

American Piety 2005: Content and Methods of the Baylor Religion Survey

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The Baylor Religion Survey (BRS) is a national population survey of religious characteristics, orientations, and attitudes modeled after the General Social Survey. This article provides an overview of the content of the 2005 BRS along with a detailed description of our methods of data collection and some descriptive characteristics from our sample of 1,721 adults in the United States. A third of the survey is dedicated solely to religion items focusing on affiliation, identity, belief, experience, and commitment. Two-thirds of the survey is dedicated to topical modules that will be rotated in subsequent administrations. We briefly describe the content of these modules and discuss how our data compare to the 2004 General Social Survey.

In the introduction to *American Piety*, Rodney Stark and Charles Y. Glock lament the paucity of resources available to religion researchers:

Religion has lagged far behind other special topics in the social sciences primarily because of an almost total lack of research funds. While such topics as poverty, race relations, education, and politics have received large-scale research support from foundations and government, research by independent scholars on the role of religion in society has gone virtually unfunded. (1968:viii)

Some might laud Stark and Glock for their prescience. But thankfully, since 1968 the sociology of religion has seen ever-expanding research efforts due to the efforts of the Lilly Endowment, Pew Charitable Trusts, John Templeton Foundation, National Science Foundation, and others. Still, contemporary sociologists of religion who wish to examine the state of individual religiosity in the United States must rely on a relatively small number of data sets.

In a meta-analysis of 536 articles from the past several years of three key journals in the sociology of religion: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Sociology of Religion*, and *Review of Religious Research*,¹ we find that approximately 41 percent of these articles (219) used national samples of the United States.² But many of these national samples did not attempt to cover the general population, consisting of surveys of particular religious groups such as the Presbyterian Panel Studies and Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life or of congregations (cf. American Congregational Giving Study, National Congregations Study).

There are national probability data sets used by religion researchers but these are limited in scope with regard to religious content. For example, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) includes only the most basic indicators of religion—denomination, biblical literalism, church attendance, importance of religion, participation in youth groups/Bible classes, and frequency of prayer. The National Survey of Families and Households provides denomination, religious switching at adulthood and marriage, and church attendance. Other national surveys include more significant batteries of religion items, such as the Social Capital Community

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Benchmark Survey 2000 (11 measures) and God and Society in North America 1996 (45 questions) but at present the data are aging and there are no clear plans for repeating these surveys. Certainly, many of these data sets have unique strengths. For example, the longitudinal design of the Add Health and NSFH data allow the tracking of religiosity over time. Add Health also includes data from parents and children, allowing studies of religion within the family. God and Society in North America focuses upon the relationship between religion and politics. However, its utility in providing recent, detailed portraits of religion in America is limited.

With good reason, the General Social Survey (GSS) was the most frequently used survey of the United States general population (approximately 22 percent of all quantitative religious research) in our meta-analysis. One cannot overestimate the importance of the GSS to the social sciences. Through its biyearly administration, the GSS continually provides sociologists with data on contemporary American attitudes and behaviors. With data going back to 1972, scholars can also examine how many of those same attitudes and behaviors have changed over time. In several waves, the GSS has devoted special attention to religion. The 1988 survey included questions about the religion of friends, religious switching, and attitudes about science and religion, among others. The 1991 survey added a battery of items on belief (in heaven, the devil, and so on) and questions about what it means to be a good Christian or Jew. And the 1998 module focused upon religion and health, asking about how religion influences coping behaviors, prayer practices, and feelings of closeness to God and others.

But the GSS cannot be all things to all researchers. Sociologists of religion are in competition with innumerable other sociological topic areas for coverage. We are forced to be satisfied with a topical module devoted to our subarea every decade or so, or with examining the comparatively small number of basic religion indicators repeated in every wave. Recognizing the need for a regularly administered, nationally representative study with a focus on American religion, we developed the Baylor Religion Survey (BRS).

The Baylor Religion Survey contains almost 400 questions pertaining to religious life, including measurement of religious identity, activity, belief, and experience, and a series of religion topical modules. The 2005 modules include questions concerning trust, civic engagement, religious consumerism, and New Age beliefs. We will repeat the BRS every other year, with planning for the 2007 wave already underway.

The primary goal of this article is to introduce the Baylor Religion Survey to an audience of potential future users. To this end, we present the methods used for data collection. In addition, we provide a brief overview of the survey content, with a particular emphasis on how the survey was constructed and how it compares to the General Social Survey.

SURVEY CONTENT

Since 1972, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) has administered the GSS to a nationwide, random sample of U.S. citizens on a yearly or biyearly basis. In designing the Baylor Religion Survey, we used the General Social Surveys (GSS) as a model. Given the length of the GSS, and the wide variety of topics that it covers, NORC had adopted the practice of rotating groups of questions into and out of the survey in different years. Each wave of the survey consists of core demographic and attitudinal items, and topical modules covering topics of special interest. The BRS is also administered to a nationwide, random sample of U.S. citizens and, as with the GSS, data will be collected every other year, beginning in 2005. The BRS has a series of core religion, moral, and political questions that will repeat in every wave, allowing researchers to examine trends over time. Each wave will also include between three and four topical modules.

Where the BRS differs from the GSS is in its focus. While the GSS covers a variety of topics, the primary mission of the BRS is to provide data for the sociological study of religion. The BRS allows us to consistently ask more questions concerning religious behaviors and attitudes than

existing nationwide surveys and rotate topic modules, which can address controversies or current issues of interest to sociologists of religion.

