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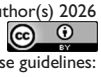
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More Contact, Less Invisibility? Intergroup and Intragroup Contact Predict Invisibility for Queer People of Color

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Abstract

People with multiple stigmatized identities (e.g., queer people of color [QPoC]) are especially at risk of experiencing invisibility or feeling overlooked and ignored. While a growing literature has explored experiences of invisibility, scarce research exists on the relationship between contact and invisibility, especially for stigmatized groups. In one preregistered study (N = 338), we examined how the quantity (frequency) and quality (how positive) of contact with different target groups relate to feelings of social invisibility for QPoC. Results reveal that having more frequent contact with ingroup members, compared to outgroup members, relates to lower invisibility. Positive contact across all target groups, but especially with other QPoC, was negatively related to invisibility. Taken together, our results highlight the potential for intragroup contact as a strengths-based tool for counteracting invisibility for people with multiple stigmatized identities.

Keywords

social invisibility, intergroup contact, intragroup contact, queer people of color, stigmatized identities

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Introduction

Being ignored and overlooked by others is a familiar experience for people who have a stigmatized identity. This form of stigmatization ("invisibility") may be widespread and likely to impact people with multiple stigmatized identities (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Remedios & Snyder, 2018; Sesko & Biernat, 2018). Invisibility has potentially pernicious consequences, including missed economic and romantic opportunities (Neel & Lassetter, 2019; Schug et al., 2015) and lower belonging and burnout at work (Settles et al., 2019). Yet invisibility is less understood than more active forms of stigmatization and discrimination (Neel & Lassetter, 2019; Sesko & Biernat, 2025).

What factors predict when stigmatized groups feel more or less invisible? This question is critical, yet underexamined. We propose that contact is one potential factor. Intergroup contact has traditionally been examined as a means of reducing prejudice among advantaged group members (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The present work asks how contact predicts invisibility among people with multiple marginalized identities, focusing on queer people of color (QPoC), or those who identify as both a racial and sexual minority.[1]

It is self-evident that QPoC have intergroup contact, or contact with outgroup members, when interacting with straight, White people, and *intragroup* contact, or contact with ingroup members, when interacting with other QPoC (double-identity ingroup). However, according to social identity complexity theory (Roccas & Brewer, 2002), it is unclear whether contact with single-identity ingroups (e.g., racial ingroup; queer people, broadly) would relate to psychological feelings of invisibility due to subjective perceptions of group overlap. Thus, focusing on the experiences of QPoC is both theoretically and practically important, as it allows us to examine contact across the fuzzy boundaries of social categorization.

Notably, our approach allows us to consider how varying degrees of shared identity influence psychological experiences of invisibility. We expect invisibility to be lowest when others share more of participants' stigmatized identities, because identity overlap can determine who is psychologically experienced as an ingroup. Vinluan and Remedios (2020) show that multiracial people treat targets

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who share their exact identity combination as stronger ingroup members than targets who share only one component identity. For QPoC, other QPoC may therefore be perceived as a clearer ingroup than single-identity ingroups, increasing expectations of recognition and visibility.

In the present work, we examined the impact of both quantity and quality of QPoC's contact with double-identity ingroups (i.e., other QPoC), single-identity ingroups (i.e., racial ingroup members and queer people, broadly), and a clear outgroup (i.e., straight, White people) on their experiences of invisibility. We argue that intragroup contact, especially with double-identity ingroups, may protect against invisibility. By focusing on varying target-group contexts (i.e., which social group one is interacting with), we expand the contact literature by moving beyond bias reduction to consider how meaningful social experiences within and across marginalized communities can serve as a resource for positive psychological outcomes such as feeling seen, recognized, and visible.

Invisibility of Queer People of Color

In the current work, we focus on QPoC's psychological experiences of invisibility: feeling ignored, forgotten, or having one's contributions go unnoticed (Sesko & Biernat, 2025). The QPoC experience compounded the burdens of multiple systems of oppression, which are qualitatively different rather than simply additive stress (McConnell et al., 2018). For example, QPoC often face unique microaggressions, or invalidations and slights, tied to their intersectional identity (Balsam et al., 2011; McConnell et al., 2018). Compared to their single-identity counterparts, they may face heightened health care discrimination (Mahowald et al., 2020) and socioeconomic disadvantage (Badgett et al., 2019). Furthermore, people with multiple stigmatized identities report more identity-based stressors, such as discrimination and stereotype concerns. Invisibility is one such stressor (Remedios & Snyder, 2018).

Multiple theories have emerged to explain invisibility. The intersectional invisibility hypothesis (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008) proposes that people who are nonprototypical for their constituent identities (e.g., Black women, Latino gay men), rather than prototypical (e.g., Black men, White, straight men), are more likely to experience *representational* invisibility by lacking representation in culture, politics, law, and history (see also Fryberg & Eason, 2017). This hypothesis derives from intersectionality, a theoretical framework articulated by Black feminist activists and scholars across centuries (Collins, 2009; Combahee River Collective, 1977; Cooper, 1892; Crenshaw, 1989; Jones, 1949; Truth, 1851) who posited that major systems of oppression interlock with social identities to create unique and unequal lived experiences for people with multiple marginalized identities. Because QPoC are likely to be seen as "minorities within a minority," they may be especially likely to experience invisibility (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Indeed, people who hold multiple stigmatized identities report experiencing greater feelings of invisibility compared to those holding a single or no stigmatized identity (Remedios & Snyder, 2018).

