

Ableism in International Relations: Autism Metaphors and How They Spread

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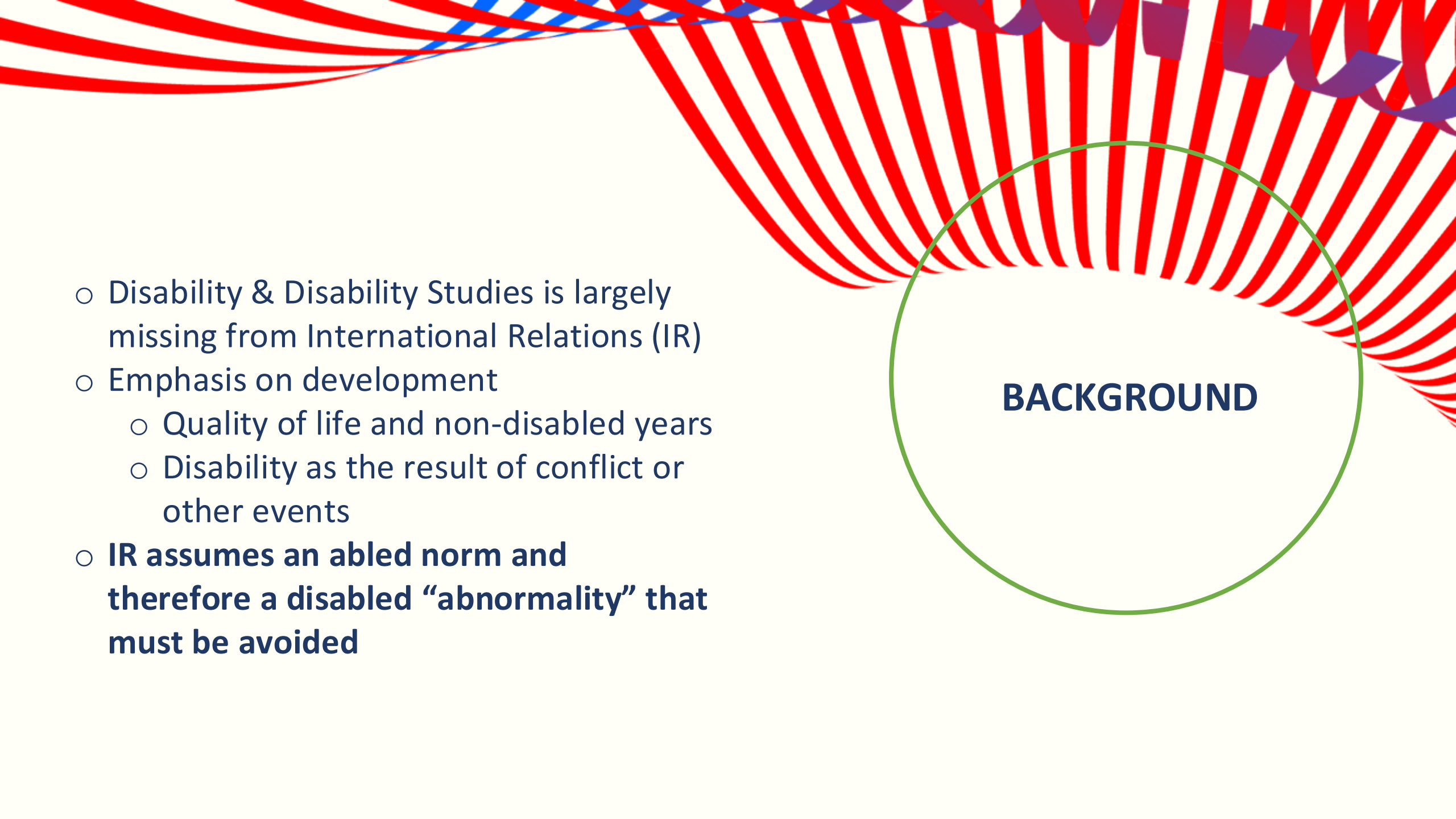
PhD in International
Relations



