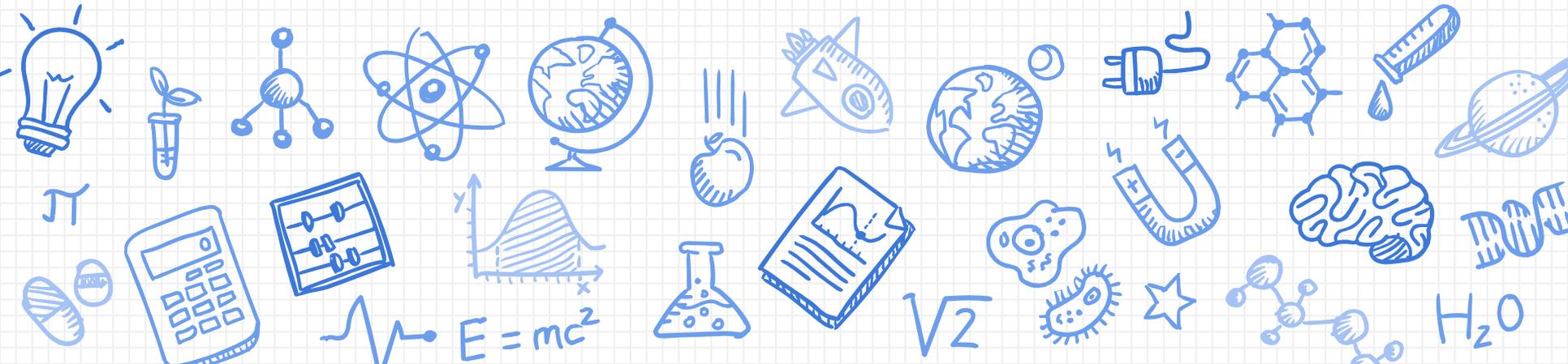


# LIMINALITY and TRANSITION in TRAUMA

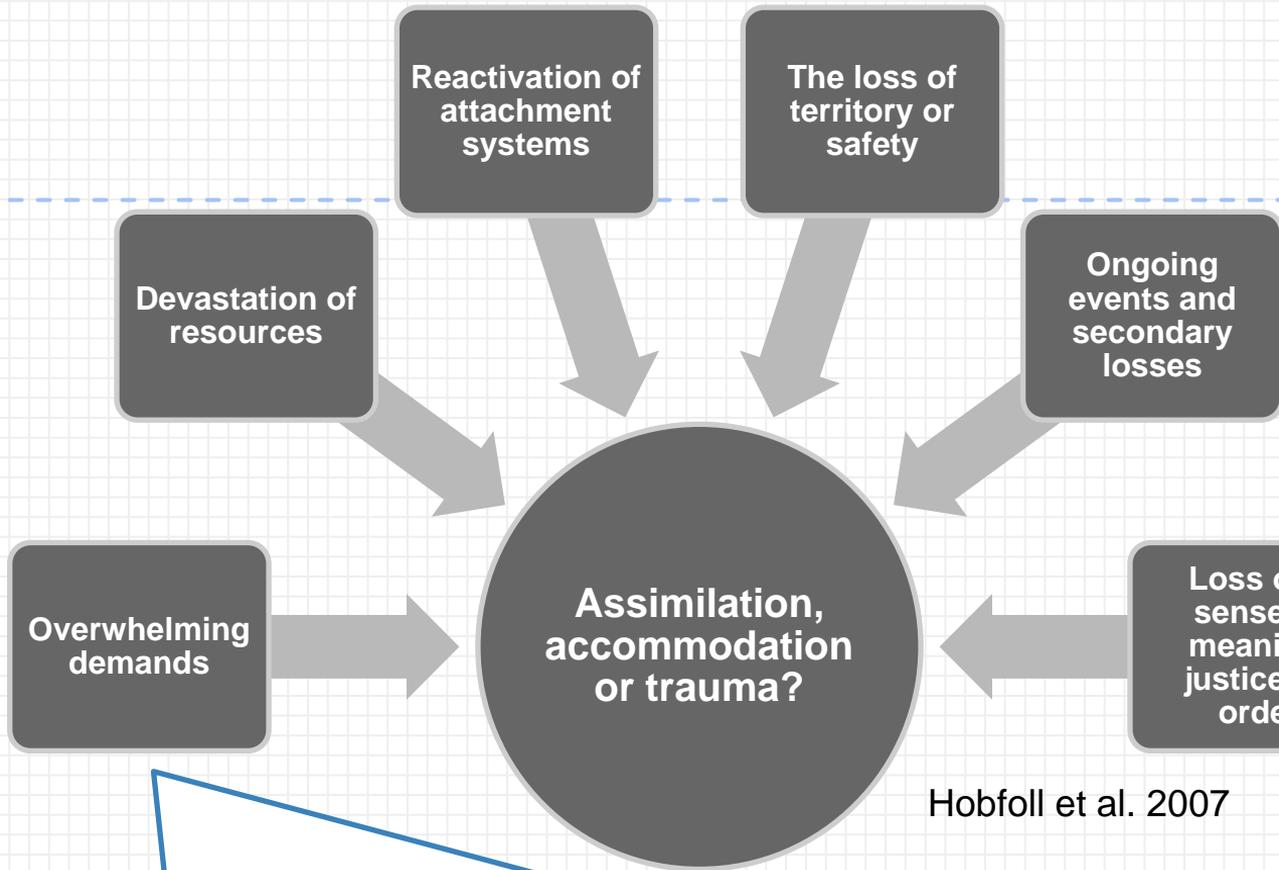


## Initiation through traumatization

The typical abduction [by the LRA] is extremely brutal. Intimidation and beatings are followed by being forced to carry loads long distances. A process of initiation through traumatization then takes place, in which the children will be ordered to torture and kill fellow abductees. A standard method is to put victims in the middle of a circle and have the rest beat them to death. Then there is 'registration', in which each receives fifty or more lashes. This will be followed by months of hard