Neel and Lassetter's (2019) affordance-management theory complements this perspective by emphasizing that the interpersonal experience of being ignored and overlooked by others, rather than being culturally underrepresented, is dynamic: whether or not a person is invisible will depend on their goals and who they are interacting with, so even multiply stigmatized people like QPoC will feel invisible with certain social groups but not others. Indeed, Lam and Neel (2026) find that people feel invisible differently depending on interaction partners' race, gender, or goals, suggesting that invisibility varies across social targets. Bridging the two frameworks, we acknowledge that invisibility is commonly experienced by people with intersectional identities (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008) and may nevertheless be experienced differently across various target groups (Lam & Neel, 2026; Neel & Lassetter, 2019). As of yet, little is known about target-group contexts where people with multiple stigmatized identities feel more or less visible.

Intergroup Contact

Intergroup contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) has traditionally been of interest to social psychologists as a prejudice-reduction tool (e.g., Paluck et al., 2021; Paolini et al., 2021; Pettigrew, 1998; Wright et al., 2005; Zhou et al., 2019; but see also Page-Gould et al., 2022). However, intergroup contact does not solely function to reduce prejudice (Paolini et al., 2021; Tropp & Mallett, 2011). For stigmatized groups, high-quality intergroup contact, including interactions with other minority groups, can predict greater well-being (Bagci et al., 2016), collective self-esteem (Bagci et al., 2018), trust (Yuan et al., 2024), and lower loneliness via a common ingroup identity (Yu et al., 2023).

On the other hand, when QPoC have more contact with outgroups, they may experience *heightened* invisibility due to increased negative interactions. For instance, in the workplace, marginalized groups are at risk of facing discrimination, exclusion, and being "othered" (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Settles et al., 2019; Smith & Griffiths, 2022). Such interactions likely involve being overlooked, ignored, or feeling invisible.

Intragroup Contact

For stigmatized groups, positive intragroup contact can provide community and support amid broader systems of oppression. Relative to intergroup contact, less is known about intragroup contact. In the context of this study, contact with ingroups largely overlaps with what others have termed "interminority contact" (i.e., interactions among

stigmatized groups; Hindriks et al., 2014; Visintin et al., 2016). Intragroup contact with other stigmatized groups has been linked to well-being (Douglass et al., 2014; Frable et al., 1998; C. Stevenson & Sagherian-Dickey, 2016). For example, ethnic minority adolescents reported fewer anxiety symptoms during interactions with same-ethnic peers (Douglass et al., 2014). Among racial/ethnic minorities, friendships with other minorities are associated with positive identity growth (Elias et al., 2025; Jugert et al., 2020; Lorenzo et al., 2024). As such, intragroup contact may be less likely to involve experiences of loneliness, rejection, and alienation for QPoC than intergroup contact. We would thus expect QPoC who engage in more intragroup contact to experience less invisibility.

Contact and Invisibility

We expect frequent, positive contact to be negatively related to invisibility. Recently, Sesko and Biernat (2025) echoed this hypothesis, suggesting that invisibility may indeed be a "bi-product of lower quality social networks" (p. 20). Because direct evidence is limited, we draw on adjacent literature on two constructs related to invisibility: loneliness (Knowles & Dean, 2018) and mattering, defined as feeling "important, visible, and heard" (Flett, 2022, p. 4). Low-frequency and low-quality contact predict greater loneliness (Ward & Masgoret, 2004), and one longitudinal study suggests intergroup contact can reduce loneliness over time (Yu et al., 2023). Relatedly, mattering research indicates that positive social interactions signal increased experiences of mattering (Flett, 2022) and multiwave longitudinal work indicates that prior interactions predict later perceived mattering and acceptance within relationships (M. M. Stevenson et al., 2014).

In contrast, Neel and Lassetter (2019) argue that contact alone may be insufficient to affect invisibility and that goals and target-group context matter. To address these discrepancies, we take a "contact-in-context" approach (Yip et al., 2019) to demonstrate how the benefits of contact depend on who the contact is with (i.e., intergroup vs. intragroup contact). How target-group context moderates the relationship between contact and invisibility is particularly relevant for QPoC who have different ways of thinking about their social identities (e.g., single- vs. double-identity ingroups).

Prior work suggests that contact quality is a more consistent predictor of downstream outcomes than contact quantity (Barlow et al., 2012; Bruneau et al., 2021). To our knowledge, no studies have directly tested how intergroup and intragroup contact relate to experienced invisibility among people with multiple stigmatized identities. Here, we test the prediction that higher-quality contact is associated with lower invisibility and that quantity matters most when contact is high quality. Although recognition and being heard are central to invisibility, here we measured contact quality as positive valence, consistent with prior contact research. We contend that both intergroup and intragroup contact predict feelings of invisibility, with positive, intragroup contact, especially with double-identity ingroups, showing a stronger, inverse association.

Current Study

In this work, we focus on QPoC's social interactions across multiple target groups, measuring both the frequency of interactions (contact quantity) and the positivity of those interactions (contact quality). The aim of the present research is to empirically assess the relationship between intergroup and intragroup contact and invisibility using a repeated-measures design. To account for our multiple observations across target groups within individuals, we used multilevel modeling to analyze the relationship between contact and invisibility. We tested three primary hypotheses. First, we predicted that contact, especially contact quality, with a social group would be associated with their feelings of invisibility toward that social group (e.g., one's contact with QPoC will predict the experience of invisibility with QPoC). Second, we expected to find a significant interaction between contact quantity and quality such that the effect of contact quantity would be amplified when contact quality is high. Finally, we hypothesized that the effect of contact on invisibility will be strongest for ingroups than outgroups (e.g., contact with QPoC is more strongly related to invisibility than contact with outgroups). We explored the fuzzy boundaries of social categorization by comparing the relationship between contact and invisibility with both single- and double-identity ingroups.

