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RELIGIOSITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA

(Accepted 21 April 2006)

ABSTRACT. Using nationally representative survey data, this paper explores the relationship between religiosity and quality of life. Three indicators of religiosity are used: (i) frequency of attendance at religious services or meetings, (ii) orthodoxy of beliefs in relation to Biblical teachings and (iii) religious denomination. Quality of life (QoL) is measured in terms of (i) household access to modern conveniences, (ii) self-assessed life satisfaction and (iii) level of satisfaction with government institutions. The data shows a significant but not very strong statistical relationship between religiosity and QoL. People who attend religious meetings most frequently and who hold the most orthodox religious views are thus more likely to have access to modern conveniences and to be satisfied with their lives. Satisfaction with government, however, tends to be highest amongst nominally religious people and lowest amongst both the most orthodox and the least religious.

KEY WORDS: denomination, life satisfaction, orthodoxy, quality of life, religion

1. INTRODUCTION

Several studies have demonstrated that people who practice a religion have a higher level of life satisfaction than do those who have no religious involvement. Ellison (1991) has shown in the United States that strong religious beliefs improve both cognitive and affective perceptions of quality of life (QoL) and that people with affiliations to a church report having greater life satisfaction than those without a religious affiliation. In a similar vein using a cumulative file of the US General Social Survey from 1972 to 1996, Ferriss (2002) has demonstrated a significant relationship between frequency of church attendance and self-assessed 'happiness'. He corroborated earlier findings (Hadaway and Roof, 1978) that people with religious faith tended to feel that their lives are worthwhile and that this faith promoted the making of a worthwhile life. Markides (1983), however, held that the social integration afforded to church members was more pertinent to their life satisfaction than was their spiritual development. In Korea, Kim

(2003, using a study conducted by Lee, 1991), has shown that both strength of faith in God and frequency of reading religious scriptures correlate with higher levels of life satisfaction. Most recently, Francis et al. (2004) have corroborated several earlier studies that have shown the significant positive relationship between religiosity and happiness. In this case the study examined the religiosity of Jewish Israeli male undergraduates, controlling for personality characteristics such as extraversion and neuroticism. These studies draw on the original work of Durkheim (1951, quoted in Ellison, 1991), which found *inter alia*, an inverse relationship between religious involvement and rates of suicide.

In South Africa, where more than four out of five people say that they have a religious faith, in this case predominantly Christian, there is a distinct lack of research on the relationship between religion and QoL or life satisfaction. Venter (2002) has lamented the paucity of sociological research on religious issues in general, these usually being perceived in academic circles as peripheral phenomena, in the Marxist tradition. His own recent paper examined the role of religious congregations in fostering bilingualism and multilingualism in South Africa. Salazar (2001) observed another impact of religion on society in the use of rhetoric of a religious nature by Presidents Mandela and Mbeki, influenced he suggests, by the charismatic oratory tradition of Archbishop Desmond Tutu during and subsequent to democratisation.

This paper interrogates data from the South African Social Attitudes Study (SASAS)¹ of 2004, to elucidate relationships between religiosity and various measures of QoL, including material wealth, satisfaction with government and self-assessed life satisfaction.

2. QUALITY OF LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA

From social and economic perspectives, a series of QoL papers published in 1997 illustrated the wide dichotomies of wealth and poverty that prevail in South Africa. Black Africans emerged as statistically far more likely to live in inadequate housing with poor infrastructure than their counterparts of other races (Orkin and Hirschowitz, 1997). Likewise, this group has historically been least likely to access education beyond primary and secondary level and is therefore relatively disadvantaged in competing for highly paid employment. May and Norton (1997) contend the need for a multi-faceted approach in order to develop indicators that adequately capture the aspects of isolation, malnutrition, security and poor access to resources, in addition to more conventional measures of income and employment. Each of these

