

# The invisible people are shouting ‘We’re here! We’re corporeal! Get used to it!’

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Several years ago, a pair of college-age women took turns walking on a well-traveled path across the campus of Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. Upon encountering another pedestrian, the women did one of three things: met that person’s eyes; met that person’s eyes and smiled; or looked toward their eyes but past them — “looking at them as if they were air,” in the words of **Eric D. Wesselmann**.

Wesselmann is [a psychology professor, now at Illinois State University](#). The experiment that he and his colleagues conducted was created to study feelings of connection and exclusion. After the pedestrians passed one another, a researcher would stop the subject and ask, “Within the last minute, how disconnected do you feel from others?”

According to the [Association for Psychological Science](#), in whose journal the results ran in 2012, “People who had gotten eye contact from the research assistant, with or without a smile, felt less disconnected than people who had been looked at as if they weren’t there.”