



THE RELIGION AND DIVERSITY PROJECT/RELIGION ET DIVERSITÉ



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Biography

Barbara Thériault is full professor at the Department of Sociology and member of the Canadian Centre for German and European Studies at University of Montreal as well as editor of the “feuilleton section” of *Sociologie et sociétés*. She holds a Ph.D. from the Max Weber Centre for Cultural and Social Studies at the University of Erfurt and the Free University of Brussels. She received her “habilitation” from the European University Viadrina.

The sociology of religion, seen from a Weberian perspective, is the thread connecting her research projects. Her previous work deals with the impact of radical change in 1989, most notably on religious organizations in East Germany. Her publications related to this topic include *‘Conservative Revolutionaries’: Protestant and Catholic Churches in Germany after Radical Political Change in the 1990s* (Berghahn, New York, 2004). Still drawing on the sociology of Max Weber, she published a book entitled *The Cop and the Sociologist: Investigating Diversity in German Police Forces* (transcript, Bielefeld, 2013).

Within the MCRI she has worked on a project dealing with religion in a prison and a halfway house in the province of Quebec. The results of her ongoing research on material culture and religion has been published as “feuilletons,” small sociological texts, and as part of a regular radio chronicle in the summer of 2015 [please correct my English!].



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Research Statement

‘Conservative Revolutionaries’: Protestant and Catholic Churches in Germany after Radical Political Change in the 1990s. During the forty years of division, the Protestant and Catholic churches in Germany were the only organisations to retain strong ties and common structures: they embodied continuity in a country marked by discontinuity. As such, the churches were both expected to undergo smooth and rapid institutional consolidation and undertake an active role in the public realm of the new eastern German states in the 1990s. Yet critical voices were heard over the West German system of church-state relations and the public role it confers on religious organisations, and critics often expressed the idea that despite all their difficulties, something precious was lost in the collapse of the German Democratic Republic. Against this backdrop, I delineate the conflicting conceptions of the Protestant and Catholic churches’ public role and paid special attention to the “East German model.”

The Cop and the Sociologist: Investigating Diversity within the German Police Forces. Drawing on the sociology of Max Weber, I investigate today’s relations toward difference within German police forces. Accompanying and interviewing police officers whose job it is to contribute to the acknowledgement of difference, the sociologist outlines three ideal types of actors – an empathetic, a principled, and an opportunist one – and the motives underlying their actions. A fourth type, the specialist, is conspicuously absent. Why is that so? Solving this enigma helps depicting the relations to difference within police forces: it points to a specific “spirit” of diversity and a singular way to apprehend the individual in Germany.

La religiosité et le corps des détenues (with Étienne Tardif, Monica Grigoire and Sophie Coulombe). This 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. 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. For this reason, they are at the centre of our analysis.