dimensions would contribute to a better understanding of QoL. Schlemmer and Møller (1997) caution that the 'fairy tale' political transition should be tempered by interrogation of the deep socio-economic divisions that linger years after the installation of a democratic government. QoL in material terms at least can be expected to vary widely for some time. From a political angle, the findings of Mattes and Christie (1997) are that South Africans hold accountable both the elected ANC government as well as the entire democratic system, to the promise of improved collective QoL. In contrast, personal QoL emerges as related neither to specific support of political parties and leaders nor more 'diffuse' support for the new political system. Encouragingly, Møller and Dickow (2002) report the differing perspectives of the so-called 'winners' and 'losers' under the new dispensation but conclude that widespread optimism is likely to sustain most South Africans until they achieve their dreams of a better QoL. South Africans are close to unanimity that income levels in the country are 'too unequal', Roberts (forthcoming) reporting that 86% holds this view (Indians 94%; black Africans 88%; whites 82%; coloureds 80%). However, no research appears to have been done to determine the relationship between religion and QoL in South Africa.

3. CHRISTIAN CATEGORISATION

Christians are not an amorphous category in society. There are distinct denominational confessions, nuanced interpretations of the Bible, varying regularity of attendance at church services and different levels of commitment, faith and religious practice.

The census and surveys of public opinion yield numerous denominations and names of individual churches, which can be categorised in various ways. The 19th century Protestant–Catholic–Orthodox trichotomy is far more diverse in 21st century South Africa. European priests and missionaries established these traditional groups on arrival as settlers from 1652 onwards. Most prominent were the Dutch Reformed, Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches. Greater diversity resulted when the African Independent (Initiated) churches (AICs), including the Zionist Christian Church and Shembe, separated from the original missionary churches. In the early 1900s, Pentecostal Christians emerged from the mainline Protestant groups (Dutch Reformed, Methodist, Anglican, Baptist) and the Roman Catholics. They comprised a more overt and enthusiastic expression of Christianity, influenced by manifestations of the Holy Spirit and theologies often developed in the United States. They formed new churches such as the

Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God. More recently, the mega-churches such as the Rhema, New Covenant, Vineyard and Pentecostal Holiness churches have drawn new waves of converts from existing churches, as well as non-believers. Some mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics, known as Charismatic Christians, experienced similar moves of the Holy Spirit but have chosen to remain part of their denominations rather than join Pentecostal churches. Recent international influences include Brazil, Nigeria and central southern Africa, where vast numbers are engaging in warfare against evil spirits and in New Testament-style healing ministries (Jenkins, 2002). The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and the Pentecostal Holiness church are similarly establishing congregations in South African inner city, informal, township and suburban localities.

Morran and Schlemmer (1984, as reported in Martin, 1990) found already that at the height of apartheid, a steady stream of people was opting to join “new” (Pentecostal) as opposed to mainline churches. These people were generally socially and politically conservative; a caveat being that they allowed multiracial congregations at a time when these were frowned upon. The authors attributed the trend to the need for a forum that addressed the guilt of individuals about the socio-political situation of the 1980s and offered a form on “instant consumer gratification” (Martin, 1990, p. 159). Subsequent to democratisation, however, many adherents of Pentecostal churches appear enthusiastically to have embraced the changes, particularly the social and economic benefits that are accruing to the emergent black middle class.

It is however, pertinent to note the observation of Finn (1992), who drawing on the philosophical writing of Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida and John Berger, holds that, “Our lives leave remainders (they say more than they mean) just as our categories leave residues (they mean more than they say)”. Although she had politics in mind, this idea is equally applicable to religion. Identifying oneself as a Pentecostal, a Catholic, a Christian, by no means implies 100% adherence to the theoretical dictates of that category. Every individual will reflect a unique configuration of characteristics that may or may not encapsulate what it is to be categorised as an adherent of a particular religion or denomination.

Further complicating any contemporary categorisation is that many Pentecostals and Charismatic Christians but probably also some others from all of the above categories, opt to refer to themselves as ‘Christian’ without any denominational tag, perhaps as a protest against divisions in Christianity and suggestive of a wish for unity between denominations. Table I lists the broad categories as enumerated in the 2001 census.

TABLE I
Religious groupings in South Africa, 2001

Religious grouping	N	%
African Independent churches	14,541,969	32.45
Mainline Protestant churches	11,195,785	24.98
Pentecostal Churches (incl. 'other' Christians)	6,831,555	15.24
Roman Catholic church	3,181,332	7.10
Other (Islam, Hinduism, Judaism)	1,690,994	3.77
None/refused/Don't know	7,378,139	16.46
Total	44,819,774	100.00

Source: Census 2001, Republic of South Africa.