CONTENTS & STRUCTURE

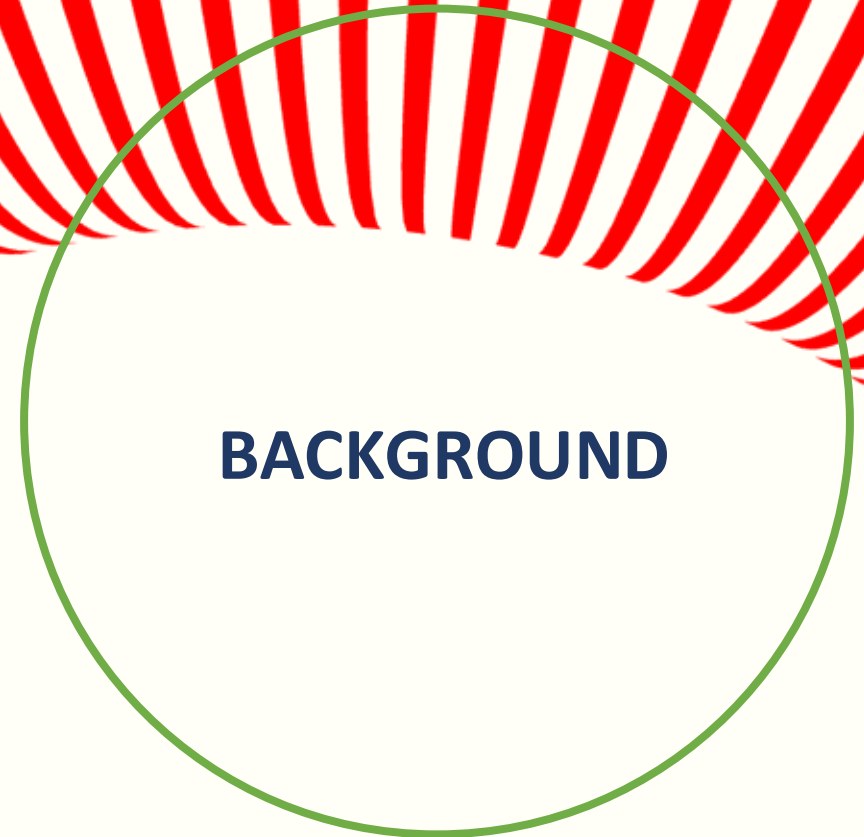
- 1) Background
- 2) Methodology
- 3) Operationalisation
- 4) Findings
- 5) How do autism metaphors spread?
- 6) References



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- Disability & Disability Studies is largely missing from International Relations (IR)
 - Emphasis on development
 - Quality of life and non-disabled years
 - Disability as the result of conflict or other events
 - **IR assumes an abled norm and therefore a disabled “abnormality” that must be avoided**

BACKGROUND

- Manifestations of ableism
 - Autism metaphors have seldom been investigated in IR [1]

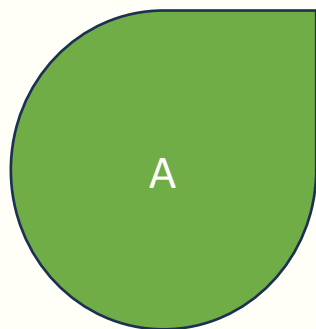


BACKGROUND



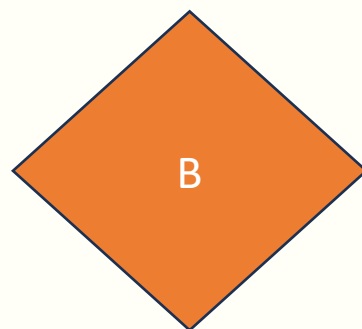
18 autism metaphors
located and studied

- What is an autism metaphor?
 - Something that is “given the name” ^[2] of autism ^[3]



