

# **Racial Variation in Parish Satisfaction among Catholic Parishioners**

by

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August, 2004

Paper prepared for presentation at the 2004 meetings of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, San Francisco, CA. Not for reprint or citation without permission of the authors. The authors would like to acknowledge the staff of the Research Services office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) – Deborah Bruce, Cynthia Woolever, and Keith Wulff – who graciously provided us with the data gathered from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey, and the Lilly Endowment and the Louisville Institute, which provided funding for the survey.

# **Racial Variation in Parish Satisfaction among Catholic Parishioners**

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## **Abstract**

Social scientists have developed an impressive literature that documents how various racial groups in the United States differ in their religious beliefs, values, and practices. Several noteworthy studies have examined such race differences with respect to Catholics, but little research has examined the ways in which of various racial and ethnic backgrounds differ in their levels of parish satisfaction and in the factors that contribute to that satisfaction. Using data from the recently administered survey of U.S. Congregational Life (Woolever and Bruce 2002) we investigate the patterns and predictors of parish satisfaction among Catholic worshippers of different races. Preliminary findings reveal that Hispanic Catholics are significantly more likely than either White, Black, and Asian Catholics to agree that their spiritual needs are being met by the parish. Moreover, Black and Asian Catholics are slightly less satisfied with their parishes than are White Catholics. Examination of the predictors of parishioner satisfaction among Catholics reveals that for all racial groups the factors that most influence levels of satisfaction are parishioner's perceptions of the pastor and parish leadership, particularly with how well these leaders listen to their congregations and invite parishioners to participate. Parishioners of all races also voice lower levels of satisfaction in parishes that have recently experienced a major conflict. Some parish characteristics (e.g., parish size, liturgical styles and music) appear to be stronger predictors of satisfaction for some racial groups more than others. Interestingly, Black Catholics appear to express greater satisfaction if their parish's liturgies include traditional hymns, Hispanic Catholics are more satisfied in parishes that have a Mass that focuses on a particular racial-ethnic group (e.g., through the use of a certain language), and Asian Catholics express greater satisfaction if their parish's liturgies incorporate music from a variety of different cultures.

## *Measures*

### *Dependent Variables*

- “Do you agree or disagree: My spiritual needs are being met in this parish?” Responses were recoded into disagree or strongly disagree (4%), neutral (13%), agree (53%), and strongly agree (30%).
- “Over the last year, how much have you grown in your faith?” Among the response categories respondents could check was the statement “Much growth, mainly through this parish.”
- “How important is the parish community in your life?,” and their responses were “little or no importance” (17%), “quite important” (24%), “very important” (34%), and “extremely important” (25%).<sup>1</sup>

### *Independent and Control Variables*

#### Demographic Variables

- sex (female=61%),
- race (White=71%, Hispanic=21%, Asian=6%, Black=1.4%, Other=3%),
- age (median age=50),
- place of birth (U.S. born=81%, outside the U.S.=19%),
- marital status (married or re-married after widowhood=57%),
- educational attainment (K-12=7%, some high school=8%, high school or trade certificate=39%, associate degree=10%, bachelors degree=22%, graduate degree 13%).

#### Parishioners’ Religious Background and Practices

- frequency of Mass attendance (once a month or less=4%, 2-3 times a month=8%, usually every week=72%, more than once a week=15%),
- whether they are currently a member of the parish (members=81%),
- the approximate number of years they have been attending their parish (less than 1 year=11%, 1-2 years=10%, 3-5 years=15%, 6-10 years=15%, 11-20 years=19%, and 20+ years=30%),
- level of involvement in parish activities, a scale based on 10 items asking about participation in groups and clubs within the parish, in community outreach, and in education.

#### Parishioners’ Rating of the Pastor and Parish Leaders

- whether they felt they are given an opportunity to participate in parish decision-making (54% report being given such opportunities);
- whether leaders have encouraged the respondent “to use your skills and gifts here” (no=34%, to a small extent=14%, to some extent=28%, and to a great extent=25%);
- whether there is “a good match between our congregation and our priest” (not a good match=17%, a good match=39%, and an excellent match=44%);
- the extent to which the pastor “takes into account the ideas of those who worship here” (no pastor or none that listens=26%, small extent=5%, some extent=23%, and great extent=42%).