4. ATTENDANCE AT CHURCH MEETINGS AND SERVICES

In terms of church attendance, South Africans claim to be frequent church attendees (Table II), with more than half (52%) saying that they attend a religious service or meeting at least once per week. This level of frequency is almost certainly a case of ubiquitous over-reporting and has been disputed elsewhere (Vermeulen et al., 2000; Rule, 2002). The actual proportion that attends weekly is thought to be in the region of 20%. Why such over-reporting? Psychology has demonstrated the disjuncture between people's saying what they mean and meaning what they say. Wicker (1969, p. 37)

TABLE II

Apart from special occasions such as weddings, funerals and baptisms, how often do you attend services or meetings connected with your religion?

Frequency	Percent
Once a week or more	52.2
Once in two weeks	11.6
Once a month	14.4
At least twice a year	2.9
At least once a year	1.5
Less often	4.8
Never or practically never	3.7
Varies too much to say	1.7
Refused/unwilling to answer	0.8
Not applicable	6.5
Total	100.0

Source: SASAS 2004.

reported “expressed attitudes of a group of people predict little of the variations in their behaviors ... People’s expressed convictions regarding the church had but a modest relationship to church attendance in any given study.” In the same vein, Triandis (1982, reported in Myers, 1987) enumerated as many as forty factors “that complicate the relationship between attitudes and behavior”. Arguably, the prominence of Christianity in the history of the country makes it socially acceptable and politically ‘correct’ to identify with a religion, even if the link is tenuous and the involvement is nominal.

Marked differences occurred in the claimed regularity of attendance at religious gatherings between members of the different Christian denominations and other religions (Table III).

Pentecostals and “Other” Christians were most likely to report frequent attendance, reflective of their more activist and enthusiastic perspectives on their religious commitment. They were ahead of members of African Independent Churches (AICs) and significantly ahead of mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics and adherents of other religions.

5. CHRISTIAN BELIEFS AND LEVELS OF COMMITMENT

A further factor to be considered when categorising Christians is their stated beliefs. Gifford (1988) holds that religion can play one of two roles in

TABLE III
Religious affiliation by frequency of religious meeting attendance

	P (%)	OC (%)	AIC (%)	MP (%)	RC (%)	OR (%)	N/D/R (%)	Total (%)
Once a week or more	65.5	63.2	60.3	52.9	44.6	53.0	10.8	52.2
Once in two weeks	10.3	11.3	13.5	15.8	17.7	10.7	2.9	11.6
Once a month	14.0	15.6	12.4	16.6	24.7	9.2	11.0	14.4
At least twice a year	2.7	0.5	4.3	2.5	6.1	3.1	3.2	2.9
At least once a year	0.8	0.8	1.7	0.8	2.5	0.5	3.5	1.5
Less often	2.6	2.3	4.9	5.4	3.8	9.5	8.8	4.8
(Practically) never	1.5	1.8	1.4	4.3	0.2	6.6	11.7	3.7
Varies too much to say	2.2	3.1	1.3	1.0	0.4	1.5	1.6	1.7
Refused to answer	0.3			0.2			4.6	0.8
Not applicable	0.1	1.4	0.1	0.6		5.8	41.9	6.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P = Pentecostal churches; OC = Other Christians; AIC = African Independent Churches; MP = Mainline Protestant; RC = Roman Catholic; OR = Other religions; N/D/R = None/Don’t know/Refused to respond. *Source*: SASAS 2004.

society. Drawing on the work of Baum (1975), he identifies 'ideological' religion, which legitimates the *status quo* and is conservative in nature, striving to defend prevailing values and the authority of the dominant group. In contrast 'utopian' religion questions dominant social values, challenges the dominant authority and seeks to improve the social order (Gifford, 1988, p. 83). Gifford appears to leave minimal space for genuine religious commitment, pointing out that concepts such as 'original sin', the Trinity and the inerrancy of the Bible are extrapolations and interpretations that were adopted centuries after the earthly life of Jesus Christ.