Method

Transparency and Openness

All data, *R* code, preregistration, and materials are available on the Open Science Framework at https://osf.io/3qdwt/overview?view_only=0bedec33fc9b4978ac2a848af6e2793e

Participants

We recruited a sample of 351 U.S.-based, self-identified QPoC (M_{age} = 32.32, SD_{age} = 11.14). A total of 13 participants were excluded from the study—7 for failing any attention check, 3 for failing to identify as QPoC, and 3 for missing data (pairwise deletion)—resulting in a final analytic sample of 338 participants. Racial identities were diverse, with the largest proportion (37.0%) identifying as African American/Black. For full demographics, see Table 1.

A priori power analysis was calculated in *R* through simulating data (Page-Gould, 2020) to determine the

Table 1. Sample Demographic Characteristics.

Demographic category	*n* (%)
Gender	
Women	197 (58.3)
Man	91 (26.9)
Gender nonconforming	39 (11.5)
Transgender	19 (5.6)
Two-spirit	8 (2.4)
Other	18 (5.3)
Prefer not to say	3 (0.9)
Race/ethnicity	
African American/Black	125 (37.0)
Hispanic/Latinx	90 (26.6)
East Asian	67 (19.8)
White	61 (18.0)
Southeast Asian	38 (11.2)
Indigenous/American Indian	22 (6.5)
South Asian	15 (2.1)
Middle Eastern/North African	7 (2.1)
Pacific Islander	4 (1.2)
Other	5 (1.5)
Education level	
Four-year college degree	132 (39.2)
Some college	84 (24.9)
Professional or master's degree	43 (12.8)
High school graduate	36 (10.7)
Two-year college degree	28 (8.3)
Some graduate school	11 (3.3)
Doctorate degree	3 (0.9)

Note. $N = 338$. Participants were allowed to select more than one race/ethnicity. Thus, all participants who selected White (18%) also selected at least one other category (i.e., were multiracial).

sample size needed to detect small, fixed effects in a multilevel model that includes both participant-level and group-level random effects. Specifically, we aimed to achieve 95% power to detect small effects of $\beta = -0.08$ and $\beta = -0.10$ for the two main effects and $\beta = -0.13$ for their interaction term (see Open Science Framework for power analysis file). The analysis indicated that we had 95% power to detect these coefficients with a sample of 350, meaning that our final analytic sample ($N = 338$) was just under 95% power.

Procedure

Participants completed the study on Qualtrics and were recruited using Prolific. Participants were screened for identifying as QPoC using Prolific's built-in filter tool, making sure they identified as both a racial minority and a sexual minority. After consenting, participants answered parallel sets of items about their experiences with four target groups: one double-identity ingroup (QPoC), two single-identity ingroups (racial ingroup; queer people, broadly), and one outgroup (straight, White people). Participants reported their feelings of invisibility, contact quantity, and contact quality toward each group. These responses were nested within-person, allowing for comparisons across target groups. Each survey took approximately 10 min to complete, and participants were compensated at a rate of £0.2 per min.

Measures

For all the measures below, except for demographic variables, we adapted all items to specify a target group. Specifically, participants responded separately to the same set of items for four target social groups: "racial/ethnic group," "LGBQA + people," "QPoC," and "straight, White people." Descriptive data, full-scale items, and reliability are found in Supplemental Material.

Invisibility

We administered an 8-item measure of social invisibility that was adapted from a 13-item experienced invisibility scale (Sesko & Biernat, 2025). Items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with higher scores indicating greater feelings of invisibility. Sample items include "I feel invisible to [*target group*]" and "My contributions often go unnoticed by [*target group*]." The invisibility subscales demonstrated excellent internal consistency among all target groups ($\alpha s > .92$).

Contact Quantity

To assess contact quantity, we used two items from Hässler et al. (2020): "Please indicate how often you interact with the following groups" on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*daily*) and "How many [*target group*] do you know, at least as acquaintances?" rated on a 10-point scale (0 = *none*, 10 = *10 or more*).

Contact Quality

We administered three items measuring quality of contact (Hässler et al., 2020). Participants indicated the extent to which those experiences were friendly, cooperative, and equal (e.g., "When you interact with [*target group*], to what extent do you experience the following"). Each item was rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The quality of contact subscales showed strong internal consistency ($\alpha s > .80$).

Attention Checks

Participants completed two attention checks. The single item, "Please choose 'strongly agree' if you are paying attention," was embedded in the contact quality and the invisibility measures. Participants who failed the attention check were excluded from the study (see "Participants" section) (Figure 1).

