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## Rural Identity, Self-Reliance, Stoicism and Attitudes Toward Mental Health Help-Seeking Among Iowans

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# Rural Identity, Self-Reliance, Stoicism, and Attitudes Toward Mental Health Help-Seeking Among Iowans

Taylor Brown, *University of Northern Iowa*

## INTRODUCTION

- In the United States, 21% of adults have a mental illness. Prevalence of mental illness tends to be highest among young adults (18-25 years old) and lowest among older adults (50 years or older; National Institute of Mental Health, 2020).
- Rural communities represent 19% of the United States population (Oser et al., 2022). Research has shown that rates of mental illness are the same in rural areas as in urban areas (Morales et al., 2020) and that suicide rates are significantly higher within rural communities (Brunk, 2010). Despite this, there is a significant lack of help-seeking among rural residents (Morales et al., 2020).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Continuity Theory

- Continuity Theory suggests that people develop images of themselves over the course of their lifetime as a result of their experiences (Atchley, 1989). When making decisions, people refer to these previously established self-images, and make choices that align with these images.
- Due to the lack of available services in rural communities, rural residents may be more likely to develop self-reliant and stoic self-images. This may influence them to seek help less often as help-seeking would be incongruent with their self-reliant self-image.

### Mental Health Help-Seeking

#### Predictors

- Knowing someone close who has sought help increases the likelihood that a person will seek help (Disabato et al., 2018).
- In addition, previous help-seeking behavior also increases the likelihood of seeking help in the future, as this often causes a person to hold more positive attitudes toward help-seeking (Reynders et al., 2014).
- Women tend to report lower levels of stigma and stoicism and more positive attitudes toward mental health services (Schroeder et al., 2021)

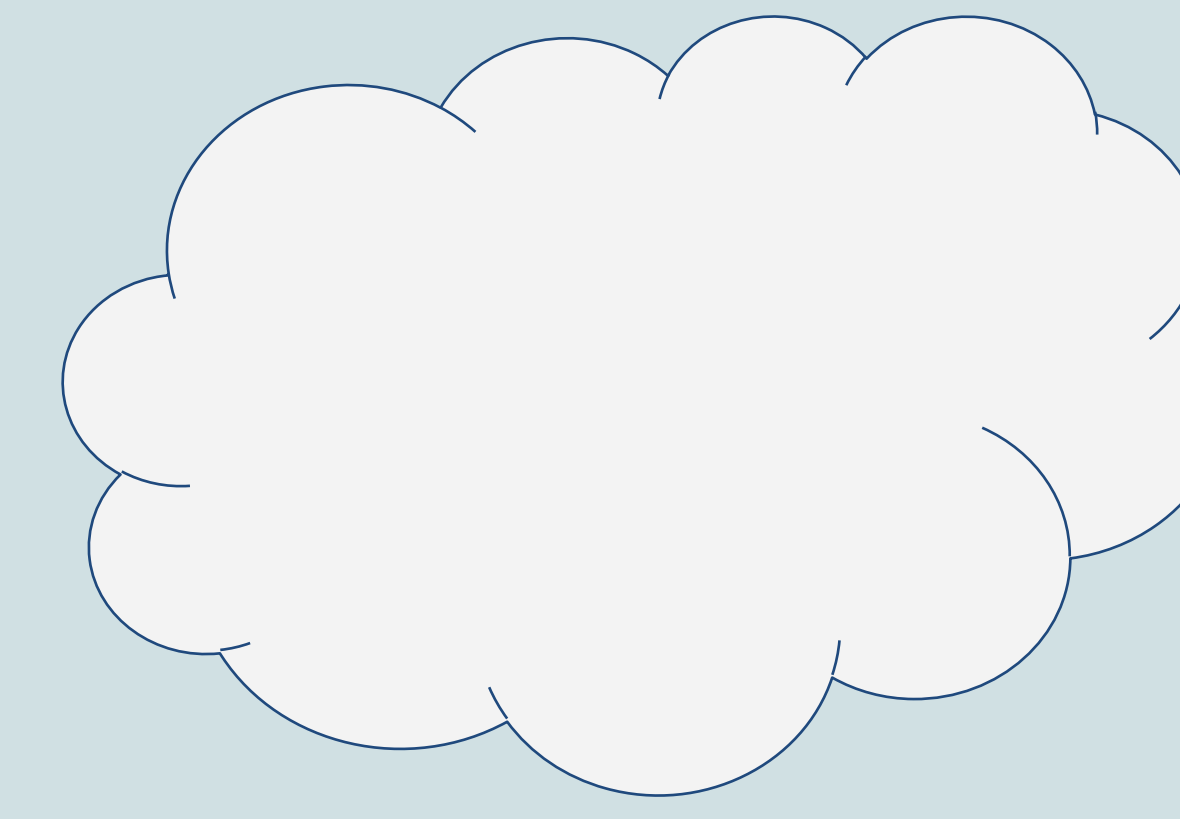
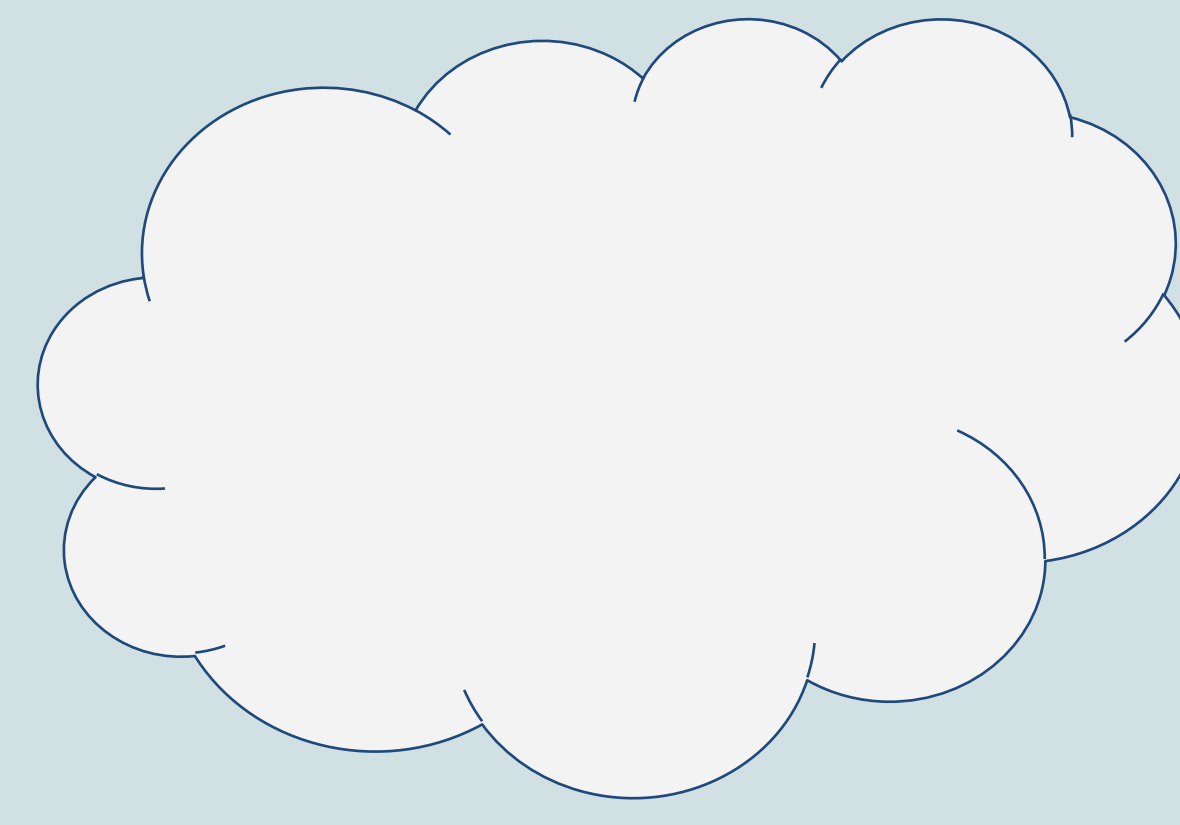
#### Barriers