In Gifford's terminologies, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians adhere to Utopian Christianity in terms of which engagement in politics and social activism is not a priority. Until shortly before the 1994 elections, this category in South Africa tended to be associated with political conservatism and sympathy with the ideals of the National Party government. Subsequent thereto, many have transferred their allegiances to the ANC regime and its transformation agenda. On the other hand, Mainline protestants and Catholics are characterised by being more liberal, both theologically and politically, and more inclined to challenge orthodoxies whether they be in relation to the Bible being God's literal word; or whether national economic policy should be realigned to control rampant free enterprise and the concentration of wealth in the hands of few. Religious denomination and level of religious commitment, i.e. how seriously the respondent appears to take his/her religion, can thus be expected to influence responses to religious questions.

In a scathing critique of the nominalism amongst Christians in the United States more than four decades ago, Berger (1961, p. 38) identified a paradox which may have applicability in modern South Africa: "On the one hand, religion appears as a prominent symbol of public life. On the other hand, for the individual, religion is relegated pretty exclusively to his private life – the hours of leisure in which he seeks refuge and repose from his involvements in public life." Berger lamented the conformity and togetherness of nominal Christianity in middle-class America, which he interpreted as "blasphemous" and stressed the need for individual intellectual engagement with theological issues and the meaning of life. His interpretation of a meaningful faith was for Christians to strive for a "lucid fearless perception of social reality", incorporating "independence of thinking" and "rebelliousness of attitude". His opinion was that if the expression of dissatisfaction with American's inert and indolent society meant "a certain amount of uncouthness and occasionally unfairness to what is best in our traditions, this is a minor consideration. We have had enough soft-spoken manners in

the Christian community. We now need loud-mouthed morality” (Berger, 1961, p. 178). His perspective begs the question about the extent to which South Africans who identify with a religion, put its precepts into practice and live out the implications of their faith in an Almighty God. My own recent research (Rule, 2002) suggests that this is not necessarily the case. Using an index of Christian Belief based on frequency of church attendance and doctrinal orthodoxy of religious beliefs, it emerged that only 31% of South Africans could be categorised as practising orthodox Christians. The balance fell into the intentional (29%), nominal (27%) and lapsed (13%) categories. No statistically significant differences in attitude towards a range of social, economic and political issues could be found between Christians in these four categories.

Degree of adherence to principles of faith and scriptural injunctions is an indicator of religious orthodoxy (Kim, 2003). For example, Loveland et al. suggest that a response to the statement: ‘The Bible is the word of God and should be interpreted literally, word by word’ – is a valid indicator of conservative theology (Loveland et al., 2005, p. 6). They indicate that this is one of the ways to distinguish between ‘conservative’ and ‘non-conservative’ Christians. Nevertheless, it could also be argued that few literate Christians would subscribe to an absolutely literal interpretation of the Bible (Schlemmer, 2005), given the advances made in scholarly critique of the original texts and meanings.

A similarly constructed index of doctrinal orthodoxy (maximum value 3) was calculated using the SASAS 2004 data for research on the relationship between religious beliefs and practice (Rule and Mncwango, forthcoming). The index of religious doctrinal orthodoxy comprises a combination of responses to several questions about belief in God, Jesus, heaven and hell, the effectiveness of prayer and the literality of the Bible. The closer the respondent’s stated opinion or attitude to the orthodox teachings of the Bible and the Church, the higher the index of orthodoxy (Table IV). A mean orthodoxy index of 1.98 emerged. Indices were greater than 2.14 for mainline Protestants, Pentecostal Christians and “other” Christians, significantly ahead of adherents of AICs (2.12), Roman Catholics (2.10), other religions (1.34) and those without a religious affiliation or who did not know or refused to reveal what their affiliation was (1.38).

6. THE SASAS 2004 DATA

Given that one of the theoretical intentions of Christianity is to enjoy an abundant life and that another is achievement of certainty about one’s

TABLE IV
Index of Orthodoxy by religious grouping

Religion	Index of Orthodoxy
African Independent Churches	2.1150
Pentecostal	2.1447
Protestant Mainline	2.1595
Roman Catholic	2.0960
Other Christian	2.1678
Other religions	1.3443
None/DK/Refused	1.3759
Total	1.9826
Significance	0.000

Note: Maximum value of index is 3.0 for adherence to orthodox views about God and the Bible.

eternal destiny in terms of life after death, it is a reasonable assumption that in some sense at least, a practising Christian would have a better QoL than a non-practising Christian or indeed, a non-believer. SASAS 2004 data was thus mined to find evidence in support of this hypothesis.