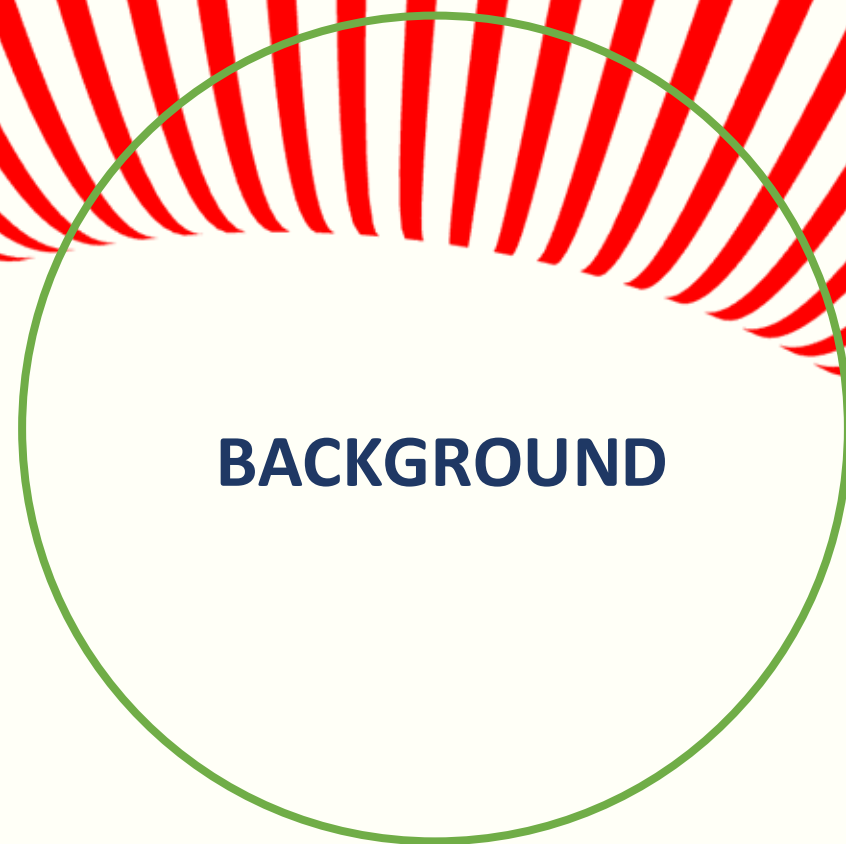
Known to
be autistic

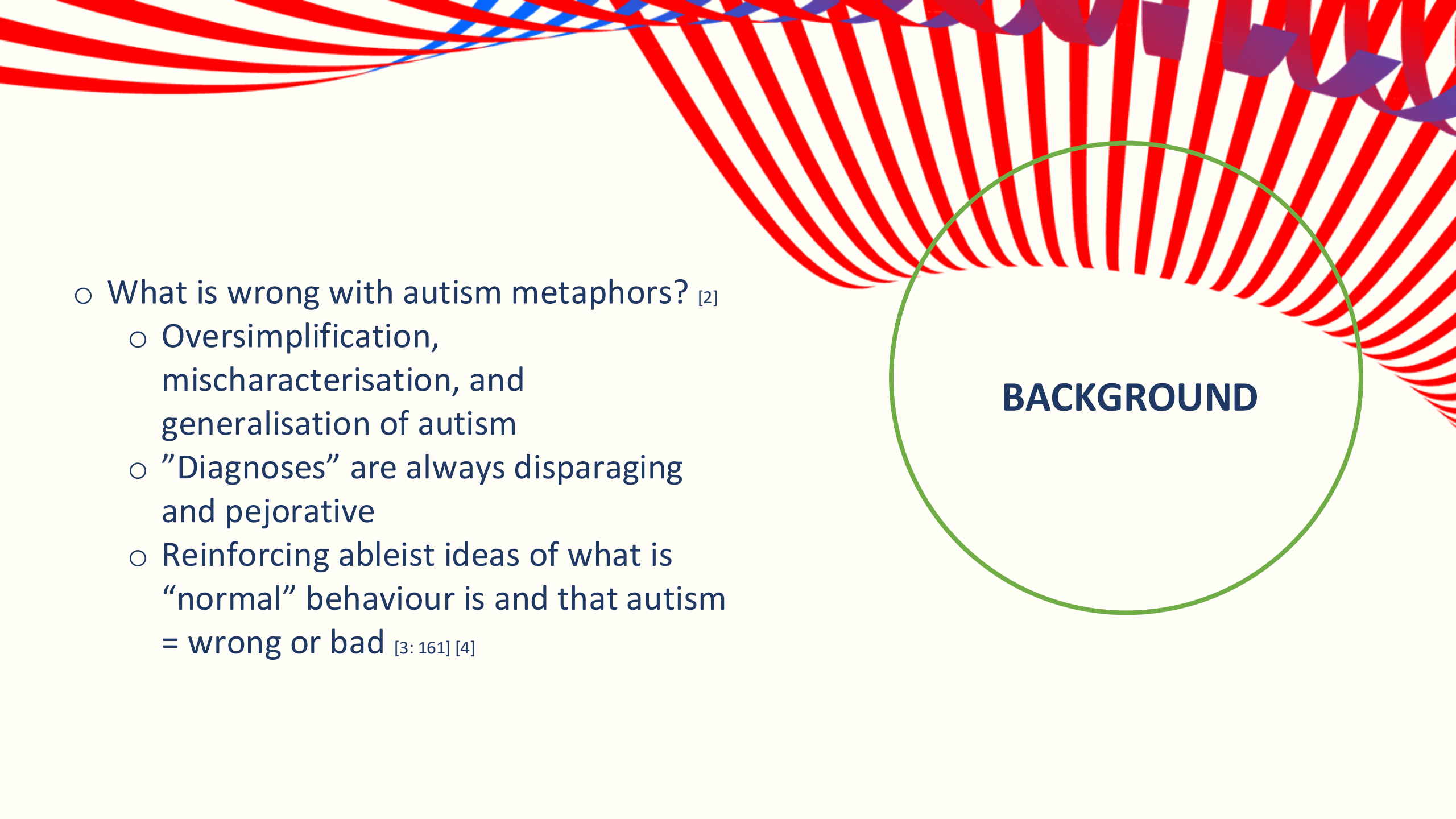
Behaves in
a certain
way



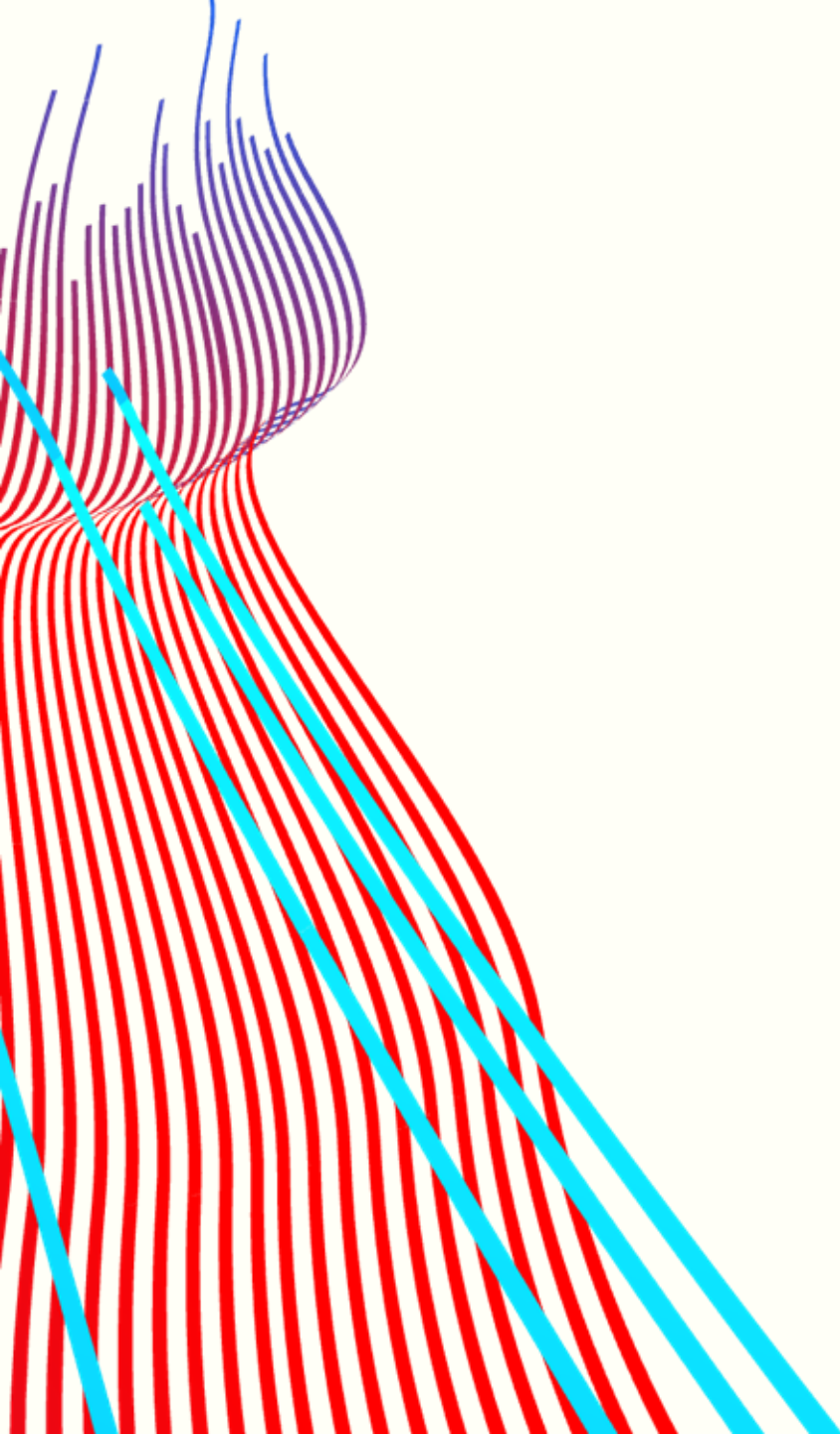
Behaves in the
same way as A

