



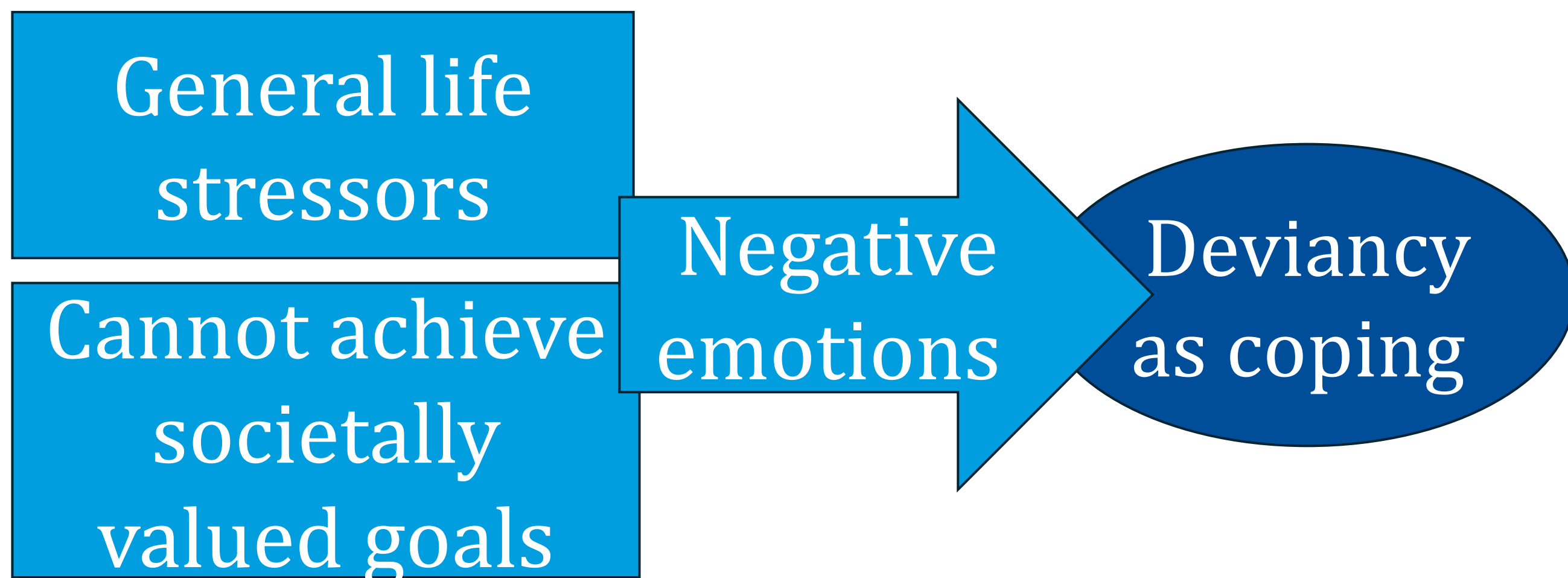
The Role of Adolescent Life Stressors in Rule-Violating Behaviors



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INTRODUCTION

Life stress is a predictor of rule-violating behavior (RVB).^{1,4}



- Stress should be separated by internal and external factors.
- Adolescent impulsivity predicts higher delinquency in poorer neighborhoods³; there may be a similar interaction with life stress.

HYPOTHESES

- External life stress will predict assault.
- Internal life stress will predict theft.
- Impulsivity will strengthen the effect of life stress on RVB.

METHODS

Participants:

- 938 students; Ages 12-19 years old
- Male: 390 Female: 548

Measures:

- Life stress, Impulsivity, RVB

Procedures:

- Data was gathered from 3 waves of the New Hampshire Youth Study²
- Adolescents completed surveys for the three measures

RESULTS

Factor Analysis

Two factors emerged across 28 items from factor analysis of the X item life stress scale: Internal life stress e.g. “Did you parents divorce or separate?” and External life stress e.g. “Did you get scared or feel really bad because kids were calling you names...”

Table 1
Regression Analysis Predicting 3 Kinds of RVB by Impulsivity and External and Internal Life Stress

Predictors	Rule-Violating Behavior			
	RVB	Assault	Substance	Stealing
Internal Stress	.338***	.303***	.155 ^t	.292***
External Stress	.283***	.370***	.157 ^t	.181*
Impulsivity	.245***	.150**	.172***	.247***

Note. $p < 0.05^*$, $p < 0.01^{**}$, and $p < 0.001^{***}$ $t = .052$

DISCUSSION

Life stress predicts RVB; impulsivity does not strengthen the effect.

External life stress most predicts assault while internal life stress predicts general RVB Findings support background literature on strain^{1,4}

Limitations

- Sample data only from southern New Hampshire.
- Individual and community differences exist beyond controls; study is limited to survey data.

Implications

- Highlights need for positive coping interventions for adolescents experiencing life stress
- Deviancy considered as it relates to adversity rather than actions alone

Future Directions

- Follow adolescent cohort into adulthood to further understand the relationship

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