Initially, a factor analysis of 98 QoL variables contained in the dataset yielded four primary factors, accounting for 29.4% of the variance in the data collected from a nationally representative sample of 2799 respondents. The variables related to perceived life improvement; levels of satisfaction with government and institutional structures and performance; race issues; health; education; exposure to crime; access to high quality water; and possession of modern electronic and other conveniences.

The eight variables that contributed the top four scores to each of the two most diverse factors ($r = -0.291$, sig. = 0.000) were identified and used in a further factor analysis, which in turn yielded two factors that explained 68.1% of the variance. An index for each of the four variables comprising each factor was computed for each respondent, thus generating indices with values from 0 to 4 for two dimensions of QoL, namely:

1. Possession of modern conveniences (microwave oven, washing machine, built-in kitchen sink, hot running water) (MODCON);
2. Satisfaction with government institutions (democracy, national government, Independent Electoral Commission, parliament) (GOVSATIS).

Cronbach's Alpha reliability statistic for MODCON was 0.896 and for GOVSATIS was 0.773. Both indicators are thus internally consistent.

A third appropriate indicator is response to the question phrased "How satisfied are you about your life as a whole these days?" (LIFESATIS),

which measures self-assessed life satisfaction on a scale ranging from 'very satisfied' (score 4) to 'very dissatisfied' (score 0).

Table V illustrates the spread of scores of South Africans in relation to each of the three indicators, and for a computed simple QoL index in which all three are equally weighted. In relation to MODCON, the pattern is bimodal, with more than half (52%) possessing none of the four specified items and almost one-fifth possessing all four. Satisfaction with the four specified government institutions is at a maximum (score 4) for almost two in five (39%) and zero for about one in eight (13%). Self-assessed life satisfaction reasonably high (score 3) for more than one-third (36%), but lower than that for almost six out of ten (59%). The resultant QoL index thus places almost half (48%) of South African adults at the middle range score of 2 out of 4, with the same mean value of 1.9 as that for self-assessed life satisfaction.

Correlation between the three indicators and the computed QoL index are shown in Table VI. The indication is that self-assessed life satisfaction is more closely related to possession of modern conveniences ($r = 0.387$) than

TABLE V
Proportion of South Africans in each score category for QoL indices

Score	MODCON	GOVSATIS	LIFESATIS	QoL
0	52.1	12.7	15.4	3.5
1	12.0	12.9	26.4	25.6
2	8.6	14.6	16.9	48.2
3	7.6	20.4	36.2	19.1
4	19.7	39.4	5.1	3.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	1.3	2.6	1.9	1.9

TABLE VI
Correlations between QoL indicators

	MODCON	GOVSATIS	LIFESATIS
QoL	0.612**	0.290**	0.672**
LIFESATIS	0.387**	-0.079**	
GOVSATIS	-0.402**		

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). $n = 2799$.

with being satisfied with the performance of government institutions ($r = -0.079$). Indeed, people who possess modern conveniences (i.e. the multi-racial middle class, as opposed to the poor, the vast majority of whom are black Africans) are more likely to be dissatisfied with the government institutions ($r = -0.402$) than those without modcons in their homes. This trend has synergies with the findings of Roberts (forthcoming) concerning responses to the SASAS 2003 statement that ‘the best things in life cannot be bought with money’. He reports that poorer people are more likely to disagree than those whose basic needs and security have been satisfied.

7. QOL AND RELIGIOSITY

How then do each of these indicators of QoL and religiosity relate to each other? Do orthodox believers or members of particular denominations or people who claim to attend religious meetings regularly have a better quality of life as measured in terms of possession of modcons, satisfaction with government institutions and their own self-assessed levels of life satisfaction?

