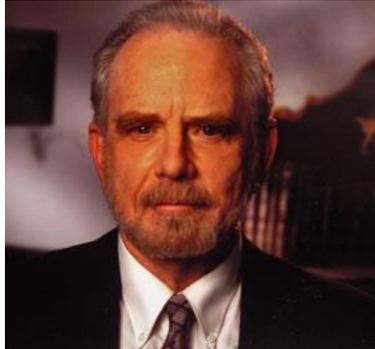




THE RELIGION AND DIVERSITY PROJECT/RELIGION ET DIVERSITÉ



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Biography

James T. Richardson earned bachelor's and master's in Sociology from Texas Tech University and a Ph.D. in Sociology from Washington State University (1968). He later earned a J.D. degree and is also a licensed attorney. He is Professor of Sociology and Judicial Studies has taught at the University of Nevada, Reno since 1968. He directs the Grant Sawyer Center for Justice Studies, and teaches in the Sociology Department and the Interdisciplinary Social Psychology Doctoral Program at the University. He also directs the Judicial Studies graduate degree program for trial judges offered by the University in conjunction with the National Judicial College and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges which are headquartered in the university campus.

Richardson has authored, co-authored, edited, or co-edited a dozen books including *Regulating Religion: Case Studies from Around the Globe* (Kluwer, 2004) and more recently (with Stuart Wright) *Saints under Siege: The Texas State Raid on the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints* (New York University, 2011), *Legal Cases, New Religions, and Minority Faiths* (with Francois Bellanger, Ashgate, 2014), and *The Sociology of Shari'a* (with Adam Possamai and Bryan Turner, Springer, 2014), along with over 300 articles and chapters, most on various aspects of new religious movements, including more recently focusing on social control of minority faiths by courts and parliaments. He also does research on the use of social and

behavioral science in judicial systems, and teaches a seminar in the Judicial Studies program for trial judges.

Research Statement

My research interests in recent years have focused on the interface of religion and law, and studies of how religion and law influence each other. One major focus has been on law as a tool of social control, particularly of minority religions. Another has been how religious groups arise and develop as they interact with the society in which they occur.

I began my career many years ago studying new religions, just to see how they recruited members, how they were organized, and societal reactions to NRMs. This early focus made me aware of controversies surrounding New Religious Movements (NRMs), particularly those dealing with conversion and recruitment, which led me into the “cult/brainwashing” battles that have occurred over recent decades. I also found myself involved in how NRMs finance themselves and how they use their resources.

Both these research foci led me in the direction of the legal issues and the law, and contributed to my seeking a law degree later in life. I now spend my scholarly efforts integrating law and sociology, and seeking to understand the ways that the law impacts society including religious aspects of life. I focus my efforts on studies of various courts and legislatures or parliaments, and how those institutions relate to religious groups and religion in general. Some of this recent work was presented in my presidential address for the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Oct. 2014, and published as “Managing religion and the judicialization of religious freedom,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 54(1): 1-19, 2015. I am also interested in Shari’a and how it is being developed and integrated into Western societies, and am pursuing research in that area with colleagues in Australia, Canada, and the U.S.