

# Race as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Personality Factors and Supervisor-Instigated Incivility

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## Background

**Workplace incivility** is defined as “low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect,” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). Prior research has shown that individuals who experience incivility report having less job satisfaction, less job commitment, and higher intentions of quitting, demonstrating the potential negative consequences of working in a hostile work environment.

Milam, Spitzmueller, and Penney (2009) found support for a mediation model of incivility and the personality traits of agreeableness and neuroticism, suggesting that target traits are an important component of incivility research. Furthermore, target race has been shown to affect vulnerability to uncivil treatment on the job (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013).

The goal of the current research is to determine whether similarities in racial status between the perpetrator and target moderate the established relationship between personality traits and incivility. **We hypothesize that when the target and perpetrator share a racial background, the target will be less likely to report the perpetrator’s behavior as uncivil.**

## Methods

### Participants

94 students at a large, public, Southwestern university in the U.S. participated in an online questionnaire in exchange for class credit.

- 25.5% male, 66.0% female.
- 27.7% Caucasian, 26.6% Hispanic, 13.8% African American, 18.1% Asian, 4.2% Other
- Mean Age = 24.02, SD = 6.261

### Measures

- International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Goldberg, 1999)
  - Agreeableness
  - Conscientiousness
  - Extraversion
  - Neuroticism
- Burnfield, Clark, Devendorf, and Jex’s (2004) Incivility Questionnaire

## Results

### Model Summary (Neuroticism)

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.2252	.0507	.1861	.9842	4.0	71.0	.4414

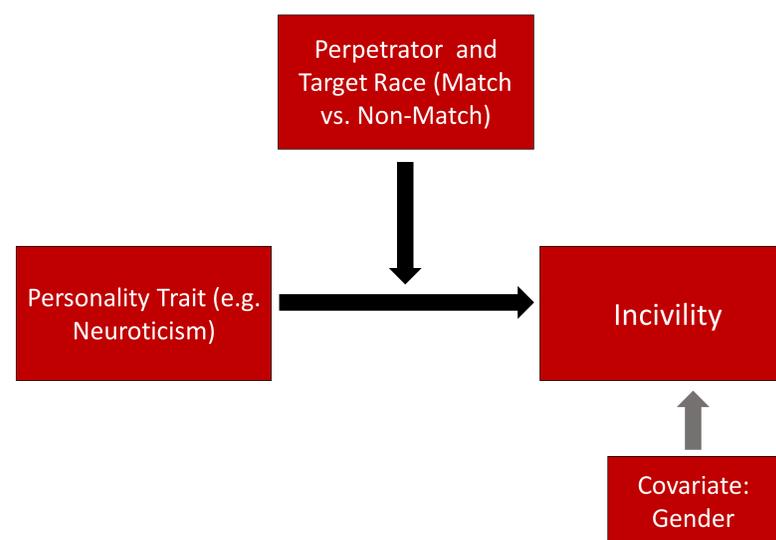
### Model (Neuroticism)

	coeff	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
<b>constant</b>	2.1595	.2877	7.5052	.0000	1.5858	2.7333
<b>incivility</b>	.0859	.1311	.6555	.5143	-.1755	.3473
<b>match_race</b>	.1394	.3116	.4472	.4472	-.4819	.7607
<b>int_1</b>	-.0347	.1659	-.2094	.8347	-.3655	.2960
<b>gender</b>	.1816	.1194	1.5204	.1329	-.0566	.4198

*Note:* int\_1 represents the interaction between incivility and racial match of perpetrator and target

### Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s)

	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
<b>X*W</b>	.0005	.0377	1.0	72.0	.8467



**Proposed Model:** perpetrator and target racial match as a potential moderator between personality traits and incivility

## Discussion

Although we did not find support for the moderation model, future research should continue to investigate the impact that both racial and personality characteristics can have on incivility in the workplace. Members of racial and ethnic minorities are still not represented in higher-status occupations to the same extent as Caucasians, and the underlying reasons behind these discrepancies must be considered when implementing diversity-centered policies or practices.

Future research may also benefit from sampling populations other than college students. For the measures of incivility, participants responded on a scale of 1 - 5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), in which the mean was 1.85 (min = 1, max = 3.14), indicating that there was not much uncivil behavior occurring in their work environment. Without a strong prevalence of this type of behavior, it is difficult to reach a definite conclusion as to what other factors may influence this relationship. Adding more measures centered around the racial background specifically between the target and perpetrator may also highlight this relationship to a greater extent.

This project will continue throughout the year as a longitudinal study investigating other personality traits and their relationship with incivility in the workplace. Overall, we hope to gain a deeper understanding as to why certain people are more likely to be targeted for uncivil behavior.

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