

L'aumônerie de prison. Le cas de l'établissement de détention Tanguay (Montréal)

1. Project Goals

Our project started with the crafting of an instrument to assess religion in a qualitative manner. For this purpose, we devised a board game. Our original intention was to locate experiences of transcendence, the “wholly other,” within space (a city landscape). Drawing on Georg Simmel’s insights, we wanted to take into account the objective and subjective forms of religion; we hoped to tie these two dimensions together by mapping the realms of religion.

The focus on space was sparked by an observation: the huge chapel, right at the center of the jail. The chapel is nothing but obvious; indeed, the jail was built in 1964, a time, which coincides with the secularization of Quebec’s schools, hospitals, and also jails.

2. Researchers and Students involved

- Barbara Thériault, associate professor, Département de sociologie, Université de Montréal (UdeM), member of the religion and diversity project.
- Monica Grigore, Ph.D. candidate, Département de sociologie, UdeM
- Etienne Tardif, BA honours, Département de sociologie, UdeM; now MA candidate.

3. Methods

- Participant observation during pastoral activities (mass, bible study sessions, ceremony of forgiveness, and discussion groups) field notes and exchange of field notes between the team members.
- 18 semi-structured interviews (with the help of our board game) with inmates as well as two with pastoral workers and volunteers.
- 2 group interviews (board game).

4. Permissions

We asked the Ministère de la sécurité publique du Québec for permission to do research at Tanguay in the Summer 2011 and were finally granted access to the jail on 8 December 2011; we then immediately started our fieldwork. Prior to gaining access to the jail, we designed the board game and tested it on different groups of people.

5. Summary of activities

From December on, we spent on average one day at the jail (Fridays) and also met once a week to discuss the project and test our instrument (game board). We completed the fieldwork on 22 June 2012. However, we want to do a few other interviews before September 2012.

6. Provisional findings

Besides developing an instrument to assess religion in a qualitative manner and revisiting theories related to transcendence, an aspect moved to the center of our analyses: the inmates' bodies.

We have noticed that inmates distinguish positive and negative experiences of transcendence. These experiences are related to places, but also to body movements (they are embodied). As a matter of fact, the body was central to most of our observations (in the care—or neglect—of the body, in ornaments [often made of religious artefacts] as well as our own reaction to inmates). The relation to the body appeared to be closely related to a gender dimension. For this reason, the body of women will be at the centre of our analysis and the publications we are preparing.

7. Output

- Thériault, Tardif, and Grigore: "Aumônerie et religiosité. Le cas de la prison Tanguay," 15 March 2012, Montréal; meeting with the Montreal team members of the religion and diversity project.

- Thériault: "Mapping the Realms of Religion (The Case of a Jail)," 10th ISORECEA conference, 21 April 2012, Iasi (Roumania).

- Thériault: "Mapping the Realms of Religion. The Case of a Montreal Jail," *New Forms of Public Religion*, Cambridge, 5-7 September 2012.

8. Budget

Ps: funds for the project have been taken from the MCRI grant as well as a FQRSC grant (matching funds, Thériault), which expires in 2011-2012.

Breakdown of Expenses				
Student Funding*				
	Amount	Name	Dates	Project
Student Stipends	2 x 1,500\$	Grigore	Sep2011 Jan2012	Prison Tanguay
	2 x 1,500\$	Tardif	Sep2011 Jan2012	Prison Tanguay
	1,400\$	Transcription	2012	Prison Tanguay
Student Assistantship	5000\$	Tardif (analyses and publication)	May- August 2012	
Research Funding				
	Amount	Project	Dates	Specifics**
Funding for Research Costs				
Funding for Research Travel				
Funding for Administrative/Supply Costs Related to Research	250\$	Graphic designer (board game)		