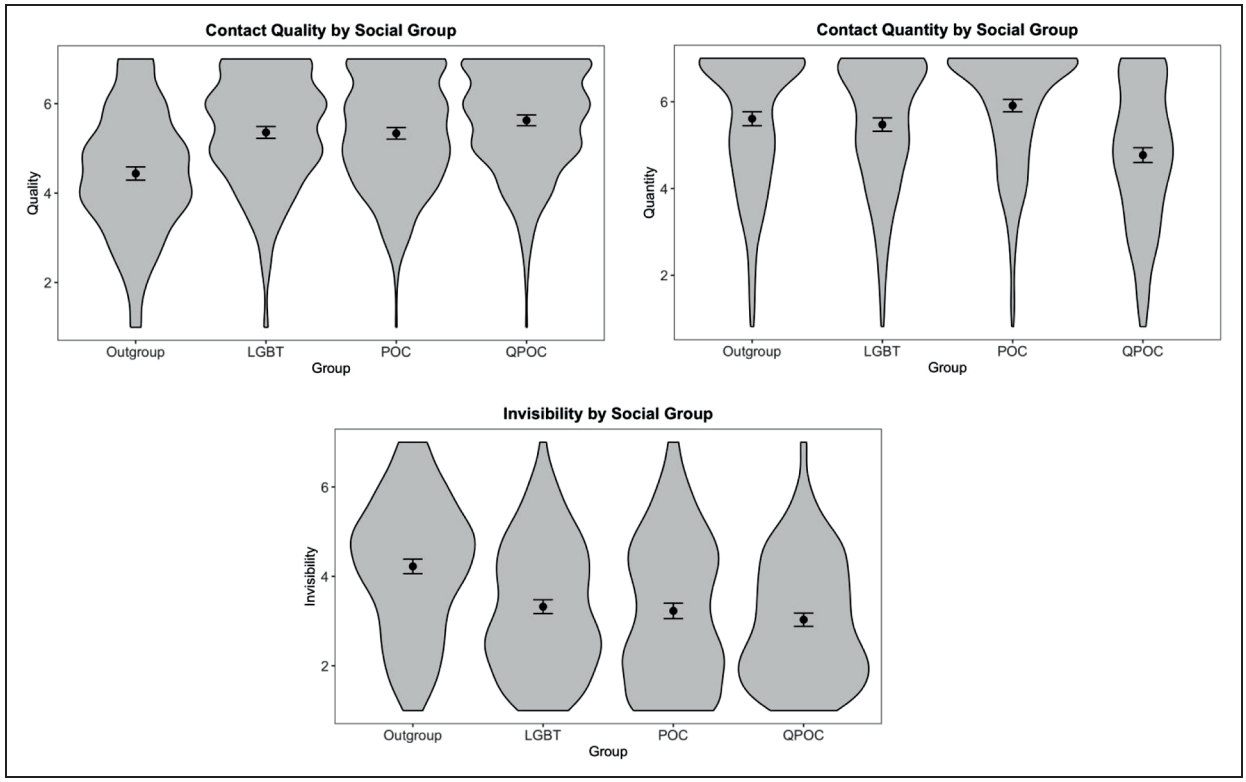

Figure 1. Descriptive statistics.
Note. Violin plots display the distribution of reported invisibility toward each of the four target social groups: queer people of color (double-identity ingroup), participants' racial/ethnic ingroup (single-identity ingroup), LGBQA + people broadly (single-identity ingroup), and straight, White people (outgroup). Points and error bars represent group means and 95% confidence intervals.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

We began by examining bivariate correlations among our variables within each target-group context (Table 2). For the full correlation matrix, see Supplementary Table S2. As expected, contact quantity and quality were each negatively correlated with invisibility. Contact quality, with double-identity ingroups, had the strongest negative association with invisibility, $r = -.54$, while contact quantity with outgroups had the weakest correlation, $r = -.12$.

Analytic Plan

We tested whether invisibility varied as a function of contact and target-group context. We prepared predictor variables by centering them at the appropriate level: person-mean centering was used for within-person variables (e.g., contact quality within-person and contact quantity within-person), and grand-mean centering was used for between-person variables (e.g., contact quality between-person), following recommendations for disaggregating multilevel effects (Enders & Tofighi, 2007; Wang & Maxwell, 2015). Analyses were done in *R* version 4.0.5 (R Core Team, 2021; see Supplementary Text 5). Invisibility was modeled as a function of between-person and within-person contact quantity and quality using three orthogonal target-group contrasts reflecting (a) the outgroup versus double-identity ingroup (*intergroup*), (b) the intersectional ingroup versus other ingroups (*intragroup*), and (c) the two single-identity ingroups (*single-identity*) and their two-way interactions. We used a two-level multilevel model with a random intercept for each participant to account for clustering of invisibility experiences within individuals. We used an unstructured covariance matrix, and degrees of freedom were estimated with the Satterthwaite method. To assess clustering, we explored the model's intraclass correlation coefficients (see Supplemental Materials Figure S1). Simple effects were tested using the inferential methods of Aiken and West (1991; West et al., 1996), implemented with the estimated marginal means package (Lenth, 2025).

While this study was preregistered, we deviated from the plan for model convergence issues (for details, see Supplementary Text 3). We started with the maximal model that would converge (Barr et al., 2013) and then trimmed random effects using the parsimonious approach (e.g., Seedorff et al., 2019; Volpert-Esmond et al., 2021). This approach suggested that none of the random slopes explained significant variance. A likelihood ratio test

Table 2. Correlations With Confidence Intervals.