Religious Items

Religious Affiliation and Identity

Of primary importance, and similar to the GSS, we ask for the religious family of the respondent. The most common religious classification systems tend to be based on the denominational affiliation of respondents (Greeley 1972; Roof and McKinney 1987; Steensland et al. 2000). In order to accurately record the denominational affiliation of each respondent, we asked for specific denomination, and the name and address of the respondent's place of worship. Because we recognize that many respondents may not know the actual denomination of their congregation, we identify each congregation and check its official denominational affiliation.

Drawing on methods used by Christian Smith (1998), we also provide respondents with a list of religious identities such as "Born-Again," "Evangelical," "Fundamentalist," and others, asking which, if any, apply to them. Respondents are asked how comfortable he/she feels talking about religion with friends, family members, co-workers, and strangers and how often he/she, in fact, does so. Further, we ask how many of the respondent's friends are members of his/her congregation, how many go to a different congregation, and how many are not religious.

Of course, the respondent's congregation is a key source of his/her religious identity. Therefore, the BRS includes a battery of items about congregations. We ask how many people attend services at the respondent's current place of worship (fewer than 100; 100–299; 300–799; 800 or more). The median congregation size for our sample was 251.4, similar to the median number (250) of regularly attending adults found in the 1998 National Congregations Study. We also ask respondents to fill in "what percent of the people at your current place of worship are of the same race/ethnicity as you." The average respondent attends a congregation in which he or she estimates that 84.5 percent of the membership is of the same race. We also measure commitment to the congregation by asking respondents how much they regularly contribute to their place of worship.

Unfortunately, after 1994 the GSS discontinued questions about the spouse's faith, making it all the more important for new national surveys to inquire about the issue. Therefore, we include this item along with the religious affiliation of the respondent's father and mother.³

Religious Belief

Expanding on basic belief questions from the GSS, respondents are asked whether they believe in each of the following: God, Satan, heaven, hell, purgatory, angels, demons, Armageddon, the Rapture, and ghosts.⁴ In 1991 and 1998, the GSS included a set of questions relating to individual conceptions of God, developed by Andrew Greeley. The BRS builds on this innovation with a series of questions concerning respondents' images of God.

While a number of studies have examined belief in an afterlife or heaven (e.g., Goode 2000; Greeley and Hout 1999), almost none have examined the details of this belief. Therefore, we ask respondents how many of their personal friends, neighbors, family members, average Americans, Christians, and non-Christians will get into heaven. Furthermore, we ask respondents if other religions besides their own are potential paths to salvation.

Religious Experience

Few religion surveys probe the mystical elements of religion. In the BRS, respondents are asked if they have ever had any of a series of 11 religious experiences, including speaking in

tongues, having a religious vision, feeling “called by God” to do something, and experiencing a state of religious ecstasy. We also ask if respondents have ever witnessed a healing they considered miraculous and if they have ever witnessed someone speaking in tongues.

Moral and Political Items

In addition to the core battery of religion items, the BRS includes numerous questions regarding attitudes about “moral” and political topics.

Moral Attitudes

Research into religious worldviews has focused on variation in perceptions of moral authority and how they affect moral and political attitudes (see Glazer 1987; Hadden and Shupe 1989; Jelen 1990; Kirkpatrick 1993; Warner 1988; Woodrum 1988). Based on findings of past research, we selected a battery of salient moral issues of the day. Respondents were asked their opinions about abortion under various circumstances, premarital and extramarital sexual relations, homosexuality, divorce, living with a partner before marriage, having a planned pregnancy outside of marriage, the adoption of a child by a gay couple, and gay marriage.

Political Opinions

The intersection of religion and politics is a topic of both scholarly research and popular press (Evans 1997, 2003; Guinness 1993; Guth et al. 1996; Hunter 1991; Kohut et al. 2000; Leege and Kellstedt 1993; Wuthnow 1988, 1996). The BRS includes political opinion questions concerning a wide range of current policy issues, including the Iraq War, embryonic stem cell research, and physician-assisted suicide, to name a few. The longitudinal aspect of the BRS will allow us to add or omit issues based on their salience to current political debates. Mimicking political tolerance items from the GSS and other national surveys, we ask whether a racist, atheist, homosexual, or Muslim should be allowed to teach at a high school. Finally, two questions directly address the bundling of religious and political attitudes. We ask respondents to indicate their level of agreement with two statements: “God favors the United States in worldly affairs,” and “God favors one political party in the United States.”

2005 Topic Modules

In addition to the core demographic and religion items, the 2005 wave of the BRS includes three topical modules: (1) trust and civic engagement; (2) religious consumption; and (3) the paranormal. The following sections provide a brief overview of the reasoning behind each module and the questions contained within.