labour, regular beatings, food deprivation, and summary execution for disobeying orders or attempting to escape.

*Vinci, 2005*

Normal reaction to an abnormal situation?

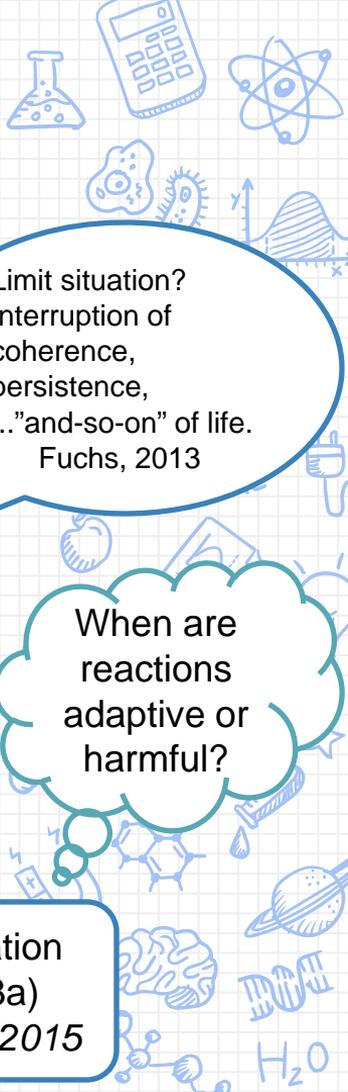


Limit situation?  
 Interruption of coherence, persistence, ... "and-so-on" of life.  
 Fuchs, 2013

When are reactions adaptive or harmful?

Hobfoll et al. 2007

Sensorimotor loop activation: Fight, flight, freeze (alert, fright, collapse). Then (1) integration into or (2) revision of existing schemas. In case of collapse of knowing how structure (3a) recovery or (3b) damage to perception of world and encoding problems (PTSD). Ataria, 2015