##### Structural

- One barrier to seeking help is the lack of available services to provide help. This includes services being too expensive, required services being unavailable, and inconvenient clinic hours (Fox et al., 2001; Girio-Herrera et al., 2013).
- Another barrier to seeking help for a psychological concern is a lack of knowledge about mental illnesses themselves, and the available services for mental illnesses (Crowe et al., 2019; Girio-Herrera et al., 2013; Salaheddin & Mason, 2016; Stewart et al., 2015).

##### Attitudinal

- Stigma (Schroeder et al., 2021; Stewart et al., 2015)
- A personal value of self-reliance has been associated with decreased help-seeking (Calloway et al., 2021; Fuller et al., 2000).
- Greater stoicism has been linked to negative attitudes toward help-seeking (Murray et al., 2008).



# How does rural identity relate to attitudes toward psychological help-seeking?

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## PLANNED MASTER'S THESIS

### Participants:

- Iowa residents will be invited to complete a survey via a QR code, paper-and-pencil survey, or iPad with survey.
- They will be recruited in-person at local events such as county fairs, festivals, and town celebrations.
- People will also be invited to participate through social media (e.g., Facebook).

### Measures:

- **Attitudes Toward Psychological Help-Seeking**
  - Attitudes Toward Professional Psychological Help-Seeking Scale Short-Form (ATPPHSS-S; Fischer and Farina, 1995)
  - e.g., “Talking about problems with a psychologist seems to me as a poor way to get rid of emotional problems” on a 4-point Likert scale
  - Higher scores indicate more positive help-seeking attitudes.
- **Stoicism**
  - Pathak-Wieten Stoicism Ideology Scale (Pathak et al., 2017)
  - e.g., “I expect myself to hide my strong emotions from others” on a 5-point Likert scale
  - Higher scores indicate greater stoicism.
- **Self-Reliance**
  - Conformity to Masculinity Norms Inventory Self-Reliance Subscale (Mahalik et al., 2003) e.g., “It bothers me when I have to ask for help” on a 4-point Likert scale. Higher scores on this measure indicate greater self-reliance.
- **Rural Identity**
  - Rural Identity Scale (RIS; Oser et al., 2022)
  - e.g., “I feel a sense of belonging with people who live in my county” on a 4-point Likert scale
  - Higher scores indicate greater rural identity.
- **Demographics:**
  - Questions regarding gender, age, race/ethnicity, education level,
  - Questions about where the participant currently lives (rural vs. urban) and where they lived in childhood (Iowa vs. other state/country; rural vs. urban)
  - Question about previous psychological help-seeking behavior

### Hypotheses:

**H1:** It is hypothesized that having greater rural identity will be associated with higher stoicism.

- A correlation will be used to test this hypothesis.

**H2:** It is hypothesized that having greater rural identity will be associated with greater self-reliance.

- A correlation will be used to test this hypothesis.

**H3:** It is hypothesized that having greater rural identity will be associated with more negative attitudes toward psychological help-seeking.

- A correlation will be used to test this hypothesis.

**H4:** It is hypothesized that rural identity will not account for help-seeking attitudes beyond those accounted for by stoicism and self-reliance.

- To test this hypothesis, a stepwise multiple regression will be used.