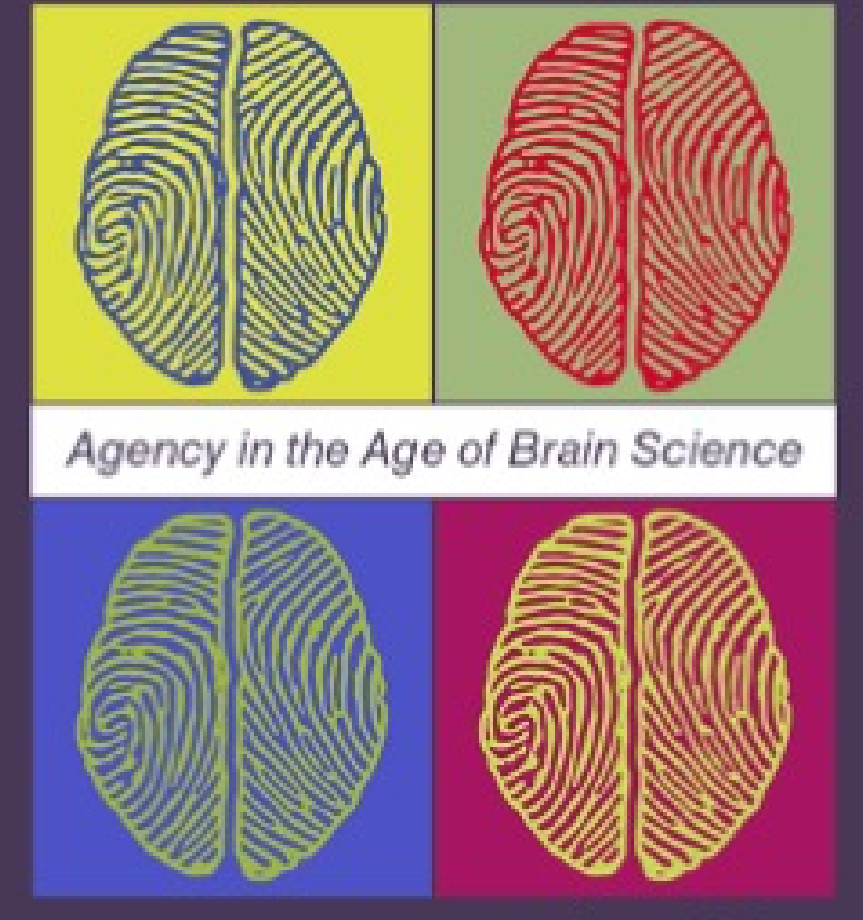




# More Alike than Unalike: Neurodiversity with Nuance

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Neuroethics



Agency in the Age of Brain Science

Joshua May

## Background

The **neurodiversity paradigm** maintains that neurological differences are normal variations in the human species, like race and sexual orientation, which ought to be valued and accommodated, not “fixed” or eliminated.

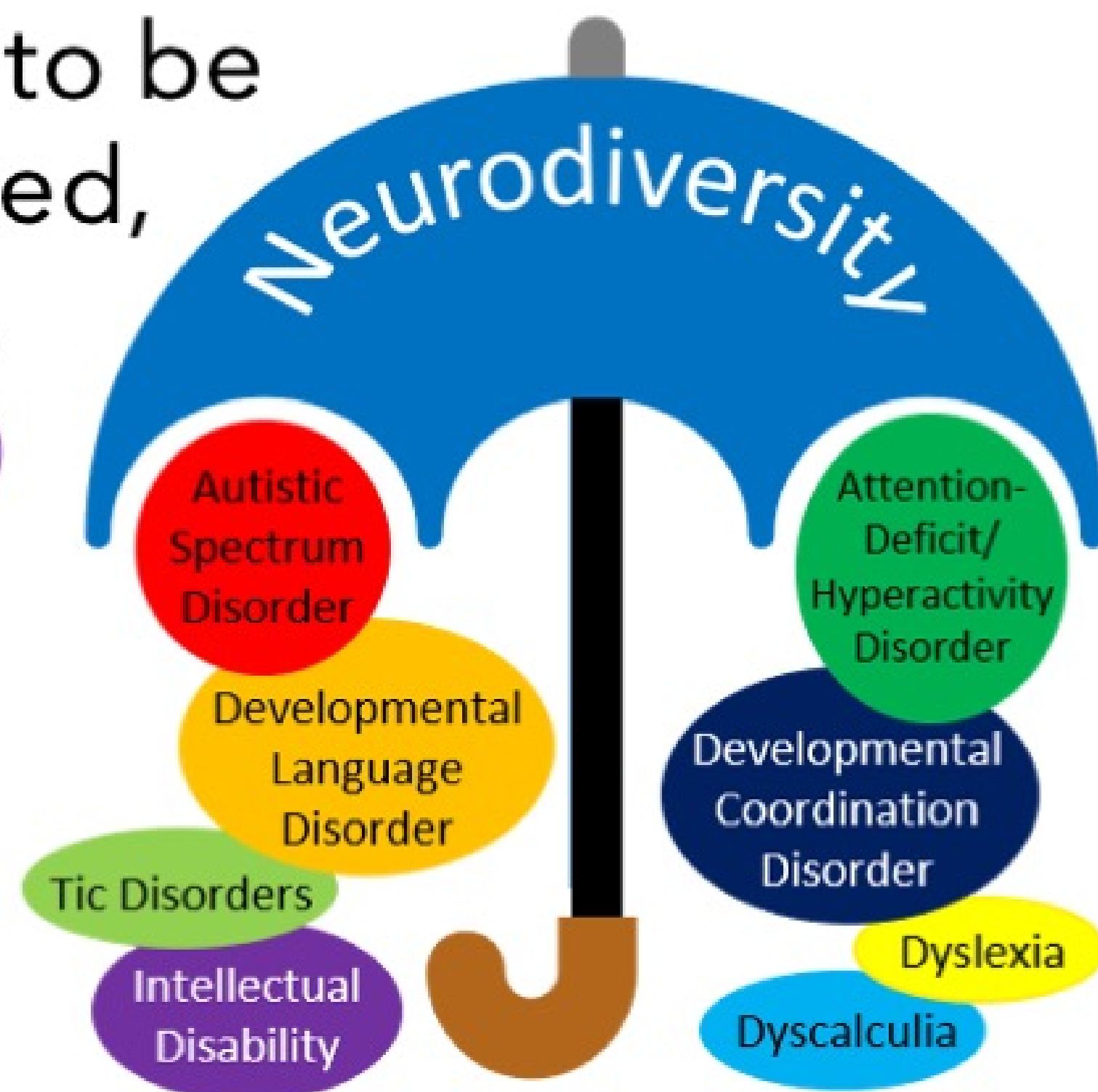
(Chapman 2020; Walker 2021)