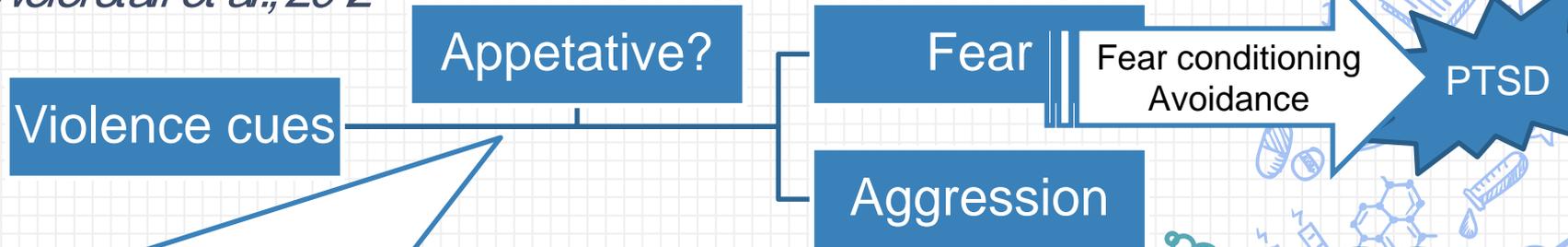


## Appetative Aggression

- ✗ Instrumental aggression  $\neq$  reactive aggression
- ✗ Severe forms can be adaptive in violent environments
- ✗ Altered perception of violence cues during armed conflicts in combatants

“The excitement was just fantastic, the exhilaration after all the years of training, the tremendous feeling of lift, of excitement, of exhilaration, it was like the first time you go deer hunting.”  
*Holmes R (1985)*

*Weierstall et al., 2012*



Is it exciting for you if you make an opponent really suffer?  
Is defeating the opponent more fun for you, when you see them bleed?  
Once you got used to being cruel, did you want to be crueller and crueller?

Addressing this human capacity?



## Return/Reintegration

- ✗ PTSS often occur after the return from the front line
- ✗ Moderated by others' reactions
- ✗ Discomfort and expectations of social condemnation, censure, and rejection - *Higgins, 1987*
- ✗ Guilt and social rejection lead to reevaluation of violent acts, violence cues: hunt- to fear-network

*Weierstall et al., 2012*

Thought bubble: Guilt and shame as (re)adaptive?

Thought bubble: Transitions as 'traumatizing'?

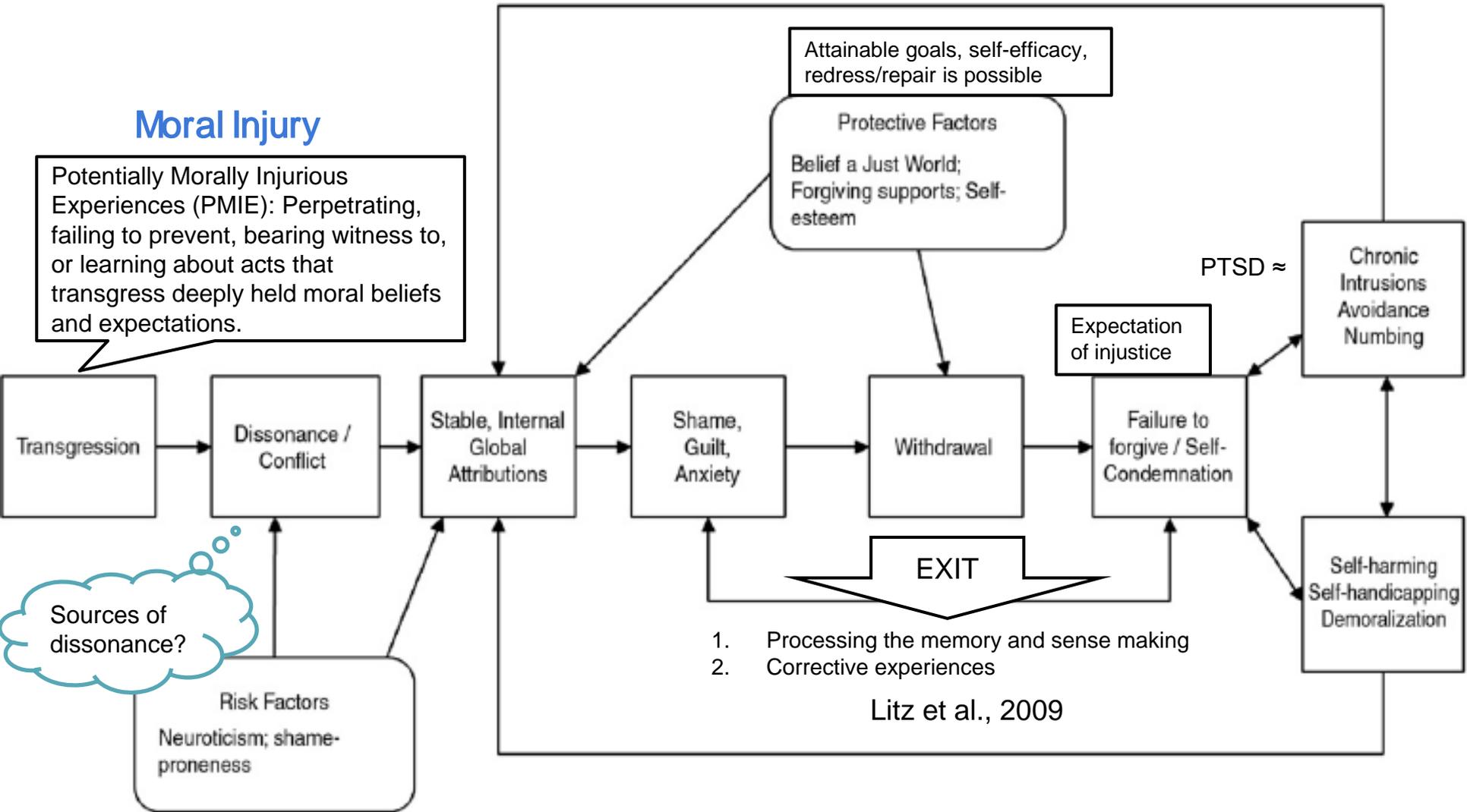
Speech bubble: "What we were doing was killing and stealing ... they were all along beating me with a bayonet and a stick ... If you are on your own you do not do those things, but because you are forced you do it, ... You cannot do it on your own."