Variable	Quality	Quantity	Invisibility	Group
Quality	1	.27** [.17, .37]	−.47*** [−.55, −.38]	QPoC
Quantity	.27** [.17, .37]	1	−.24** [−.34, −.13]	
Invisibility	−.47** [−.55, −.38]	−.24** [−.34, −.13]	1	
Quality	1	.24** [.14, .34]	−.51*** [−.59, −.43]	POC
Quantity	.24** [.14, .34]	1	−.23** [−.33, −.13]	
Invisibility	−.51** [−.59, −-.43]	−.23** [−.33, −.13]	1	
Quality	1	.31** [.21, .40]	−.48*** [−.56, −.39]	LGBT
Quantity	.31** [.21, .40]	1	−.21** [−.31, −.11]	
Invisibility	−.48** [−.56, −.39]	−.21** [−.31, −.11]	1	
Quality	1	.19** [.09, .29]	−.48** [−.56, −.40]	Outgroup
Quantity	.19** [.09, .29]	1	−.12* [−.22, −.01]	
Invisibility	−.48** [−.56, −.40]	−.12* [−.22, −.01]	1	

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. The confidence interval is a plausible range of population correlations that could have caused the sample correlation.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 3. Multilevel Model Output.

Fixed effects	*b*	SE	*t*	df	*p*	R^2	95% CI
(Intercept)	3.44	0.06	56.11	454	<.001		
Quantity (within-person)	−0.07	0.03	−2.08	324	.04	.003	[0.000, 0.012]
Quality (within-person)	−0.62	0.04	−14.82	296	<.001	.144	[0.112, 0.179]
Intergroup effect	0.59	0.12	5.08	961	<.001	.01	[0.004, 0.029]
Intragroup effect	−0.09	0.1	−0.95	912	.34	0	[0.000, 0.006]
Single-identity effect	0.07	0.08	0.87	905	.384	0	[0.000, 0.005]
Quantity (between-person)	−0.1	0.05	−1.96	344	.051	.008	[0.001, 0.021]
Quality (between-person)	−0.52	0.06	−8.74	332	<.001	.151	[0.118, 0.186]
Quantity × quality (within-person)	−0.06	0.04	−1.5	1016	.135	.002	[0.000, 0.010]
Quantity (within-person) × Intergroup	−0.2	0.12	−1.67	1037	.094	.002	[0.000, 0.010]
Quantity (within-person) × Intragroup	0.15	0.09	1.55	1044	.121	.001	[0.000, 0.009]
Quantity (within-person) × Single-Identity	0.11	0.1	1.14	1117	.254	.001	[0.000, 0.007]
Quality (within-person) × Intergroup	−0.13	0.13	−0.95	883	.341	.001	[0.000, 0.007]
Quality (within-person) × Intragroup	−0.08	0.12	−0.64	1040	.525	0	[0.000, 0.005]
Quality (within-person) × Single-Identity	0.20	0.13	1.56	1114	.118	.002	[0.000, 0.009]
Quantity (between-person) × quality (between-person)	−0.04	0.05	−0.85	331	.397	.002	[0.000, 0.009]
Intergroup × quantity (between-person)	0.26	0.09	2.97	943	.003	.005	[0.000, 0.015]
Intragroup × quantity (between-person)	−0.11	0.07	−1.5	889	.135	.001	[0.000, 0.008]
Single-Identity × Quantity (between-person)	−0.04	0.07	−0.55	907	.58	0	[0.000, 0.005]
Intergroup × Quality (between-person)	0.1	0.1	1.09	972	.276	.001	[0.000, 0.006]
Intragroup × Quality (between-person)	−0.09	0.08	−1.12	840	.265	.001	[0.000, 0.006]
Single-Identity effect × Quality (between-person)	−0.02	0.08	−0.32	886	.753	0	[0.000, 0.004]

Random effects	Variance	SD	Correlation	
Participant (ID)	0.80	0.89		
Quality (within-person)	0.09	0.31	−.06	
Quantity (within-person)	0.06	0.24	−.05	0.04
Residual	0.71	0.84		

Note. Level 1 (N = 1334 observations), Level 2 (N = 338). The coding scheme is as follows: Intergroup: QPoC = −.5, LGBT = 0, POC = 0, Outgroup = .5; Intragroup: QPoC = −2/3, LGBT = 1/3, POC = 1/3, Outgroup = 0; Single-Identity: QPoC = 0, LGBT = .5, POC = −.5, Outgroup = 0.

comparing the maximal model with random slopes for all three-way interactions to the trimmed model without any random slopes indicated that the more complex model (BIC = 4314.1) did not significantly improve fit over the simpler model (BIC = 4274.2), $\chi^2(6) = 3.32$, $p = .77$, suggesting that the relationship between contact and invisibility was consistent across people. We therefore interpreted the trimmed model as our final model for parsimony (Table 3).[2] For the maximal model output, see Supplementary Table S3.

