



© privat

Barbara Thériault, Dr. phil.

Professor of Sociology

Université de Montréal

Born in 1972 in Lévis, Quebec, Canada
Studied Political Science at the Université Laval, Sociology at the Max-Weber-Kolleg, University of Erfurt, and Anthropology at the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder)

PROJECT

Average Aesthetics or the Regular Haircut. The Aesthetic Dimension of the Social in a German City

In “Die Abenteuer einer linkshändigen Friseurin,” due to appear in March 2024, I propose an exploration as a sociologist, but also as a hairdresser – an observational profession if ever there was one, of which I am an apprentice. I conduct interviews and observations in the social and confidential environment of three hairdressing salons and one barber shop in a town in central Germany.

While doing so, I pay attention to the particular sociability, superlative language, and culture of non-confrontation characteristic of these temples of beauty and well-being, thus revealing Georg Simmel's not-so-secret influence. The salons also impose their own topics: aging, “natural” beauty, fashion, holidays as markers of life. The physical proximity and non-sexual intimacy with strangers specific to the practice of hairdressing raise other Simmelian themes: the importance of senses and of appearance as a medium of social interaction and aesthetic judgment. In addition to capturing the aesthetic dimension of the social, I aim to continue to work on the renewal of sociological writing through “sociological feuilletons,” short texts combining sociology, literature, and reportage and inspired by Siegfried Kracauer and German journalism of the 1920s and 1930s. In recent years, sociological feuilletons have been the subject of seminars, workshops, columns in newspapers, and a new magazine (Siggi, le magazine de sociologie, <https://editionueberland.de/shop/siggi-le-magazine-de-sociologie/>). I further develop this form of writing in publications related to this project and in the form of an anthology.

Recommended Reading

Thériault, Barbara (2004). “Conservative Revolutionaries”: Protestant and Catholic Churches in Germany after Radical Political Change in the 1990s. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

— (2013). The Cop and the Sociologist: Investigating Diversity in German Police Forces. Bielefeld: transcript.

— (2020). Die Bodenständigen: Erkundungen aus der nüchternen Mitte der Gesellschaft. Leipzig: edition überland.

The Adventures of a Left-Handed Feuilletonist

In the salon atmosphere reminiscent of the origins of the "sociological feuilleton," the sociologist-turned-hairdresser and the moderator converse about a forthcoming book, hairdressing salons as small worlds, "East Germany" since the 1990s, and the feuilleton as a sociological genre.

Because the conversation takes place in German, Barbara Thériault provided – prior to the colloquium – parts of her forthcoming book, *Abenteuer einer linkshändigen Friseurin* (Adventures of a Left-Handed Hairdresser) in English (the introduction and one of the brief chapters). The conversation draws on these documents.

The dialogue, interrupted by the reading of text samples (with English-language handouts), is prompted by the publishing of the book, an empirical study involving fieldwork in several hairdressing salons and barbershops in an East German city, Halle an der Saale. All the texts it contains are short and inspired by a "newspaper sociology" thriving in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s; some were also printed in the newspaper of the city where the author carried out the fieldwork.

Will the moderator, who asserts being faithful to his hairdresser, nevertheless get a haircut?

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOWS' LIBRARY

Thériault, Barbara (Leipzig, 2024)

Abenteuer einer linkshändigen Friseurin

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1862691258>

Thériault, Barbara (Wien, 2022)

Vom Alltag aus

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1853792853>

Thériault, Barbara (New York, 2020)

Georg Simmel and the 'newspaper sociology' of the 1920s and 1930s

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1853791768>

Thériault, Barbara (Leipzig, 2020)

Die Bodenständigen : Erkundungen aus der nüchternen Mitte der Gesellschaft

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1692301195>

Thériault, Barbara (New York, NY, 2019)

Max Weber, contemporary life conduct and existential cultures

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=185379743X>

Thériault, Barbara (Bielefeld, 2013)

The Cop and the sociologist : investigating diversity in German police forces

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=732681960>

Culture and social practice

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=732681960>