*Kryger & Lindgren, 2011*

Speech bubble: "Returning from the initiatory space of the battlefield to the normal world is every bit as mysterious a journey as entering the Temple of Mars. The world you left behind has changed and you have changed. You know parts of yourself that you, ... never knew before. You've been evil, and you've been good, and you've been beyond evil and good. You've split your mind from your heart, and you've split your heart with grief and your mind with fear." *Marlantes, 2011*

# Moral Injury

Potentially Morally Injurious Experiences (PMIE): Perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.



Attainable goals, self-efficacy, redress/repair is possible

Protective Factors  
Belief a Just World;  
Forgiving supports; Self-esteem

Expectation of injustice

PTSD ≈

Chronic Intrusions  
Avoidance  
Numbing

Self-harming  
Self-handicapping  
Demoralization

EXIT

- 1. Processing the memory and sense making
- 2. Corrective experiences

Litz et al., 2009

# Narrative Foreclosure/Re-Narrating

✘ The premature conviction that one's life story has effectively ended – there is no more to tell (**past**), there is no more than can be told (**future**).

Culturally or socially available narratives?

Sense of foreshortened future

"The story of my life contains many regrets."

Despair, brooding rumination

Depression

Life on hold...

"The story of my life is finished."

Stability

"I expect that new chapters will be added to my life story."

Hope

Openness

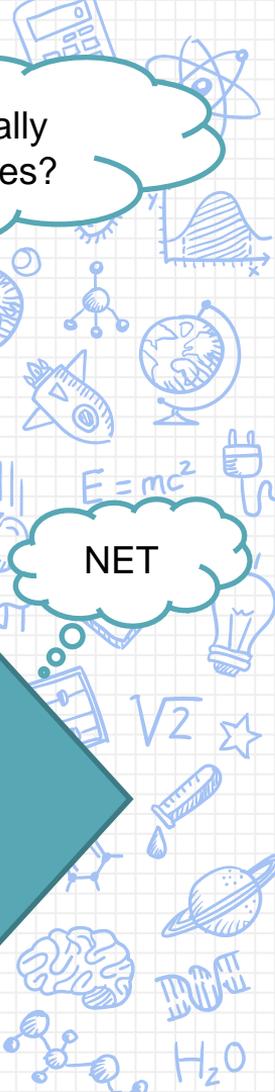
Age

Realm of possibility

Sense of safety  
Re-narrating  
Re-engagement  
*Herman, 1992*

Growth motivation

NET



How do you separate the  
(individual/collective)  
trauma/dysfunction/disorder  
from contextual adaptation to  
adverse circumstances?

Peri- and post-  
traumatic  
Dissociation

Loss of  
interpersonal  
trust in Torture  
survivors

Efficacy of  
Unaccompanied  
minors

Ambiguous loss  
in Families of  
the Missing

Reintegration and  
justice for Children  
affected by armed  
conflict

...and what do you  
do about it?

Thank you for your attention