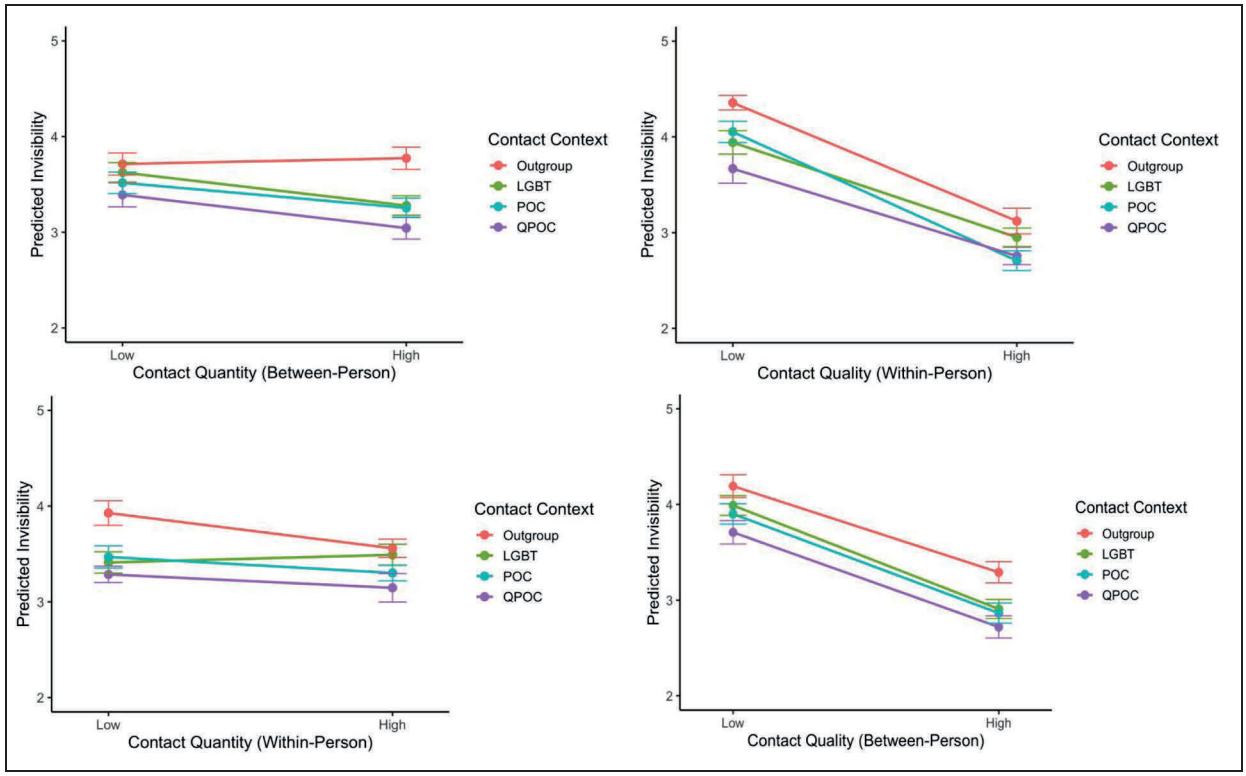

Figure 2. Invisibility predicted from contact quantity (within- and between-person) and contact quality (within- and between-person) as a function of social group.

Note. Lines depict the simple slope of contact predictors (quantity and quality) at "low" (−1 SD) and "high" (+1 SD) levels predicting invisibility within each target-group context, while controlling for the other contact predictors. Within-person effects reflect how contact with a given target group, relative to one's average contact across groups, predicts invisibility from that group. Between-person effects reflect how participants' overall levels of contact across groups predict their general experience of invisibility. Error bars represent standard error.

Contact and Invisibility

Comparing experiences with different target groups within people, there were main effects of both contact quality and contact quantity (within-person) on reported invisibility. Specifically, more frequent contact ($b = -0.07$, $SE = 0.03$, $t(324) = -2.08$, $p = .04$, $R^2 = .003$) and greater quality ($b = -0.62$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(296) = -14.82$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .14$) with a target group, relative to other groups, were both associated with lower experiences of invisibility from that group, although the effect size of quantity (within-person) is effectively zero. There was no interaction between contact quantity and contact quality, $b = -0.06$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(1016) = -1.50$, $p = .135$, $R^2 = .002$.

At the between-person level, participants who, in general, experienced greater quality social contact with people reported lower invisibility, $b = -0.52$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(332) = -8.74$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .151$. However, the between-person effect of contact quantity was not significant: $b = -0.10$, $SE = 0.05$, $t(344) = -.96$, $p = .051$, $R^2 = .008$. There was no interaction between between-person contact quality and between-person contact quantity, $b = -0.04$, $SE = 0.05$, $t(1037) = -0.85$, $p = .397$, $R^2 = .002$. Overall, the model explained 32% of the variance in invisibility through fixed effects (marginal $R^2 = .32$) and 71% when including random effects (conditional $R^2 = .71$), indicating substantial systematic individual differences (Table 3, Figure 2).

Exploring the Relationship Between Contact Quality and Contact Quantity

We did not observe a significant interaction between contact quantity and quality at either the within-person or between-person level. However, following our preregistration, we probed the relationship between contact quantity and quality using the Aiken and West (1991) simple-slopes approach. Given that both within-person main effects were significant and the main effect of between-person contact quality was significant, we only tested whether the effect of between-person contact quantity was significant at high and low levels of between-person contact quality (see Tybout et al., 2001). Contrary to our hypothesis, we did not find an effect of contact quantity at high quality. As shown in Figure 3, when contact quality (between-person)

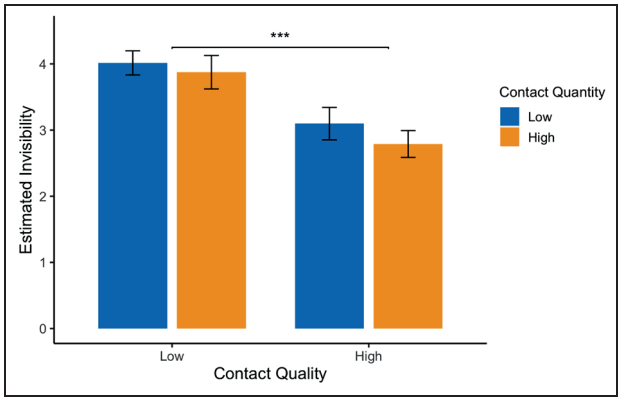

Figure 3. Estimated marginal means of invisibility as a function of low and high contact quantity and quality.
Note. Bars represent estimated marginal means of invisibility at four combinations of "low" (−1 SD) and "high"(+1 SD) between-person contact quantity and contact quality, while controlling for within-person contact quantity and quality. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.
***$p < .001$.