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<sup>1</sup> Other possible measures of parish satisfaction include the following question items: “To what extent do the worship services or activities of this congregation help you with everyday living?” Responses were “not at all” (5%), “a small extent” (13%), “some extent” (44%), and “a great extent” (38%); “Do you have a strong sense of belonging to this parish?” Their response options included: “Yes, a strong sense of belonging that is growing,” “Yes, a strong sense – about the same as last year,” “Yes, but perhaps not as strong as in the past,” “No, but I am new here,” “No, and I wish I did by now,” and “No, but I am happy as I am.”

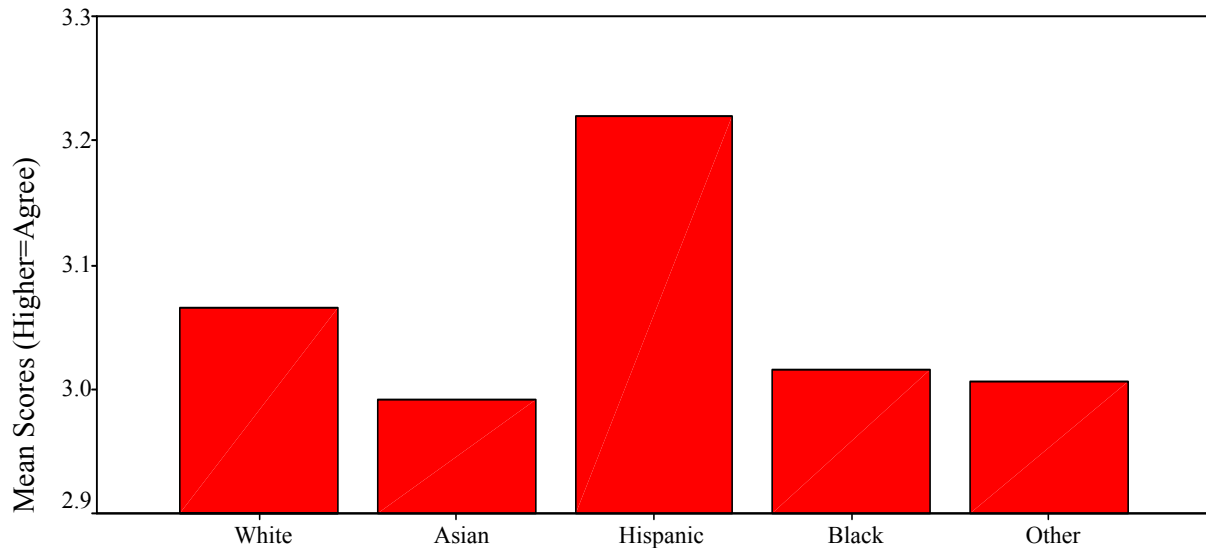
### Parish Characteristics

- the **parish size** based on the number of people regularly participating,
- a scale based on 18 items, which we label “**service**,” that measures the level of the parish’s community outreach or political activities/services for members of the parish or people in the community (e.g., housing for senior citizens, prison or jail ministry, emergency relief, immigrant support activities, etc.),
- **focus**, which measures whether the parish has a worship service that focuses on a particular racial-ethnic group (e.g., through the use of a certain language) (yes=17%),
- the extent to which the congregation has experienced **conflict** in the last five years (no real conflict=69%, some conflict=19%, major conflict but not causing people to leave=4%, major conflict causing people to leave=8%).

### Characteristics of the Parish’s Liturgies

- a scale based on 5 items, which we label “**demonst**,” that measures the extent to which demonstrative behaviors (e.g., applause, laughter, calling out “amen,” jumping, shouting, dancing, or raising hands) are part of the parish’s worship services;
- dichotomous variables measuring whether the parish’s liturgical music included
  - **traditional hymns** (yes=95%),
  - **classical music** (yes=34%),
  - music from a variety of **cultures** (yes=36%),
  - contemplative **chants** (yes=15%),
  - African-American **gospel music** (3%).
  - Contemporary music was left out of the regression models to serve as a reference category.

