

# Humanities Center Brown Bag Colloquium Series 2021-2022

## Why Peer Relationships Matter for Adolescent Health

During adolescence, peer relationships take on heightened developmental significance. Whereas feeling accepted and supported by peers promotes adolescents' psychological and physical well-being, being the target of peer aggression or rejection can take a considerable toll on adolescent health. In this talk, I will discuss my findings from two recent studies that seek to understand why and under what conditions experiences of peer stress interfere with adolescent mental and physical health. The first study investigates associations between daily peer stressors and health symptoms among youth with asthma and considers sleep as an underlying mechanism. The findings demonstrate that youth experiencing greater daily peer problems (e.g., exclusion; conflict) report more severe daytime and nighttime asthma symptoms, and such associations are partially explained by elevated sleep disturbances. The second study examines variations in peer victimization and mental health symptoms as a function of adolescents' changing schooling formats (i.e., in-person vs. online) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings from longitudinal data collected from ninth graders during the 2020-2021 academic year suggest that online schooling environments provide some protection against peer victimization and its emotional consequences. Together, these findings underscore the relevance of peer relationships for understanding adolescent health and provide insights into developmentally sensitive intervention approaches.



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**Hannah Schacter** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Wayne State University and Affiliate Faculty of the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute for Child & Family Development. She received her Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles and completed a National Science Foundation postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Southern California. Her research broadly examines adolescent peer relationships and health, with a specific emphasis on understanding how youth adjust when faced with interpersonal stressors, such as bullying or discrimination.

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Wednesday, November 10, 2021

12:30PM—1:30PM

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