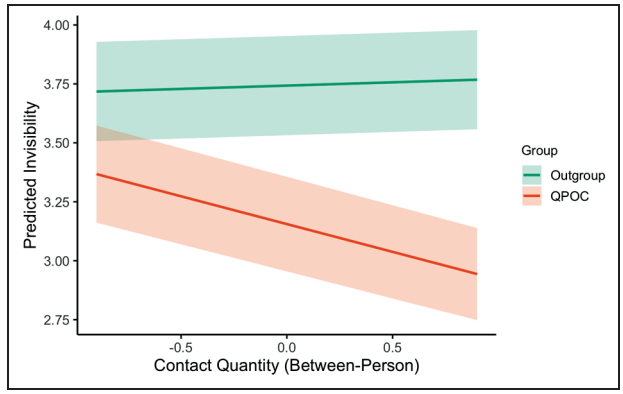

Figure 4. Interaction between contact quantity (between-person) and target-group context.
Note. Lines depict the interaction between contact quantity (between-person) and target-group context predicting invisibility, comparing intragroup contact with the double-identity ingroup (i.e., QPoC) versus intergroup contact with the outgroup (i.e., straight, White people). Shaded bands represent 95% confidence intervals.

was low, contact quantity (between-person) had no effect on invisibility, $b = -0.07$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(337) = -0.99$, $p = .323$. Even when contact quality was high, the simple slope of quantity was also nonsignificant, $b = -0.14$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(339) = -1.93$, $p = .054$.

How Does the Relationship Between Contact and Invisibility Vary by Target Social Group?

We tested whether including the specific group context would improve the overall fit of the model. To do this, we compared a main effects model that excluded all target-group main effects (AIC = 4153.3, BIC = 4319.5) to the full model used in the main analysis (AIC = 4132.2, BIC = 4314.1). A chi-square comparison test revealed that including group context significantly improved model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 27.08$, $p < .001$.

To identify the patterns that emerged within specific group contexts, we turn back to the omnibus model (Table 3) to examine the contrasts and their interactions. There was a main effect of the intergroup contrast (*intergroup effect*), reflecting that participants reported significantly higher invisibility in intergroup contexts compared to interactions with fellow QPoC, $b = 0.59$, $SE = 0.12$, $t(961) = 5.08$, $p < .001$. No such differences were observed when comparing interactions between QPoC and single-identity ingroups (*intragroup effect;* $b = -0.09$, $SE = 0.10$, $t(912) = -0.95$, $p = .343$) or when comparing between single-identity ingroups (*single-identity effect;* $b = 0.07$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(905) = 0.87$, $p = .385$).

As shown in Figure 4, we observed a significant interaction between the intergroup contrast and between-person contact quantity, $b = 0.26$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(943) = 2.97$, $p = .003$, $R^2 = .005$. Participants who reported having more contact with people overall, relative to those with fewer social interactions, tended to experience less invisibility during intragroup contexts (i.e., interactions with other QPoC) than during intergroup contexts. There was no difference in the relationships between contact quantity (between-person) and invisibility for QPoC interacting with other QPoC (double-identity ingroup) compared to queer people or racial/ethnic ingroup (single-identity ingroups), $b = -0.11$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(889) = -1.50$, $p = .135$, $R^2 = .001$.

Discussion

In response to growing evidence of intersectional invisibility among people with multiple stigmatized identities (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Remedios & Snyder, 2018; Sesko & Biernat, 2025), this study presents the first empirical evidence of the relationship between contact and invisibility. As expected, we found that contact quality consistently predicted lower experiences of invisibility, irrespective of whether that contact was with an outgroup, single-identity, or double-identity ingroup. In contrast, contact quantity was related to invisibility in certain target-group contexts: people who interacted more frequently with a certain group reported less invisibility toward that group, especially with ingroups. However, people who were generally more socially active did not report less invisibility overall. This pattern diverges from prior evidence linking both contact quantity and quality to related constructs such as loneliness (Ward & Masgoret, 2004; Yu et al., 2023), suggesting that the relationship between contact and invisibility may represent a distinct psychological process.

Contact quality had a stronger effect on invisibility than quantity. We did not find a significant interaction between

contact quantity and quality (Figure 3). This echoes Sesko and Biernat's (2025) prediction that "lower quality" interactions would be related to greater invisibility and is consistent with prior work suggesting that the quality of contact is a stronger predictor of intergroup outcomes than quantity (e.g., Barlow et al., 2012; Bruneau et al., 2021).

Still, our work suggests that these intragroup experiences, within and across stigmatized groups, must still be of high quality to correspond to lower invisibility. Critically, for people with multiple stigmatized identities, having many interactions, even with other minority groups, may not be beneficial if those interactions are not positive. An implication of this work could be that creating diverse spaces alone is incomplete without actively incorporating meaningful, positive interactions (Carey et al., 2022).

