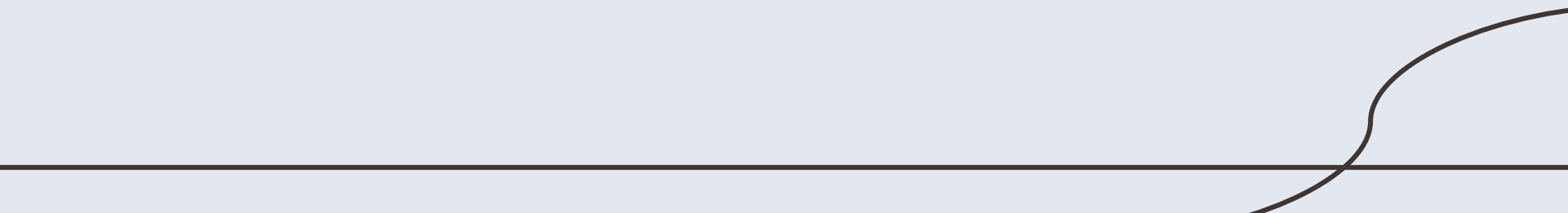




# The Psychology of Rural Health

By Sarah Stringer, DMSc, PA-C, CAQ-Psych



# About me...



## Assistant Professor

TTUHSC Physician  
Assistant Program;  
3 years



## Physician Assistant

Psychiatry and  
Addiction Medicine;  
10 years of clinical  
experience



## West Texas

Originally from  
Midland, Undergrad  
@ TTU  
PA @ TTUHSC

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# Why do some people pursue rural areas while others don't?

**01** What does the literature say?

**02** Practical implications for admission process?

**03** Outcomes at our PA program

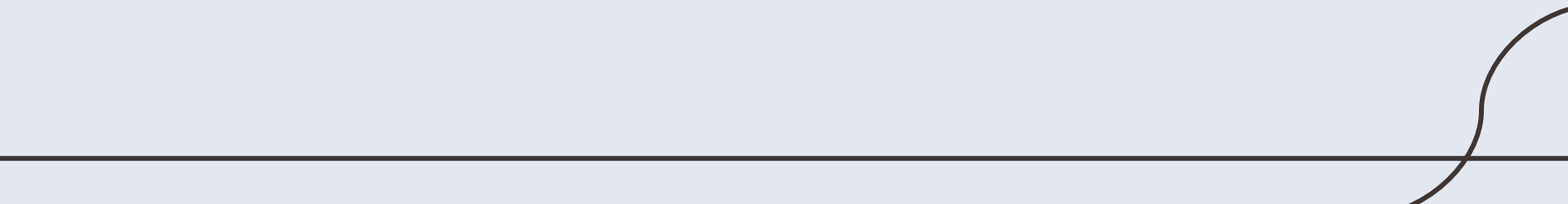
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01

# What does the literature say?

There are three primary drivers<sup>1</sup>...



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# Primary driver #1




## Rural Familiarity

"home"

Enjoyment of rural lifestyle  
From rural backgrounds

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# Primary driver #2



## Social Connection and Place Integration

- Opportunities to meet people and develop relationships
- Moved with family (spouse and/or children)
- Physical attractiveness of location



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# Primary driver #3



## Fulfillment of Life Aspirations

Personal and professional identities of rural health practitioners were inseparable  
Long term satisfaction with their identities in a rural area

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# The Missing Link...

Emotional Intelligence?<sup>2,3,4</sup>

## Emotional Intelligence Domains and Competencies

Self-awareness	Self-management	Social awareness	Relationship management
Emotional self-awareness	Emotional self-control	Empathy	Influence
	Adaptability		Coach and mentor
	Achievement orientation	Organizational awareness	Conflict management
	Positive outlook		Teamwork
			Inspirational leadership





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02

**Emotional Intelligence  
in Admissions Crash  
Course**



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# Red Flags



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# Perfectionism

## Signs<sup>5</sup>

- Highly critical
- Unrealistic standards
- Fearful
- Fear of failure
- Defensiveness
- Low self esteem

## Why?<sup>6</sup>

- A little perfectionism is OK □ organizational ability
  - High perfectionism is problematic □ hard to work with/dysfunctional: picky, critical, stubborn
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# “The loner”

## Signs<sup>5</sup>

- Detachment
- Overly independent
- Distrusting
- Over-reactive to difficult situations
- Prefer to work alone
- Defensiveness

## Why?<sup>5</sup>

- Moody
  - Critical
  - Over-sensitive to criticism
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# “The aggressor”



## Signs<sup>6</sup>

- Overly self-confident
- Risk-taking
- Very expressive
- Creativity
- Assertive
- Unafraid of failure or rejection
- “the perfect interview”

## Why?<sup>6</sup>

- Impulsive
- High levels of aggression
- Competitive
- Intimidation
- Self-promoting
- Stimulation-seeking



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# “Irresponsible Behavior”



## Signs<sup>6</sup>

- Late on submission of any documents or component of interview
- Immaturity in interview
- Associated with inability to “go deep” and argumentativeness

## Why?<sup>6</sup>

- Associated with board violations later in career: crime convictions, drug/alcohol charges, negligence, fraud, inappropriate prescribing of controlled substances, etc.
-

# “Externalizing Blame”



## Signs

- Can't take responsibility for their mistakes/failures
- Vague and shallow expressions of emotion
- Can't identify examples of their mistakes/failures/areas for self improvement or only very shallow or canned ones
- EX: “The professor wrote poor exams.”

## Why?⁸

- Highly correlated with unprofessional, aggressive and predatory behaviors



# Indicators of High EQ





### **5 Domains of EQ<sup>9</sup>**

internal motivation, pursuing important goals while delaying gratifications  
mood regulation, controlling negative emotions  
empathy, picking up on how others are feeling  
self-awareness, having personal insight into one's own feelings  
interpersonal skills, interacting well with others.

### **Why?<sup>11</sup>**

Improved organization culture  
Acceptance of change  
More respectful and caring service of people  
Better leadership abilities  
Negatively correlated with predatory and self aggrandizing behavior<sup>7</sup>  
CORRELATED WITH SUCCESS IN MEDICAL SCHOOL<sup>8</sup>

# “Organizational Citizenship Behavior”

## Signs<sup>9</sup>

- “I am often helping others with problems.”
- “I come to work early if needed.”
- “I seldom complain about things.”
- “I typically attend voluntary meetings.”
- “I often find myself assessing what is best for the hospital.”
- Leadership, interest in teams, volunteerism

## Why?<sup>9</sup>

- Highly correlated with EQ

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# 03 Our Programmatic Impact

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**“During didactic, we are just interacting with textbooks and PowerPoints, but one of the reasons we come into healthcare is to help people. It can be easy to lose sight of that and when you spend so much time in the classroom. Continuing to interact with the community through service has really helped me remember why I am here and inspires me to make an impact locally.”**

**Ashley Loy, PA-S**



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