8. ORTHODOXY AND QOL

First, an examination of the extent to which there is a relationship between people’s stated levels of Christian religious orthodoxy and their QoL. Pearson’s correlation co-efficients measuring this relationship are uniformly low (Table VII). There appears thus not to be a strong relationship between QoL and how strongly one believes in God, the Bible, Jesus, heaven and hell or the effectiveness of prayer.

From another perspective, the mean index for each of the four QoL measures does not change dramatically with the level of doctrinal orthodoxy of the respondent. Table VIII indicates a decrease and then an increase in the mean MODCON as Orthodoxy increases. Conversely, GOVSATIS first

TABLE VII
Correlation between Religious Orthodoxy and QoL

	MODCON	GOVSATIS	LIFESATIS	QoL
<i>R</i>	0.066**	-0.016	0.130**	0.085
Significance	0.002	0.467	0.000	0.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). $n = 2192$.

TABLE VIII
Comparison of mean QoL indices by Orthodoxy indices

Orthodoxy	MODCON	GOVSATIS	LIFESATIS	QoL
1.00	1.4149	2.5176	1.7054	1.8730
2.00	1.3520	2.5947	1.9480	1.9613
3.00	1.6923	2.4587	2.0926	2.0527
Total	1.4822	2.5251	1.9124	1.9608

increases and then decreases. Only in terms of LIFESATIS is there a consistent although small increase in the mean index and a relatively 'stronger' correlation ($r = 0.130$; sig. = 0.000). In terms of the overall QoL index, which factors in all three others, the increase is from 1.9 to 2.1 as the orthodoxy of the respondent increases.

Further dis-aggregating the relationship between religious orthodoxy and self-assessed life satisfaction elucidates the trend. Table IX shows the proportions of the population at each of the three levels of orthodoxy that are very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied or who do not know how they feel about their lives 'as a whole these days'. The tendency towards greater life satisfaction as orthodoxy increases is clear. Whereas 31% of the unorthodox (index = 1) are satisfied or very satisfied, this is the case amongst 52% of the most orthodox (index = 3). Conversely, dissatisfaction with life is highest amongst the unorthodox (50%) and lowest amongst the orthodox (32%).

TABLE IX
Christian religious orthodoxy by self-assessed life satisfaction

	Orthodoxy Index level			Total
	1.00	2.00	3.00	
Very satisfied	2.2%	3.9%	5.9%	4.0%
Satisfied	28.8%	36.9%	45.8%	37.2%
Neither nor	19.2%	17.4%	15.9%	17.5%
Dissatisfied	31.8%	31.2%	17.2%	26.7%
Very dissatisfied	17.7%	10.2%	14.6%	14.1%
Do not know	0.3%	0.4%	0.7%	0.5%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

9. DENOMINATION AND QOL

Next, we test the relationship between religious denomination and QoL (Table X). Significant variations exist between all measures of QoL and denomination. Notably, people with no religion or no desire to disclose the information, have the lowest LIFESATIS index (1.5), second lowest MODCON index (0.69) and second lowest overall QoL index (1.66). Conversely, they have the highest GOVSATIS index (2.8). This pattern is very similar for members of AICs, whose MODCON, LIFESATIS and QoL indices are all low, but their GOVSATIS index is high. The data thus indicates relative material deprivation and life dissatisfaction amongst people without religions and members of AICs, but high levels of satisfaction with government and its institutions. While this may be positive for government at this stage, it is somewhat disturbing in terms of the sustainability if the mean QoL of these people does not improve in the medium-term future.

In contrast, the mean indices for 'other' religions, in this case Hinduism and Islam are highest in the cases of MODCON (3.3) and overall QoL (2.4) and among the highest for LIFESATIS (2.1), but by far lowest for GOVSATIS (1.8). Adherents of these religions in South Africa thus emerge as materially and psychologically content but dissatisfied with government. Not far behind them is the Pentecostal or Charismatic Christian group, with high indices on all four measures: MODCON 2.2; GOVSATIS 2.4; LIFESATIS 2.2 and the combined QoL 2.2. They emerge, thus, as the most consistently contented group in all spheres. The remaining three groups namely mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics and 'other' Christians have intermediate indices in terms of modern conveniences and self-assessed life satisfaction and relatively high levels of satisfaction with government institutions. Their combined QoL indices are 2.2; 2.1 and 2.0, respectively.