Across targets, invisibility was lower in intragroup contexts and more strongly associated with contact than in intergroup contexts, suggesting that invisibility is more pronounced in outgroup interactions for QPoC. Consistent with this, greater overall contact in daily life predicted lower invisibility with double-identity ingroups but not with outgroups (Figure 4). This pattern aligns with affordance-management theory, which proposes that visibility depends on perceived goal relevance (Neel & Lassetter, 2019). In line with this account, work by Le Forestier and colleagues (2026) finds that people tend to appraise ingroups as higher in goal-relevant opportunities than outgroups, which may increase expectations of support and affiliation in intragroup contexts. For stigmatized groups, outgroup interactions may also be settings in which invisibility is more likely, given anticipated prejudice and discrimination (Tropp & Bianchi, 2006). Nevertheless, intragroup interactions (even with other QPoC) are unlikely to be uniformly affirming. The affordances of these interactions likely depend on interaction-partner characteristics and within-group status (e.g., social capital) and may be stronger when interactional fluency, including shared cultural and generational context, increases felt understanding (see Hsueh et al., 2026).

Interestingly, we found that contact with one's single-identity ingroups was not necessarily less fulfilling than contact with a double-identity ingroup. Said differently, whether a QPoC interacted with a racial ingroup or queer person, they reported similar experiences of invisibility as when interacting with other QPoC. One potential explanation is that interacting with an ingroup member, regardless of level of similarity, may be enough to activate a common ingroup identity (Yu et al., 2023). Another explanation is that QPoC in our sample may have relatively high social identity complexity (Roccas & Brewer, 2002) such that they define ingroups more broadly or more flexibly. For them, sharing either a racial or sexual minority identity may be sufficient to activate a sense of belonging and reduce invisibility.

It is important to note that QPoC experiences remain highly heterogeneous and likely depend on various within-group differences such as gender, age, and socioeconomic status. To illustrate this, we consider gender differences. In line with past intersectionality theorizing, which has emphasized the role of gender in shaping invisibility (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008), we conducted exploratory analyses examining whether invisibility differed by participants' gender (woman, man, gender-diverse[3]). Interestingly, while there were no differences between men and women, gender-diverse participants reported greater invisibility than both groups. We interpret this cautiously given the smaller gender-diverse subsample, but this pattern is plausible given that gender-diverse people often face distinct barriers to recognition and belonging (Hennekam & Dumazert, 2023), which may heighten invisibility (see Supplementary Text 4).

A potential future direction of this work is to explore *why* contact is related to invisibility. One potential explanation is that positive social networks with ingroup members, or other minority groups, may elicit a common ingroup identity, thereby reducing invisibility (Yu et al., 2023). Contact with ingroup members may also offer opportunities for social support or activate a sense of belonging or companionship (C. Stevenson & Sagherian-Dickey, 2016; Thoits, 2011) and thus reduce experiences of invisibility.

Limitations and Future Directions

We examined how contact can counteract negative experiences of invisibility, but our cross-sectional design could not test these causal assumptions. Longitudinal and experimental evidence is needed to more strongly establish the relationships between our variables and examine whether and how contact with other stigmatized groups relates to invisibility.

We sacrificed some measurement quality for feasibility reasons with our repeated-measures design. Contact quantity was measured using two items, one of which refers to how many people someone knows from each social group on a 0–10 scale. It is likely that most people have an abundance of interactions with people from different social groups beyond what can be captured by a 0–10 item. Future work should incorporate more sensitive measurements. In addition, we asked participants about their general feelings of invisibility to different groups, but invisibility likely varies across situational contexts. For example, outgroup contact and invisibility may differ in dating, workplace, or religious settings and depending on whether one is alone, with ingroup others, or among strangers. Although our focus was on generalized perceptions of invisibility across varying target groups, future work should consider how specific momentary interactions or settings (e.g., with experience sampling methods) shape the contact–invisibility relationship.

While we did find a relationship between contact quality and invisibility, our operationalization of contact quality certainly does not capture all dimensions of what "high-

quality" interactions could mean. Instead, contact quality or "valence" primarily indicated positivity, friendliness, and equality, rather than being heard, validated, or recognized. Future work should examine how those deeper processes shape invisibility. Moreover, the construct itself may need refinement for stigmatized populations, as it has been largely validated with majority-group samples (cf. Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Finally, participants were screened for LGBTQ + identity but did not report their specific sexual orientation. This raises a small risk of misidentification, though all participants identified as LGBTQ + on Prolific.

Conclusion

Taken together, our findings highlight how frequent, positive contact for individuals with multiple marginalized identities can buffer against experiencing invisibility. Queer people of color who reported better contact experiences with other QPoC felt the most seen and visible to other QPoC, and this relationship was stronger than for contact with outgroup members. This study contributes to a growing body of research that centers the lived experiences of multiply stigmatized people and moves beyond a focus on dominant group perceptions. It also expands the scope of intergroup contact theory by reframing contact not simply as a prejudice-reduction tool but as a predictor of invisibility for QPoC. When contact occurs within and among marginalized communities, it has the potential to enhance multiply stigmatized people's experiences of feeling seen and recognized. Future research should build on these findings by examining whether and how this phenomenon may generalize to other stigmatized groups.

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Supplemental Material

The supplemental material is available in the online version of the article.

Notes

1. Although we are aware that "queer" is commonly used as an umbrella term to represent both sexual and gender minorities, our analytic focus in this article is on the intersection of race and sexuality. Accordingly, our sampling and analyses center people who primarily identified as sexual minorities. Please also note that while we did not screen for gender minorities, many participants in our sample also identified as a gender minority (see Table 1).
2. While both model outputs are very similar, they differ in that contact quantity (between-person) is only marginally significant in the trimmed model ($p = .051$), whereas it was significant in the maximal model ($p = .043$). We believe that this is only a minor difference that does not change the interpretation of our data.
3. We coded "gender-diverse" as all gender identities other than "Woman" and "Man" (see Table 1).

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