

Fiche informative:***L'aumônerie de prison. Le cas de l'établissement de détention Tanguay***

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Innovation Funding Project, 2011-2012

Project Description and Goals:

This project started with the crafting of an instrument to assess religion in a qualitative manner. For this purpose, we devised a board game.

The original intention was to locate experiences of transcendence, the “wholly other,” within space (a city landscape). Drawing on Georg Simmel’s insights, the team members wanted to take into account the objective and subjective forms of religion; they 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.

Methodology:

- a) 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.
- a) 18 semi-structured interviews (with the help of our board game) with inmates as well as two with pastoral workers and volunteers.
- b) 2 group interviews (board game).

Student Involvement:

- Monica Grigore, Université de Montréal
- Etienne Tardif, Université de Montréal

Results:

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.

It was 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 their observations (in the care—or neglect—of the body, in ornaments [often made of religious artefacts] as well as their own reaction to inmates). The relation to the body appeared to be closely related to a gender dimension.

Dissemination:



- **Thériault, Barbara**, Etienne Tardif and **Monica Grigore**. 2012. “Aumônerie et religiosité. Le cas de la prison Tanguay,” *Meeting with the Montreal team members of the Religion and Diversity Project*, Montréal, Québec, 15 March.
- **Thériault, Barbara**. 2012. “Mapping the Realms of Religion (The Case of a Jail),” *10th ISORECEA conference*, Lasi, Roumania, 21 April.
- **Thériault, Barbara**. 2012. “Mapping the Realms of Religion. The Case of a Montreal Jail,” *New Forms of Public Religion*, Cambridge, 5-7 September.