

# Oral Defense Announcement

## University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology with an emphasis in Clinical-Community Psychology

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M.A., Psychological Sciences, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2021  
M.P.H., Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Boston University, 2019  
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### **Optimistic Biases on E-Cigarette Cessation: Examining Competing Theoretical Models for Young Adults with and without Chronic Health Conditions**

Date: August 29, 2024

Time: 1:00PM CT to 3:00PM CT

Place: Remote

#### **Abstract**

The dramatic increase in youth nicotine initiation is an ongoing public health concern and heightens risk for morbidity and mortality, especially among young adults with chronic health conditions. Consequently, there is an urgent need for research exploring potential psychological mechanisms for continued e-cigarette use to aid in the development of targeted cessation interventions and combat the re-emerging nicotine epidemic. Utilizing the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health (PATH) Study, the present study modeled the impact of optimistic biases for e-cigarette use on e-cigarette cessation interest among young adults with and without chronic health conditions (n=1,827). Results showed that, regardless of chronic health status, optimistic biases for coping benefits led to decreased e-cigarette cessation interest through reduced risk perceptions and reduced worry for harms of e-cigarettes (i.e., reduced risk responses). Additionally, consistent with stated hypotheses, the impact of optimistic biases on coping benefits in the model for young adults with chronic health conditions was nearly twice as strong, suggesting that perceived harms of e-cigarette use may be outweighed by perceived coping benefits for young adults with greater health stressors. In light of these findings, research examining whether stepped care approaches providing psychoeducation and cognitive-behavioral therapy addressing alternate coping strategies are worthwhile targets for combatting continued e-cigarette use, particularly among young adults with chronic health conditions. Further, to produce greater public health impact, state and federal policies are needed to prevent e-cigarette initiation for adolescents and young adults before nicotine dependence develops.

#### **Defense of Dissertation Committee**

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