Trust and Civic Engagement

Trust is a key predictor of belonging to voluntary organizations (Stolle 2001) and participating in those organizations by volunteering time and talent (see Uslaner 2002). Following the suggestions of Miller and Mitamura (2003), a series of BRS items asked respondents their level of trust for 17 different groups or individuals.⁵ As do many surveys with questions on civic engagement, we ask respondents how many hours per month they volunteer. Because recent scholarship has shown that some religious volunteers may be more likely to volunteer within their congregations or for religious causes than for secular organizations (see Park and Smith 2000; Wilson and Janoski 1995; Wuthnow 1999), we ask respondents to indicate how many of their hours of volunteering were “for the community, through my church,” “for the community, not through my church,” and “for my church.”⁶

Religious Consumption

The market for religious goods has increased in recent decades (Moore 1994; Wuthnow 1991). A detailed series of questions ask respondents whether they have purchased religiously themed items during the past year and, if so, where they were bought. Specifically, we ask about the purchase of religious jewelry, religious fiction books, religious nonfiction books, devotional books, sacred books, music by religious artists, religious art or pictures, movies with religious themes, religious education products, Bible-study/small group materials, and clothing, bumper stickers, and/or greeting cards with religious messages or symbols. If the respondent purchased an item, we ask if that item was purchased from an online merchant, religious store, nonreligious store, or at a church. Finally, we ask respondents to indicate how much they spent on religious products in the past year.

The Paranormal

Scholars of the paranormal and New Age have argued that we are experiencing an increasing shift from mainstream to unconventional forms of religious belief (Albanese 1990; Brown 1992; Lewis 1992). However, a dearth of quantitative research on the consumption of paranormal materials proves problematic for developing theories or reaching conclusions about the movement's potential importance in the American religious landscape (Mears and Ellison 2000). Several studies have asked respondents to indicate their level of *belief* in paranormal topics, such as UFOs, astrology, and psychic phenomena (see, for example, Benson 1991; Eckberg 1996; Hammond and Roof 1988; IRSS 1998). Others have attempted to gauge interest in the paranormal as a general topic of inquiry (Benson 1991).⁷ However, none of these studies provide the necessary data for investigating how church membership influences the extent to which people's interest in the paranormal is reflected in spending, interest in television programs with related topics, or utilization of New Age/paranormal services, such as psychics, astrologers, and holistic healers.

DATA COLLECTION

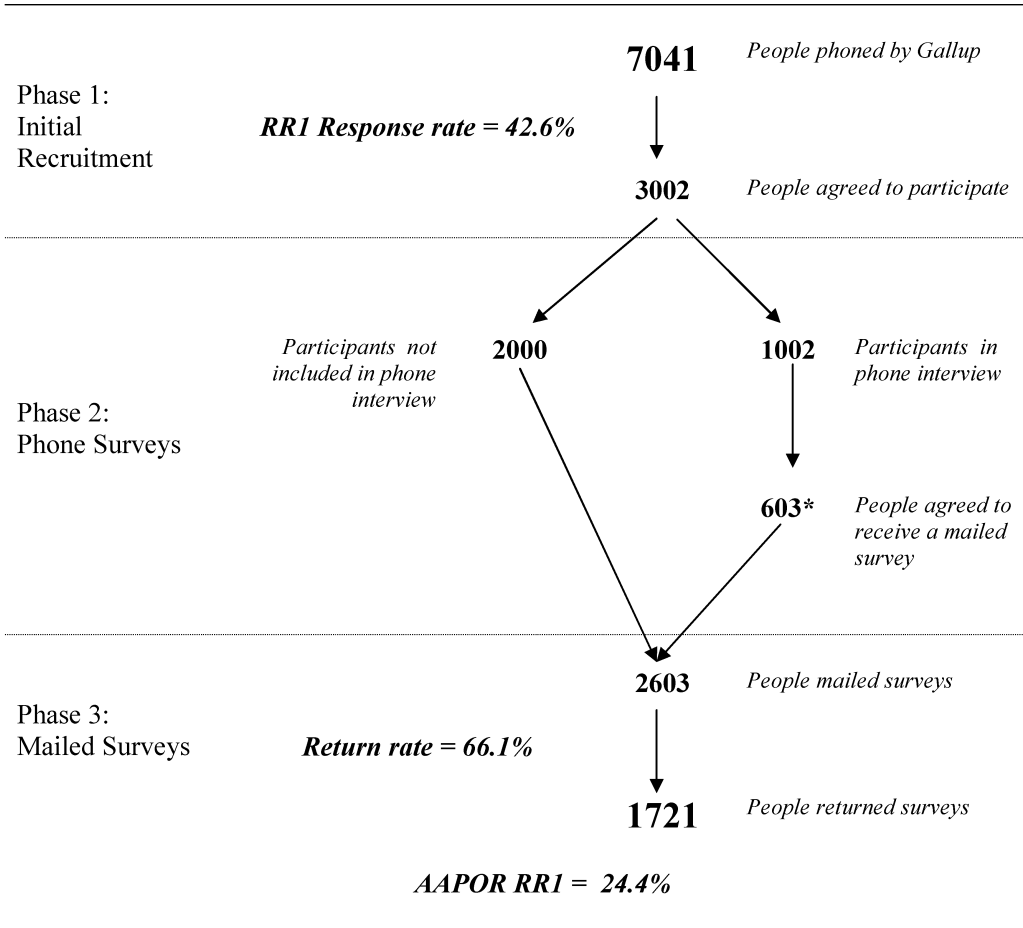
We partnered with the Gallup Organization to administer the survey, which resulted in a final sample of 1,721 adults in the United States. For this study, Gallup used a mixed-mode sampling design (telephone and self-administered mailed surveys). The recruitment and administration of the BRS can be broken down into three distinct phases: (1) initial recruitment through random-digit dialing; (2) phone interviews on a randomly selected subsample of participants to determine bias in initial refusals; and (3) the mailed survey.