Therefore, must
also be autistic



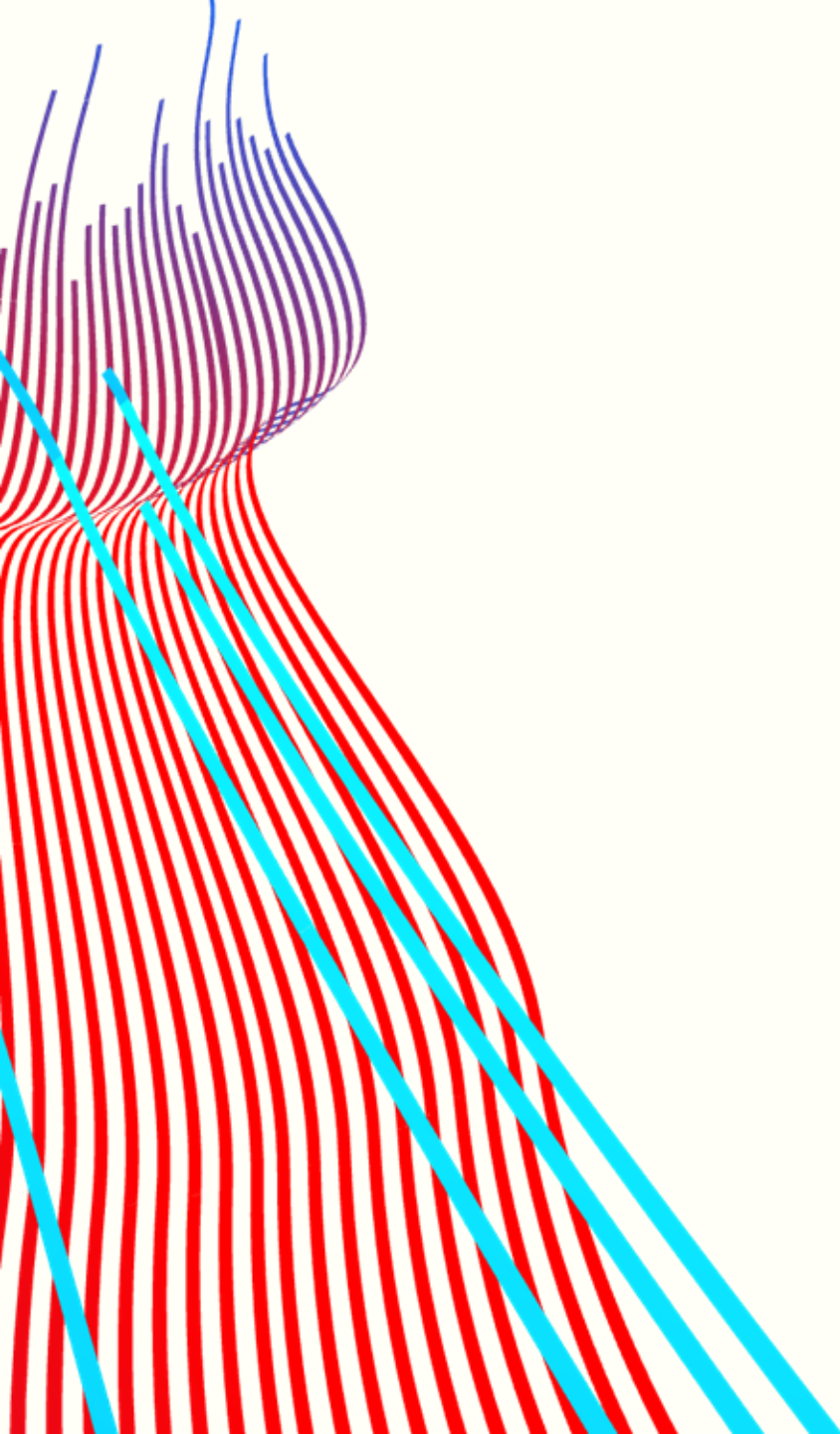
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- What is wrong with autism metaphors? [2]
 - Oversimplification, mischaracterisation, and generalisation of autism
 - "Diagnoses" are always disparaging and pejorative
 - Reinforcing ableist ideas of what is "normal" behaviour is and that autism = wrong or bad [3: 161] [4]