TABLE X
Comparison of mean QoL indices by religious denomination

Religious denomination	MODCON	GOVSATIS	LIFESATIS	QoL
African Independent Churches	0.3712	2.7940	1.6585	1.6084
Pentecostal/Charismatic	2.2462	2.3559	2.1574	2.2434
Mainline Protestant	1.4956	2.6178	2.0662	2.0678
Roman Catholic	1.2555	2.6916	2.1083	1.9924
Other Christian	1.2331	2.6609	1.7947	1.9088
Other Religions (Hinduism, Islam)	3.2844	1.7626	2.0551	2.4227
None/DK/Refused	0.6898	2.7969	1.5154	1.6594
Total	1.3067	2.6097	1.8790	1.9324

Again, in terms of self-assessed life satisfaction specifically, the ‘very satisfied’ and ‘satisfied’ categories were best represented (Table XI) amongst the Pentecostals and Charismatics (52.9%) and Roman Catholics (49.8%). Not far behind were adherents of ‘other’ religions (Hinduism and Islam) (46.2%), and mainline Protestants (46%). However, ‘other’ Christians and AIC members lagged somewhat at 36.3% and 32.7%, respectively. In the case of those who had no religious affiliation or did not know if they did or refused to say if they did, only 28.2% claimed to be ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with ‘life as a whole these days’.

10. CHURCH ATTENDANCE AND QOL

What about QoL and church attendance? The correlation between frequency of attendance and overall QoL is $r = -0.124$, i.e. weak and negative but statistically significant (Table XII). The frequency index increases as attendance decreases; the implication is an inverse relationship between frequency of attendance and QoL. There is thus a slight tendency for people who attend religious services or meetings less frequently to enjoy a lesser QoL than those who attend infrequently or not at all. This holds for the MODCON and LIFESATIS components of the overall QoL index. The opposite is true for GOVSATIS, in which case the relationship is weak but in the opposite direction. This means that there is a very slight but statistically significant tendency that the more frequently people attend religious meetings, the less satisfied they are with government institutions.

Mean QoL indices decline from 2.0 amongst those who attend meetings or services at least once per week, to 1.8 amongst those who never attend

TABLE XI
Religious affiliation by self-assessed life satisfaction

	AIC (%)	P/C (%)	MP (%)	RC (%)	OC (%)	OR (%)	N/D/R (%)	Total (%)
Very satisfied	2.3	6.0	2.3	7.2	2.8	5.6	3.2	3.6
Satisfied	30.4	46.9	43.7	42.6	33.5	40.6	25.0	37.2
Neither nor	16.9	15.0	19.4	14.8	20.4	18.6	19.2	17.8
Dissatisfied	29.6	23.0	27.1	25.1	26.6	17.9	31.2	26.9
Very dissatisfied	19.4	9.0	6.5	9.7	16.3	14.2	21.4	13.7
Do not know	1.5	0.1	0.9	0.6	0.4	3.0		0.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

AIC = African Independent Churches; P/C = Pentecostal/Charismatic; MP = Mainline Protestant; RC = Roman Catholic; OC = Other Christian; OR = Other religions; N/D/R = None/Don't know/Refused to respond.

TABLE XII
Correlation between frequency of church attendance and QoL

	MODCON	GOVSATIS	LIFESATIS	QoL
<i>R</i>	-0.133**	0.054**	-0.140**	-0.124**
Significance	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Note: The coding of the frequency of attendance question was such that the higher the value, the less frequent the respondent's church attendance. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). $n = 2733$.

and 1.7 amongst the 'not applicables' or the non-disclosers of this information (Table XIII). The trend is similar in the case of mod cons, the better off in this sense being more frequent churchgoers. However, the mean MODCON index is slightly higher for people who attend church or religious meetings infrequently or never (1.4) than amongst those who attend a few times per year (1.1). In terms of LIFESATIS, the relationship is linear, highest satisfaction being amongst the most frequent attendees (2.1) and lowest amongst the non-disclosers and not applicable category (1.5). A more complex relationship occurs in the case of satisfaction with government, with a similar level (2.4) for both frequent and non-attendees. Those who attend infrequently or who do not disclose (or for whom religious service attendance is 'not applicable') tend to be more satisfied with government institutions.

11. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has explored data from the South African Social Attitudes Survey of 2004 and determined that there is a statistically significant

TABLE XIII
Mean QoL by frequency of attendance at religious meetings or services

Church attendance	MODCON	GOVSATIS	LIFESATIS	QoL
Weekly or more	1.6808	2.4063	2.0526	2.0339
1-2 times per month	1.1370	2.8327	1.8511	1.9236
Few times per year	1.0826	2.6612	1.7190	1.8512
Infrequently or never	1.3808	2.4164	1.7331	1.8256
NA or refuse to say	0.8207	2.7880	1.4511	1.6576
Total	1.4146	2.5628	1.9085	1.9484

correlation between quality of life and religiosity, albeit not very strong. Three measures of religiosity (doctrinal orthodoxy, religious denomination and frequency of attendance at religious meetings) were used to assess the nature of the relationships with three measures of QoL (possession of modern conveniences, satisfaction with government institutions and self-assessed life satisfaction).

In general, self-assessed life satisfaction emerges as higher amongst people who claim to hold views that are most closely aligned to the teachings of the Church and the Bible. The trend is similar for people who attend religious services or meetings most frequently and for people who consider themselves as belonging to religious groups as opposed to those who do not. In terms of specific denominations, members of Pentecostal or Charismatic Christian churches emerge as having the highest levels of life satisfaction, slightly ahead of Roman Catholics, mainline Protestants, Hindus and Muslims. In contrast, 'other' Christians and members of African Independent Churches report somewhat lower levels of life satisfaction, *albeit* at higher levels than those with no religion or who do not know or do not wish to disclose their religious affiliation.

Materially, religious people emerge on average as better-off than less religious people. Those who hold the most doctrinally orthodox beliefs and who attend religious meetings most frequently tend to have more modern conveniences (microwave oven, washing machine, built-in kitchen sink and running hot water) in their homes than those who do not. Denominationally, the Hindu and Muslim groups are far ahead of Pentecostals and Charismatics, who in turn are better-off than mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics and other Christians. Near the bottom of the pile in this respect are the relatively materially poor adherents of AICs, who nevertheless emerge, on average, as significantly better off than those who do not profess to have a religion.

The third measure of quality of life, namely satisfaction with government institutions has a less clear relationship with religiosity. People who express the greatest levels of satisfaction with national government, the Independent Electoral Commission, Parliament and Democracy, tend in general to attend religious services or meetings occasionally. In contrast, those who attend either frequently or not at all are least satisfied with these institutions. The most doctrinally orthodox tend to be less satisfied with government than their less orthodox counterparts. Members of AICs and people with no religious affiliation are most satisfied with government and Hindus and Muslims are least satisfied. Adherents of the other Christian churches and denominations are intermediate between the two extremes.

Along with previous studies in the United States and Korea, South Africa thus also emerges as a country in which religiosity, as measured in terms of orthodox beliefs and frequency of church attendance, is related positively to both material quality of life and self-assessed life satisfaction. Although the strength of the relationship is not overwhelming, the evidence suggests intriguing correlations would require more research for further elucidation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The survey to collect the data discussed in this paper was conducted while the author was Director of Surveys at the Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria. My gratitude for the insightful comments, especially on the value of public opinion, that were provided by Lawrence Schlemmer after his reading of an initial draft of this paper.

NOTE

¹ The South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) collects responses to a variety of questions relating to social, economic and political attitudes, behaviour and knowledge. SASAS was preceded by the Evaluation of Public Opinion programme (EPOP) prior to 2003, and has a rigorously administered fieldwork operation to ensure accuracy and quality. The sample of 3500 households is selected from the HSRC's master sample, which is stratified explicitly by province and area type (urban formal, urban informal, rural formal, tribal) and implicitly by race. Smaller components of the South African population, namely Indians and residents of the Northern Cape are over-sampled to ensure adequate in sizes, and down-weighted for analytical purposes. Non-responses, empty households and refusals are not replaced, thus resulting in a realised sample of 2799 in this instance.

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