Phase 1: Initial Phone Recruitment

The Gallup Organization conducted phone recruitment requesting participation in a survey project that is designed to "investigate the values and beliefs of Americans." The Gallup Organization did not indicate that the BRS was specifically about religion or that Baylor University was involved in the study for fear that this might bias the response rate. The random-digit telephone sample was drawn from telephone exchanges serving the continental United States. In order to avoid various other sources of bias, a random-digit procedure designed to provide representation of both listed and unlisted (including not-yet-listed) telephone numbers was used. The design of the sample ensures representation of all telephone numbers by randomly generating the last two digits of numbers selected on the basis of their area code, telephone exchange, and bank order.

This selection procedure produces a sample superior to random selection from a frame of listed telephone households because the assignment of telephone numbers to households is made independently of their publication status in the directory. Random-number selection within

**FIGURE 1
RECRUITMENT DIAGRAM**



*660 agreed to receive a mailed survey but only 603 provided mailing addresses.

banks ensures that all numbers within a particular bank (whether listed or unlisted) have the same likelihood of inclusion in the sample, and that the sample so generated will represent all residential (noninstitutional) telephone households in the appropriate proportions.

The Gallup Organization contacted 7,041 households by phone and 3,002 people agreed to participate in the study (see Figure 1). This constitutes a RR1 response rate of 42.6 percent. From this group of 3,002 individuals, 2,000 were directly sent a mailed survey while the remaining 1,002 participated in a short phone survey before being asked to complete the mailed survey. The “Phase 2: Telephone Surveys” explains the purpose and outcome of these phone interviews.

Phase 2: Telephone Surveys

The Gallup Organization completed 1,002 telephone interviews. At each randomly selected household, a Gallup interviewer attempted to conduct an interview with a selected person in the household (adult, age 18 years and over who had the most recent birthday). A three-call design

was used for this survey (one initial call plus two additional call-backs). At the conclusion of the telephone survey, respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate further in this study. If a respondent agreed, a mailing address was requested. Of the 1,002 respondents in the telephone survey, 660 agreed to participate, though not all agreed to give the interviewer an address. In total, 603 of the 660 who initially agreed to participate also agreed to disclose an address for mailing purposes. Mailed surveys were sent out daily following the previous night's recruitment interview. The recruitment phase was conducted during the period of October 7–November 1, 2005.

This initial phone interview was done to see if there was systematic bias in the types of people who would refuse to participate. Table 1 presents comparisons of those respondents who agreed to fill out a mailed survey and gave the Gallup Organization their mailing address with those who refused to do so. We compared these two groups on gender, race, education, region of the country, and how often they attend religious services. Difference of proportion tests for all categories failed to reveal any statistical differences between those who were willing to complete a mailed survey and those who were not.⁸

At the end of this intermediate phone interview phase, 603 interview participants were sent a mailed survey—joining the 2,000 individuals already sent mailed surveys to produce a total of 2,603 individuals who received mailed surveys.

Phase 3: Mailed Surveys

We chose a mail questionnaire for several key reasons. First, the mail survey allows us to ask a significantly larger volume of questions compared to telephone surveys (Dillman 2000). We have 77 questions from which over 400 variables are constructed. Mail surveys also provide privacy and allow respondents greater comfort in answering questions, which avoids many biases that are introduced in interview surveys, such as social desirability in response, acquiescence, and other interview effects (de Leeuw 1992; Dillman and Tarnai 1991; Schuman and Presser 1981). Moreover, a mail survey reduces other biases introduced by aural presentation of response categories, such as the primacy and “recency” effects (Dillman et al. 1995, 1996).

The self-administered survey consisted of a 16-page booklet including a cover page entitled, “The Values and Beliefs of the American Public—A National Study.”⁹ A total of 2,603 questionnaires with a cover letter explaining the study's objectives and including a number to call if they had any questions or comments were mailed to the adults who agreed to participate in the study (see Figure 1). In appreciation of their participation, potential mail survey respondents were offered a \$5.00 incentive to complete the self-administered questionnaire and return it to the Gallup Organization. The Gallup Organization mailed these households a letter thanking them for agreeing to participate and asking for their cooperation. A follow-up reminder postcard was sent to all those who did not respond to the initial survey mailing. A second complete mailing was also used.

Response Rate

When these three phases of data collection ((a) initial recruitment; (b) phone interviews; and (c) mailed surveys) are pooled to calculate the response rate for the mixed-mode method per AAPOR RR1, it becomes 24.4 percent ($1,721 / 7,041 = 24.4$ percent).¹⁰

$$RR1 = \frac{1}{(I + P) + (R + NC + O) + (UH + UO)}$$

Where I = Complete interview; P = Partial interviews; R = refusals and break-offs; NC = Noncontact; O = Other; UH = Unknown if household occupied; UO = Unknown, other. This response rate for multimethod surveys accounts for nonresponse at all levels of data collection.

