and secondly, the occupational perspectives.

To try and account for what is at stake when confronting the job market, we continued interviewing six of our subjects during the three years that followed their experience in the training program; we were unable, however, for lack of time, to observe them on the job, in their professional interactions. A stable occupational status considerably reinforces the belief that converting was worthwhile, whereas precarious employment leads to “fiddling” around with

several identities according to one's situation. The fact one continues living in a housing development is not in itself an obstacle for going through with the conversion: for former "tough guys", "settling down" can even be interpreted as a supplementary sign of moral strength. When they stay in their old neighborhoods, the girls appear to suffer more than the boys, however, finding the burden of past stigmata harder to bear. As one of them put it, "Your reputation is like a [prison] record, it sticks to you all your life". Given that, girls may be more tempted to reactivate their old "street" habits, except if they break away from that universe totally, especially if they manage to physically and geographically move away from it.<sup>17</sup>

17 For a view of long-term educational work, see Coutant (2005).

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Desde os anos 70 do século XX, devido às transformações do mercado laboral e às mudanças registadas na "cultura de rua", a moral profissional já não substitui a "moral da rua" tão facilmente quanto antes e o operariado tem menor capacidade de integração dos jovens delinquentes. Nesse sentido, aumentou proporcionalmente a importância do papel desempenhado pelas instituições envolvidas no processo de normalização. Foi precisamente esse tipo de ambição que pretendi captar ao estudar um programa de integração de delinquentes juvenis num subúrbio francês. Através de estudos de caso de três rapazes, explico as razões por que os jovens envolvidos nesse programa participam nele e as condições que terão de verificar-se para que a autoridade moral de um educador de rua seja reconhecida. Destaco a aculturação que acontece no âmbito deste programa e o tipo de competências que podem ser adquiridas através dele. Mostro também como o estigma associado a um passado de delinquência pode sempre interferir no processo e reactivar hábitos desenvolvidos na "rua".

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: delinquência juvenil, autoridade dos educadores, conversão moral, capital de conformidade, estigmatização, subúrbios.