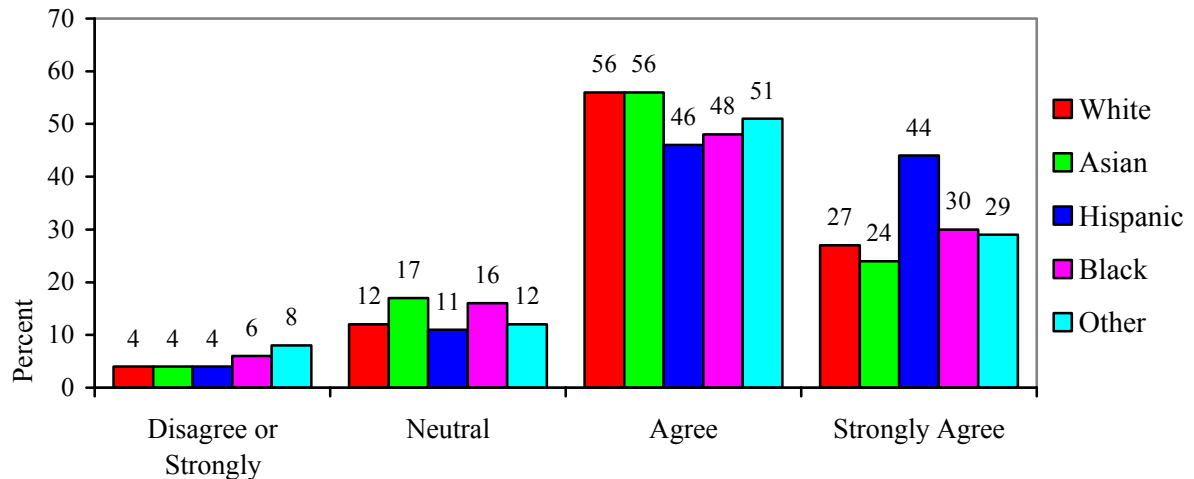
## Levels of Agreement that Spiritual Needs are Being Met