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF PHONE INTERVIEWEES WHO REFUSED OR AGREED
TO RECEIVE A MAILED SURVEY

	Refused to Participate (<i>N</i> = 374*)	Agreed to Participate (<i>N</i> = 603)
Church Attendance		
<i>Never</i>	19.3%	16.1%
<i>Less than once a year</i>	10.4%	9.6%
<i>Several times a year</i>	14.4%	12.3%
<i>Once a month</i>	5.6%	6.3%
<i>Two to three times a month</i>	9.1%	11.4%
<i>About weekly</i>	5.3%	6.6%
<i>Weekly</i>	26.2%	25.9%
<i>Several times a week</i>	7.5%	10.8%
<i>Refused</i>	2.1%	1.0%
Sex		
<i>Female</i>	62.3%	56.9%
<i>Male</i>	37.7%	43.1%
Race		
<i>White</i>	81.6%	85.4%
<i>African American</i>	8.6%	7.5%
<i>Asian</i>	1.6%	0.8%
<i>Native American</i>	0.5%	1.8%
<i>Hispanic</i>	1.9%	3.2%
<i>Other</i>	0	0.3%
<i>Refused</i>	5.8%	0.8%
Education		
<i>Less than high school</i>	5.9%	5.0%
<i>High school graduate</i>	25.7%	23.1%
<i>Some college</i>	19.5%	27.7%
<i>Trade/vocational training</i>	4.0%	3.3%
<i>College graduate</i>	24.9%	21.2%
<i>Postgraduate work/degree</i>	15.2%	19.2%
<i>Refused</i>	4.8%	0.5%
Region		
<i>East</i>	23.3%	21.2%
<i>Midwest</i>	25.4%	27.5%
<i>South</i>	29.1%	30.3%
<i>West</i>	22.2%	20.9%

*Twenty-five individuals who refused to participate did not provide any responses for comparison purposes; this is why the reported *N* is not 399.

If one looks at response rates for individual phases of data collection, they are as follows: the response rate for the initial recruiting phase is calculated according to the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) RR1 definition: $RR1 = 3,002/7,041 = 42.6$ percent.¹¹ Of the 2,603 surveys mailed, 1,721 were completed and returned. Consequently, the return rate for the mailed surveys is 66.1 percent ($1,721/2,603$).¹²

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF CORE DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES FOR BAYLOR RELIGION SURVEY (WEIGHTED VERSUS UNWEIGHTED)

	Weighted		Unweighted	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Region				
East	390.0	23%	327	19%
Midwest	420.3	24%	511	30%
South	520.5	30%	458	26%
West	390.1	23%	425	25%
Total	1720.9	100%	1,721	100%
Sex				
Male	809.8	47%	745	43%
Female	911.2	53%	976	57%
Total	1720.9	100%	1,721	100%
Race				
White	1453.4	86%	15.8	90%
Black	135.0	8%	66	4%
Other	93.8	6%	103	6%
Total	1682.2	100%	1,677	100%
System missing	38.8		44	
Total	17.20.9		1,721	
Education				
8th grade or less	35.2	2%	17	1%
9–12 grade	107.2	6%	45	3%
H.S. graduate	308.6	18%	257	15%
Some college	475.7	28%	410	24%
Tech training	178.5	11%	140	8%
College graduate	314.3	19%	415	25%
Postgraduate	273.0	16%	406	24%
Total	1692.6	100%	1,690	100%
System missing	28.4		31	
Total	1720.9		1,721	

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BRS

The data are weighted using a ratio estimation program. By using a statistical algorithm, the overall (marginal) distributions as well as the interrelationships among several variables are simultaneously adjusted by assigning weights to individual respondents in order to bring all of the distributions into alignment with population parameters, or “true distributions” of these variables and their relationships with one another. The Gallup Organization used the most recent national data available from the Bureau of the Census Current Population Survey for gender, race, region, age, and education. In the first step of the weighting a full-weighting matrix of region by gender, by age, by education is derived from the CPS information. The second step involves a full-weighting matrix of region by gender, by race. Table 2 presents the core demographic variables used to construct the weighting variables for the weighted and unweighted BRS sample.¹³

The weighted BRS data have the following demographic characteristics: 53 percent of the sample is female, compared to 56.7 percent in the unweighted data. The geographical distribution of respondents is East (22.7 percent); Midwest (24.4 percent); South (30.2 percent); West (22.7 percent). In comparison, the unweighted BRS region data are: East (19 percent), Midwest (29.7 percent), South (26.6 percent), and West (24.7 percent). The BRS did not oversample African Americans or other race and ethnic groups that traditionally are underrepresented in cross-sectional survey data. In the weighted final sample 86.4 percent are white, 8 percent are African Americans, and 5.6 percent are other races. In the unweighted sample the race breakdown is as follows: white (89.92 percent), African American (3.94 percent), other (5.6 percent).

In the weighted BRS file education breaks down as follows: did not finish high school/GED (8.4 percent); graduated from high school only (18.2 percent); have some college or vocational education beyond high school (38.6 percent); 18.6 percent are college graduates; an additional 16.1 percent report some postgraduate education. Average household income is estimated at \$42,000. Approximately 17 percent (17.3 percent) of the respondents report incomes of \$20,000 or less, while 17.4 percent report incomes in excess of \$100,000.¹⁴ The average age is 49.8. The breakdown of marital status is as follows: married (56.9 percent), never married (15.5 percent), divorced (14.5 percent), widowed (7.8 percent).

COMPARING THE BRS WITH THE 2004 GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY

The multimethod RR1 response rate includes all phases of data collection—the initial telephone surveys and mail-out surveys. With a 24.4 percent response rate, we were concerned about systematic biases in our data. To assess further the quality of our data, we compare the 2005 BRS to the 2004 General Social Survey on key demographic, religious, and attitudinal measures.