## My Thesis

### Cognitive continuity

among the neurotypical and neurodivergent requires more **nuanced**

**normative claims** that respect individual differences and fluid circumstances.



## Difference, Not Deficit?

**Depends on the case.** For some, a mere difference (e.g. Temple Grandin, Chacku Mathai). *Others* a deficit (e.g. Donna Williams, Elyn Saks). Many autistic people accept difference *and* deficit (Kapp et al. 2013)

## Accommodation Alone?

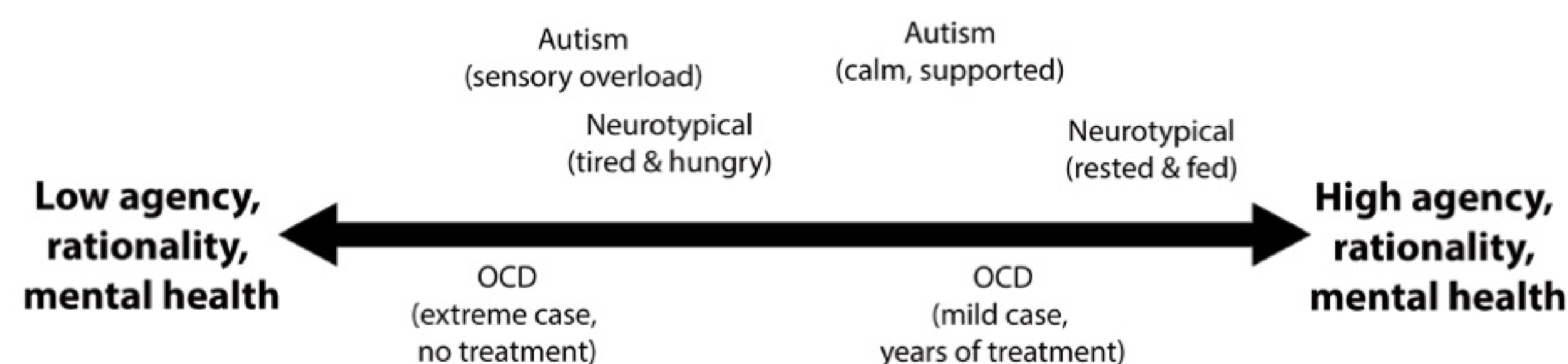
Impairments only *sometimes* arise from stigma or lack of social accommodation (e.g. Saks).

*False dichotomy* between **social & medical models** (contra Lim 2015; Den Houting 2019)



## Cognitive Continuity

Neurodivergent and neurotypical **differ in degree, not kind**. Psychological variation not only within neurological conditions, but across humanity. (May 2023)



## Minority vs. Personality

No such thing as “severe” autism, schizophrenia, etc.

just like there’s no “severe homosexuality” or other **minority identities?** (Walker 2021) (contra Hughes 2021; Nelson 2021)



*Better model:*

**personality traits.**

E.g. *introversion* sometimes a mere difference (recharge), sometimes a deficit (isolation).

## A Nuanced Paradigm

Reject the **biodiversity metaphor**.

Individual differences in brain function are quite unlike the phenotypic differences between a beetle and a Bengal tiger.

We’re **more alike than unalike**.

Emphasizing our shared humanity can promote compassion, respect, and support for all.



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