Race of Respondent

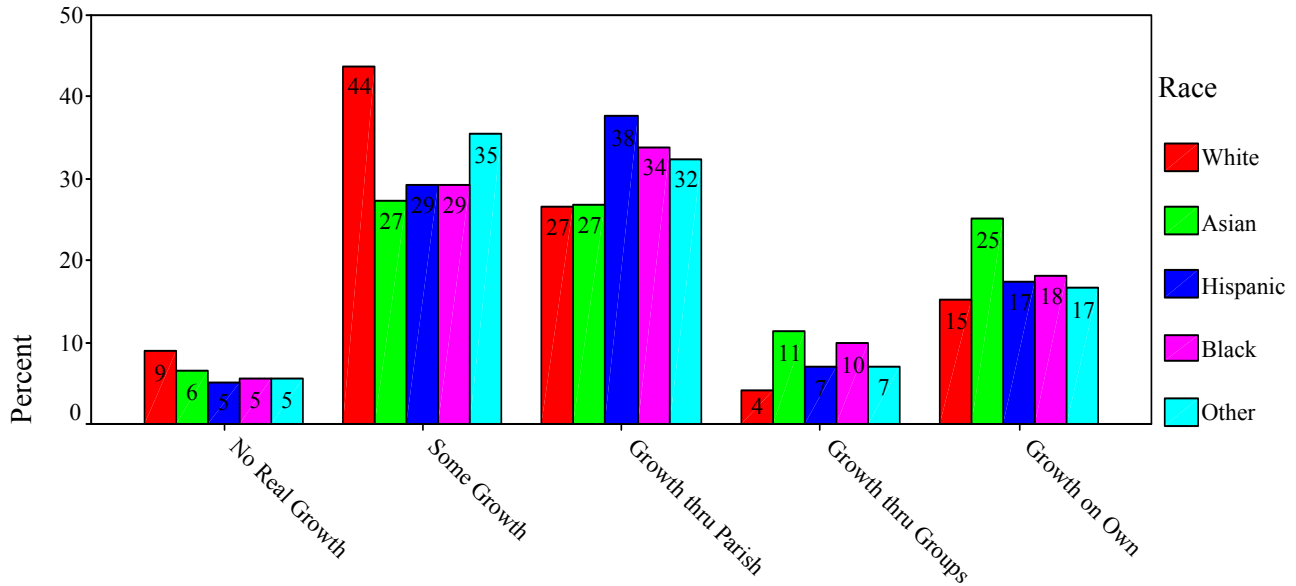
Reported on a Scale from 1-4

## Percentage of Each Race Group Answering Each Category of Spiritual Needs Being Met

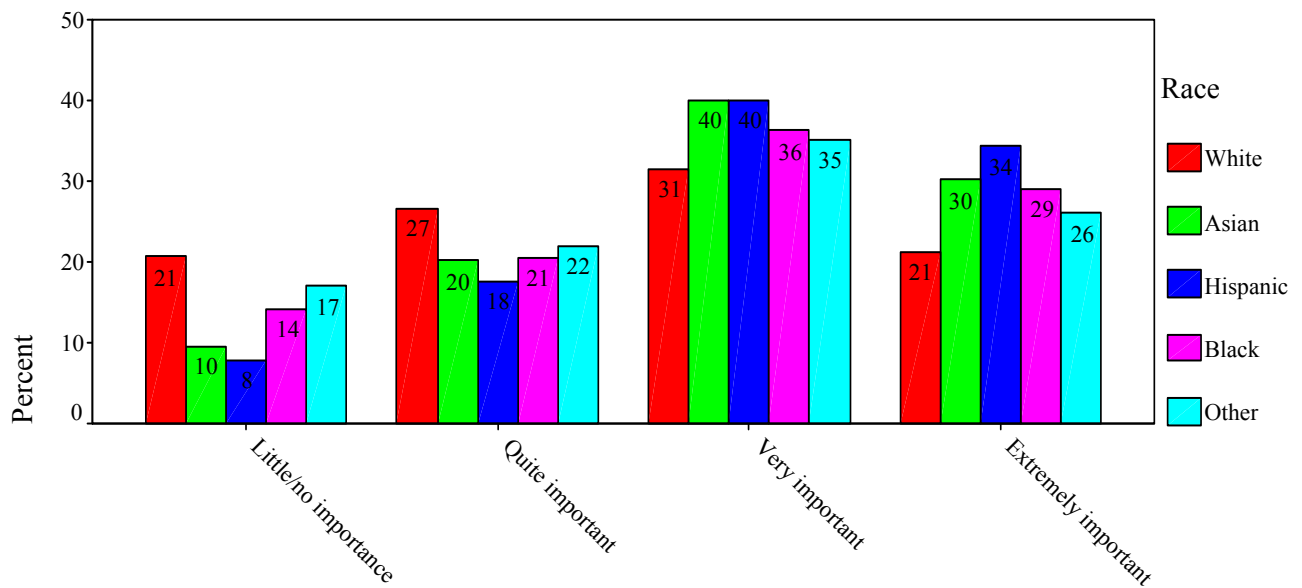


Spiritual Needs Being Met by the Parish (Higher=Agree)