One of the primary concerns we had with a self-administered questionnaire on religious values and beliefs is that there would be selection bias toward more religious respondents. For example, perhaps those in mainline denominations will be concerned by questions regarding dramatic religious experiences such as speaking in tongues. On the other hand, perhaps those in more conservative/strict traditions will be offended by a battery of questions on the paranormal. To check for such biases, we compare the religious families of respondents to the BRS 2005 to the 2004 General Social Survey (see Table 3).

The two surveys gather data on affiliation in different ways. Question 1 on the BRS asks respondents to select their “religious family” from a list of 42 options. Determining the religious family or denomination of a GSS respondent required the examination of three variables, RELIG, DENOM, and OTHER. We recoded these three variables to match the list of religious families in the BRS survey booklet. For example, those who claimed to be American Lutheran, Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Evangelical Lutheran, some other Lutheran, or Lutheran but do not know which on DENOM were coded as belonging to the Lutheran family.

The BRS compares quite similarly to the 2004 GSS in terms of the religious family of respondents.¹⁵ Differences between the surveys were less than 1 percent for 29 of the 37 groups for which comparisons are possible (78 percent). The largest differences were for Catholics (GSS = 24.2 percent; BRS = 20.2 percent), Baptists (GSS = 19.3 percent; BRS = 14.4 percent), and no religion (GSS = 14.8 percent; BRS = 11.0 percent). In addition to comparing the 2004 GSS to the BRS in terms of the religious affiliation of respondents we also compare basic religion measures (see Table 4). Again, the BRS data are similar to the 2004 General Social Survey. With church attendance, there is a slightly higher proportion in the BRS data that never attend church than in the 2004 General Social Survey. For most categories, there is very little difference between the two surveys. The BRS estimates are slightly higher when it comes to weekly attendance (21.8 percent vs. 18.1 percent). The BRS data are also similar with regard to frequency of prayer, with a slightly lower percentage of individuals in the BRS indicating that they pray several times a day

TABLE 3
COMPARISON OF BRS AND GSS ON RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF RESPONDENTS

Religious Family ¹	2004 General Social Survey		2005 Baylor Religion Survey	
	Valid N	Percent	Valid N	Percent
Adventist	3	0.1	1	0.1
African Methodist	15	0.6	10	0.6
Anabaptist	1	0.0	1	0.1
Assemblies of God	12	0.4	25	1.5
Baha'i ²	—	—	2	0.1
Baptist	524	19.3	244	14.4
Bible Church	4	0.1	13	0.8
Brethren	1	0.0	1	0.0
Buddhist	13	0.5	14	0.8
Catholic/Roman Catholic	656	24.2	342	20.2
Chinese Folk Religion	—	—	2	0.1
Christian & Missionary Alliance	0	0	5	0.3
Christian Reformed	4	0.1	17	1.0
Christian Science	0	0	2	0.1
Church of Christ	46	1.7	40	2.3
Church of God	8	0.3	14	0.8
Church of the Nazarene	14	0.5	5	0.3
Congregational	11	0.4	14	0.8
Disciples of Christ	2	0.1	5	0.3
Epsicopal/Anglican	59	2.2	51	3.0
Hindu	13	0.5	1	0.1
Holiness	6	0.2	7	0.4
Jehovah's Witnesses	18	0.7	2	0.1
Jewish	55	2.0	41	2.4
Latter-Day Saints	44	1.6	23	1.4
Lutheran	111	4.1	98	5.8
Mennonite	1	0.0	5	0.3
Methodist	181	6.7	153	9.0
Muslim	16	0.6	4	0.2
Orthodox (Eastern, Russian, Greek)	26	1.0	5	0.3
Pentecostal	73	2.7	34	2.0
Presbyterian	69	2.5	56	3.3
Quaker/Friends	3	0.1	1	0.1
Ref. Church of America/Dutch Reformed	4	0.1	4	0.2
Salvation Army	0	0	0	0.0
Seventh-Day Adventist	9	0.3	2	0.1
Unitarian Universalist	8	0.3	19	1.1
United Church of Christ	8	0.3	12	0.7
Nondenominational Christian	283	10.4	172	10.2
No Religion	403	14.8	186	11.0
Other	7	0.3	38	2.2
Don't Know	5	0.2	24	1.4
Totals	2,716	100.0	1,695	100.0
Missing	12		26	

¹Responses to three items on the GSS 2004—RELIG, DENOM, and OTHER—were recoded to match religious family (Q1) on the BRS 2005 as closely as possible. We were unable to directly compare 74 respondents from 655 2004.

²Baha'i and Chinese Folk Religion respondents to the GSS 2004 are included within a broader "Other Eastern Religion" category and cannot be directly compared.

TABLE 4
COMPARISON OF BRS AND GSS ON BASIC RELIGION MEASURES

2004 General Social Survey		2005 Baylor Religion Survey	
Church Attendance			
<i>Never</i>	16.7%	<i>Never</i>	21.8%
<i>Less than once a year</i>	7.0%	<i>Less than once a year</i>	6.4%
<i>1 or 2 times a year</i>	14.1%	<i>1 or 2 times a year</i>	10.6%
<i>Several times a year</i>	13.2%	<i>Several times a year</i>	11.9%
<i>Once a month</i>	6.8%	<i>Once a month</i>	3.7%
<i>2 to 3 times a month</i>	9.1%	<i>2 to 3 times a month</i>	9.1%
<i>About weekly</i>	6.0%	<i>About weekly</i>	7.7%
<i>Weekly</i>	18.1%	<i>Weekly</i>	21.8%
<i>Several times a week</i>	8.6%	<i>Several times a week</i>	8.7%
Religious Identity			
Would you say you have been “born again” or have had a “born again” experience; that is, a turning point in your life when you committed yourself to Christ?		Which, if any, of the following terms describe your religious identity: born again?	
<i>Yes</i>	32.8%	<i>Yes</i>	44.3%
<i>No</i>	65.7%	<i>No</i>	55.7%
Prayer			
How often do your pray?		How often do you pray or meditate outside of religious services?	
<i>More than once a day</i>	31.0%	<i>Several times a day</i>	28.7%
<i>Daily</i>	27.5%	<i>Once a day</i>	20.9%
<i>Several times a week</i>	14.1%	<i>A few times a week</i>	15.4%
<i>Never</i>	10.2%	<i>Never</i>	13.5%

and a higher percentage of respondents indicating that they never pray. However, an independent samples difference of proportions test did not reveal significant differences for this category across samples.

A more pronounced difference emerges in the question of whether the respondent is “born again.” In contrast to the other religion questions, the BRS respondents appear more religiously conservative, with 44 percent indicating that they are “born again” in comparison to 33 percent on the 2004 GSS.

In addition to looking at religious items, we also investigate whether there are significant differences with regard to demographic, moral, and political variables. We begin with a comparison of employment status, marital status, and education (see Table 5). While the BRS response categories for the employment question are dramatically different from the 2004 GSS, we find that for both surveys approximately 63 percent report being employed in the previous week. Also, 57 percent of the BRS respondents indicate that they are currently married, compared to 53 percent on the 2004 GSS. The only category that varies significantly is the percent reporting that they are never married; however, the BRS includes an additional category for “living as married,” which primarily takes respondents away from the never married category.

Finally, it appears that the BRS has a slightly more educated sample than the 2004 GSS. Only 55 percent of the BRS respondents have a high school diploma or less compared to 64 percent of the 2004 GSS sample. And while the BRS has the same percentage of college graduates (18 percent) it contains a higher percentage of individuals having done graduate work (16 percent compared to 10 percent in the 2004 GSS). We expect that this difference may be a product of having many abstract and philosophical issues covered in the BRS.

TABLE 5
COMPARISON OF BRS AND GSS ON BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

2004 General Social Survey		2005 Baylor Religion Survey	
Employment			
Last week were you working full time, part time, going to school, keeping house, or what?		Last week did you do any work for pay or profit?	
<i>Full time</i>	52.1%	<i>Yes</i>	62.9%
<i>Part time</i>	11.4%	<i>No</i>	34.9%
<i>On leave</i>	2.8%		
<i>Unemployed</i>	3.5%		
<i>Retired</i>	14.3%		
<i>In school</i>	4.1%		
<i>Keep house</i>	9.5%		
<i>Other</i>	2.2%		
<i>No answer</i>	0		
Marital Status			
Are you currently:		What is your current marital status?	
<i>Married</i>	52.6%	<i>Married</i>	56.9%
<i>Widowed</i>	7.3%	<i>Widowed</i>	7.8%
<i>Divorced</i>	14.8%	<i>Divorced</i>	14.5%
<i>Separated</i>	3.4%	<i>Separated</i>	1.6%
<i>Never married</i>	22.0%	<i>Never married</i>	15.5%
		<i>Living as married</i>	3.7%
Education			
What is your highest educational degree?		What is your level of education?	
<i>No high school diploma</i>	12.9%	<i>8th grade or less</i>	2.1%
<i>High school diploma</i>	51.0%	<i>9–12th grade/no diploma</i>	6.3%
		<i>High school graduate</i>	18.2%
		<i>Some college</i>	28.1%
<i>Junior college</i>	8.0%	<i>Trade/vocational school</i>	10.6%
<i>BA degree</i>	18.0%	<i>College graduate</i>	18.5%
<i>Graduate degree</i>	10.0%	<i>Graduate work/degree</i>	16.1%

We find that the BRS respondents are as likely to hold absolutist moral attitudes and identity with the Republican Party as 2004 GSS respondents (see Table 6). Again, we were concerned that because the BRS may appeal to those with strong religious attitudes we may overrepresent individuals with conservative moral and political attitudes, simply because these variables are often highly correlated. However, it turns out that the BRS sample is not biased toward more conservative respondents. In both surveys, approximately 38 percent of the respondents report a Republican identity. Over 55 percent of 2004 GSS respondents indicate that homosexual relations are “always wrong” compared to 54 percent on the BRS. Also, both surveys indicate that 29.7 percent of Americans believe homosexuality is “not wrong.” There emerge some differences in responses to the issue of premarital sex. Thirty-four percent of BRS compared to 26 percent of 2004 GSS participants felt that sex before marriage is always wrong.