## Percentage of Each Race Group Indicating How They Have Grown in Their Faith over the Last Year



## Percentage of Each Race Group Indicating How Important The Parish Community Is in Their Life



**Table 1****Regression Coefficients for Parish Satisfaction Among Catholics**

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>
(Constant)	2.900***		2.543***		1.597***		1.562***	
FEMALE	-.015	-.009	-.031***	-.020	-.042***	-.027	-.041***	-.027
BLACK	-.024	-.004	-.027	-.004	-.047	-.007	-.055	-.008
HISPANIC	.131***	.067	.146***	.075	.096***	.049	.087***	.044
ASIAN	-.118***	-.035	-.097***	-.029	-.088***	-.026	-.101***	-.030
AGE	.004***	.100	.004***	.100	.003***	.067	.003***	.061
NON-US BORN	.109***	.053	.109***	.053	.124***	.060	.106***	.052
MARRIED	.002	.001	-.002	-.002	-.007	-.004	.002	.001
EDUCATION	-.007*	.013	-.017***	-.031	-.018***	-.032	-.016***	-.029
ATTENDANCE			.106***	.081	.052***	.039	.055***	.042
PARISH MEMBER			.147***	.070	.029**	.014	.037***	.018
PARISH ACTIVITIES			.045***	.085	.013***	.024	.022***	.042
YEARS AT PARISH			-.007***	-.084	-.003***	-.036	-.002***	-.025
CAN MAKE DECISIONS?					.057***	.036	.059***	.037
INVITED TO USE GIFTS?					.097***	.147	.095***	.145
GOOD MATCH?					.360***	.346	.336***	.322
PASTOR LISTENS?					.056***	.086	.053***	.082
SIZE OF PARISH							.022***	.022
SERVICE SCALE							.000	.002
FOCUS ON RACE							-.005	-.002
CONFLICT IN PARISH							-.091***	-.105
DEMONSTRATIVE							.000	.000
TRADITIONAL HYMNS?							.050**	.015
CLASSICAL MUSIC?							-.013	-.008
MUSIC OF DFF CULTURES?							-.009	-.005
CHANTS?							-.070***	-.034
GOSPEL MUSIC?							.087***	.021
<b>Adjusted R-Square</b>		<b>.017</b>		<b>.043</b>		<b>.252</b>		<b>.263</b>

Dependent Variable: SPRNEED Spiritual Needs Being Met by the Parish (Higher=Agree)

**Table 2**

**Regression Coefficients for Parish Satisfaction Among Black Catholics**

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>
(Constant)	2.75***		2.61***		1.38***		1.09*	
FEMALE	-.018	-.011	-.016	-.010	.007	.004	-.005	-.003
<b>AGE</b>	<b>.005*</b>	<b>.101</b>	<b>.005*</b>	<b>.104</b>	.004	.081	.005	.086
NON-US BORN	.019	.011	-.004	-.002	.097	.056	.161	.093
MARRIED	.054	.032	.032	.019	-.025	-.015	-.027	-.016
EDUCATION	.021	.039	.014	.025	.009	.017	.008	.015
ATTENDANCE			-.012	-.010	.008	.006	.000	.000
PARISH MEMBER			<b>.215*</b>	<b>.105</b>	.097	.047	.115	.056
PARISH ACTIVITIES			<b>.113***</b>	<b>.215</b>	.047	.089	.059*	.112
YEARS AT PARISH			-.009	-.096	-.005	-.049	-.005	-.048
CAN MAKE DECISIONS?					.012	.007	.026	.016
<b>INVITED TO USE GIFTS?</b>					<b>.133***</b>	<b>.190</b>	<b>.133***</b>	<b>.190</b>
<b>GOOD MATCH?</b>					<b>.351***</b>	<b>.308</b>	<b>.335***</b>	<b>.294</b>
PASTOR LISTENS?					.056	.081	.047	.067
SIZE OF PARISH							.032	.047
SERVICE SCALE							-.031	-.121
FOCUS ON RACE							.154	.079
<b>CONFLICT IN PARISH</b>							<b>-.142**</b>	<b>-.123</b>
DEMONSTRATIVE							-.052	-.098
<b>TRADITIONAL HYMNS?</b>							<b>.624*</b>	<b>.097</b>
CLASSICAL MUSIC?							.001	.000
MUSIC OF DFF CULTURES?							.022	.013
CHANTS?							-.180	-.098
GOSPEL MUSIC?							.271	.136
<b>Adjusted R-Square</b>	<b>.005</b>		<b>.064</b>		<b>.236</b>		<b>.256</b>	

Dependent Variable: SPRNEED Spiritual Needs Being Met by the Parish (Higher=Agree)