CONCLUSION

This article provides an extensive overview of the Baylor Religion Survey’s (BRS) content and a detailed summary of its methods. The BRS has a 24.4 percent response rate using a mixed

TABLE 6
COMPARISON OF BRS AND GSS ON POLITICAL AND MORAL VARIABLES

2004 General Social Survey		2005 Baylor Religion Survey	
<i>Moral Attitudes</i>			
What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex—do you think it is		How do you feel about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex?	
<i>Always wrong</i>	55.7%	<i>Always wrong</i>	54.0%
<i>Almost always wrong</i>	4.6%	<i>Almost always wrong</i>	7.5%
<i>Sometimes</i>	6.7%	<i>Only wrong sometimes</i>	8.7%
<i>Not wrong</i>	29.7%	<i>Not wrong at all</i>	29.7%
If a man and a woman have sexual relations before marriage, do you think it is		How do you feel about sexual relations before marriage?	
<i>Always wrong</i>	26.3%	<i>Always wrong</i>	34.0%
<i>Almost always wrong</i>	8.7%	<i>Almost always wrong</i>	11.4%
<i>Sometimes</i>	17.3%	<i>Only wrong sometimes</i>	17.3%
<i>Not wrong</i>	45.1%	<i>Not wrong at all</i>	37.3%
<i>Political Identity</i>			
Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what?		How would you describe yourself politically?	
<i>Strong Democrat</i>	16.2%	<i>Strong Democrat</i>	13.4%
<i>Democrat</i>	17.9%	<i>Democrat</i>	16.2%
<i>Leaning Democrat</i>	10.0%	<i>Leaning Democrat</i>	6.3%
<i>Independent</i>	16.7%	<i>Independent</i>	19.9%
<i>Leaning Republican</i>	8.5%	<i>Leaning Republican</i>	7.4%
<i>Republican</i>	15.1%	<i>Republican</i>	17.2%
<i>Strong Republican</i>	14.1%	<i>Strong Republican</i>	14.3%

mode telephone/mail survey and compares similarly to equivalent items on the 2004 General Social Survey.

Thanks to the work of senior scholars in the field and the continuing efforts of the endowments, trusts, and foundations with an interest in religion, the resources available for sociologists of religion have dramatically improved since the publication of *American Piety* in 1968. To our knowledge, the Baylor Religion Survey 2005 contains the most extensive battery of religion-related items ever administered to a national random sample of U.S. citizens. The current wave includes over 400 questions about religious experiences, religious activities, prayer and its content, images of God, beliefs about heaven, views about the role of religion in politics, the consumption of religious goods, and paranormal beliefs and experiences. In addition to specifically religious items, the survey also contains a host of measures related to civic engagement, trust, politics, and morality.

As the Baylor Religion Survey project moves forward, we encourage religion researchers to contact us with suggestions for improvements, additional questions, and ideas for topic modules. It is the research team's desire for the Baylor Religion Survey to be a continuing, *public* resource for researchers in the sociology of religion. Any comments, critiques, or suggestions that will help in this regard as the project moves forward are most welcome.

NOTES

1. The analysis includes: *Review of Religious Research* 37(3) to 47(3); *Sociology of Religion* 57(1) to 67(1); *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 35(1) to 45(1).

2. The remaining articles (59 percent) were either qualitative in focus, used international data sources, such as the World Values Survey or ISSP, or used local, regional, or convenience samples.
3. In addition, we ask about how personally religious the respondent was at age 12 and the frequency with which he or she attended religious services at that time. The combination of information about parent's religion and childhood religiosity is important for elucidating matters of religious switching and the ascribed nature of religious socialization (e.g., Hadaway 1980; Loveland 2003).
4. An additional item gathers opinions about Jesus, asking whether Jesus is a fictional character, a real but not extraordinary person, an extraordinary person, one of many messengers of God, or the son of God.
5. The BRS trust items differ from previous studies like the GSS and Social Capital Benchmark Community Benchmark Survey, which ask "Would you say most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?"; thus potentially conflating trust and caution.
6. Current research in the area of civic engagement often measures the level of engagement by counting the number of associational memberships that individuals have (Putnam 2000; Wuthnow 1999). In order to better measure the civic engagement of respondents, we also ask their level of involvement with 15 different types of organizations including arts/cultural organizations, civic or service groups, neighborhood groups and associations, sports, hobby and leisure group, and 11 others. For each of the organizations, respondents are asked if they belong, if they contribute, if they volunteer, and if they hold a leadership position.
7. See also Bibby (1975–1995).
8. One interesting note from these tables is that 4.8 percent of those who refused to provide education data also refused to give their mailing address, compared to 0.5 percent of those who refused to give education information but were willing to provide a mailing address. A similar percentage is found on the race question, 5.8 percent of those who refused to provide a mailing address also refused to provide their race. In comparison, only 0.8 percent of those who were willing to provide an address refused to provide their race in the preinterview.
9. A copy of the mailed survey instrument can be found at [www.baylor.edu \ isr](http://www.baylor.edu/isr).
10. See American Association for Public Opinion Research (2006).
11. This response rate and the denominator used to calculate it were provided directly to us by the Gallup Organization. The 42.6 percent response rate to a national random RDD sample is within recent industry norms for response rates of studies of this type (Curtin et al. 2005).
12. A 66.1 percent return rate for the mail survey is very acceptable for mailed out surveys of 16-page length (Dillman 2000).
13. The data are weighted with SPSS.
14. The income categories are as follows: \$10,000 or less; \$10,001–\$20,000; \$20,001–\$35,000; \$35,001–\$50,000; \$50,001–\$100,000; \$100,001–\$150,000; \$150,001 or more.
15. We were unable to locate definitively respondents in the GSS 2004 that were Baha'i, Chinese Folk Religion, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Christian Science, or Salvation Army.

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