**Table 3****Regression Coefficients for Parish Satisfaction Among Latino Catholics**

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>
(Constant)	3.212***		2.98***		2.022***		1.996***	
FEMALE	-.054**	-.034	-.060**	-.038	-.067***	-.042	-.066***	-.042
AGE	.003***	.065	.003***	.055	.002**	.037	.002**	.033
NON-US BORN	.140***	.090	.141***	.091	.147***	.095	.131***	.084
MARRIED	.053*	.034	.044*	.028	.020	.013	.028	.018
EDUCATION	-.054***	-.099	-.056***	-.103	-.040***	-.074	-.026***	-.048
ATTENDANCE			.072***	.061	.008	.007	.021	.018
PARISH MEMBER			.111***	.062	.034	.019	.031	.017
PARISH ACTIVITIES			.021**	.036	.007	.013	.016*	.027
YEARS AT PARISH			-.004**	-.044	-.004***	-.046	-.004***	-.043
CAN MAKE DECISIONS?					.032	.021	.030	.019
INVITED TO USE GIFTS?					.058***	.092	.054***	.086
GOOD MATCH?					.356***	.323	.338***	.307
PASTOR LISTENS?					.068***	.105	.064***	.098
SIZE OF PARISH							.040*	.031
SERVICE SCALE							-.010**	-.048
FOCUS ON RACE							.044*	.027
CONFLICT IN PARISH							-.093***	-.103
DEMONSTRATIVE							.014	.023
TRADITIONAL HYMNS?							-.082	-.018
CLASSICAL MUSIC?							-.142***	-.091
MUSIC OF DFF CULTURES?							.036	.023
CHANTS?							-.128*	-.026
GOSPEL MUSIC?							.082	.017
<b>Adjusted R-Square</b>	<b>.027</b>		<b>.037</b>		<b>.200</b>		<b>.216</b>	

Dependent Variable: SPRNEED Spiritual Needs Being Met by the Parish (Higher=Agree)

**Table 4**

**Regression Coefficients for Parish Satisfaction Among Asian Catholics**

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Beta</u>
(Constant)	2.458***		2.12***		1.384***		1.796***	
FEMALE	.010	.007	-.011	-.007	-.032	-.021	-.032	-.021
<b>AGE</b>	<b>.007***</b>	<b>.137</b>	<b>.005***</b>	<b>.110</b>	<b>.003*</b>	<b>.064</b>	<b>.003*</b>	<b>.060</b>
NON-US BORN	.025	.012	.075	.037	.058	.029	.052	.025
MARRIED	.015	.010	-.013	-.009	-.006	-.004	-.006	-.004
<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>.058***</b>	<b>.094</b>	<b>.063***</b>	<b>.103</b>	<b>.046**</b>	<b>.075</b>	<b>.049***</b>	<b>.080</b>
ATTENDANCE			.057	.043	.028	.021	.026	.020
<b>PARISH MEMBER</b>			<b>.187***</b>	<b>.115</b>	<b>.099**</b>	<b>.061</b>	<b>.107**</b>	<b>.066</b>
PARISH ACTIVITIES			.052***	.087	.019	.033	.025	.042
YEARS AT PARISH			.002	.017	.000	-.002	.002	.016
<b>CAN MAKE DECISIONS?</b>					<b>.094**</b>	<b>.063</b>	<b>.092**</b>	<b>.066</b>
<b>INVITED TO USE GIFTS?</b>					<b>.070***</b>	<b>.112</b>	<b>.069***</b>	<b>.042</b>
<b>GOOD MATCH?</b>					<b>.322***</b>	<b>.307</b>	<b>.314***</b>	<b>.016</b>
<b>PASTOR LISTENS?</b>					<b>.060***</b>	<b>.092</b>	<b>.055***</b>	<b>.066</b>
SIZE OF PARISH							-.058	-.038
SERVICE SCALE							-.008	-.029
FOCUS ON RACE							-.105	-.046
<b>CONFLICT IN PARISH</b>							<b>-.081**</b>	<b>-.067</b>
DEMONSTRATIVE							-.007	-.011
TRADITIONAL HYMNS?							.231	.041
CLASSICAL MUSIC?							.062	.042
<b>MUSIC OF DIFF CULTURES? CHANTS?</b>							<b>.175**</b>	<b>.116</b>
GOSPEL MUSIC?							<b>-.201**</b>	<b>-.119</b>
<b>Adjusted R-Square</b>		<b>.038</b>		<b>.067</b>		<b>.230</b>		<b>.240</b>

Dependent Variable: SPRNEED Spiritual Needs Being Met by the Parish (Higher=Agree)