BACKGROUND



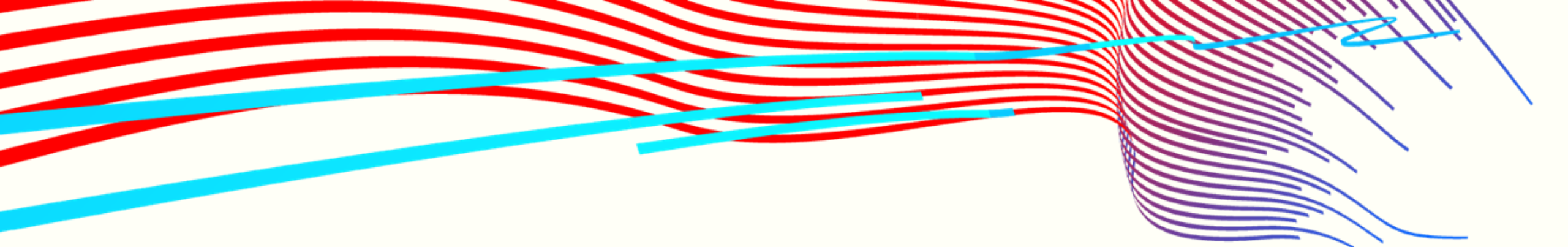
METHODOLOGY

- Concept analysis crystallises the defining characteristics on an unclear concept and what counts as part of that concept ^[5]
 - Specifically within the relevant context e.g. what is an autism metaphor **in International Relations?**
- Derived from nursing science ^[6]
 - Initial "blurry" concepts such as care and compassion, and what they look like in practice



METHODOLOGY

- Concept analysis variants differ in epistemology and implementation
- **Pragmatic Utility** ^[7]
 - Post-positivist and inspired by Critical Theory
 - Focused on implicit assumptions and biases in those invoking a concept
 - No sampling – every academic instance of the concept must be investigated



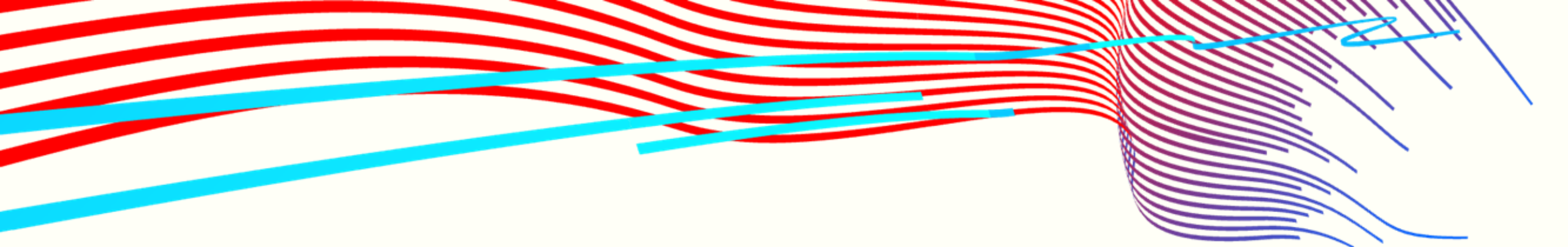
OPERATIONALISATION

Principle 1: Be clear about the purpose of the inquiry; identify data population

Principle 2: Ensure validity; does the concept exist?

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- Scimago's Journal & Country Rank database on "Political Science and International Relations" [8]
 - Total of 706 journals and book series

- Full-text searching each journal/book series for "autis"
 - This would return both "autism" and "autistic"



OPERATIONALISATION

Principle 3: Identify significant analytical questions; Read each instance of an autism metaphor

Principle 4: Synthesise results; Record relevant information

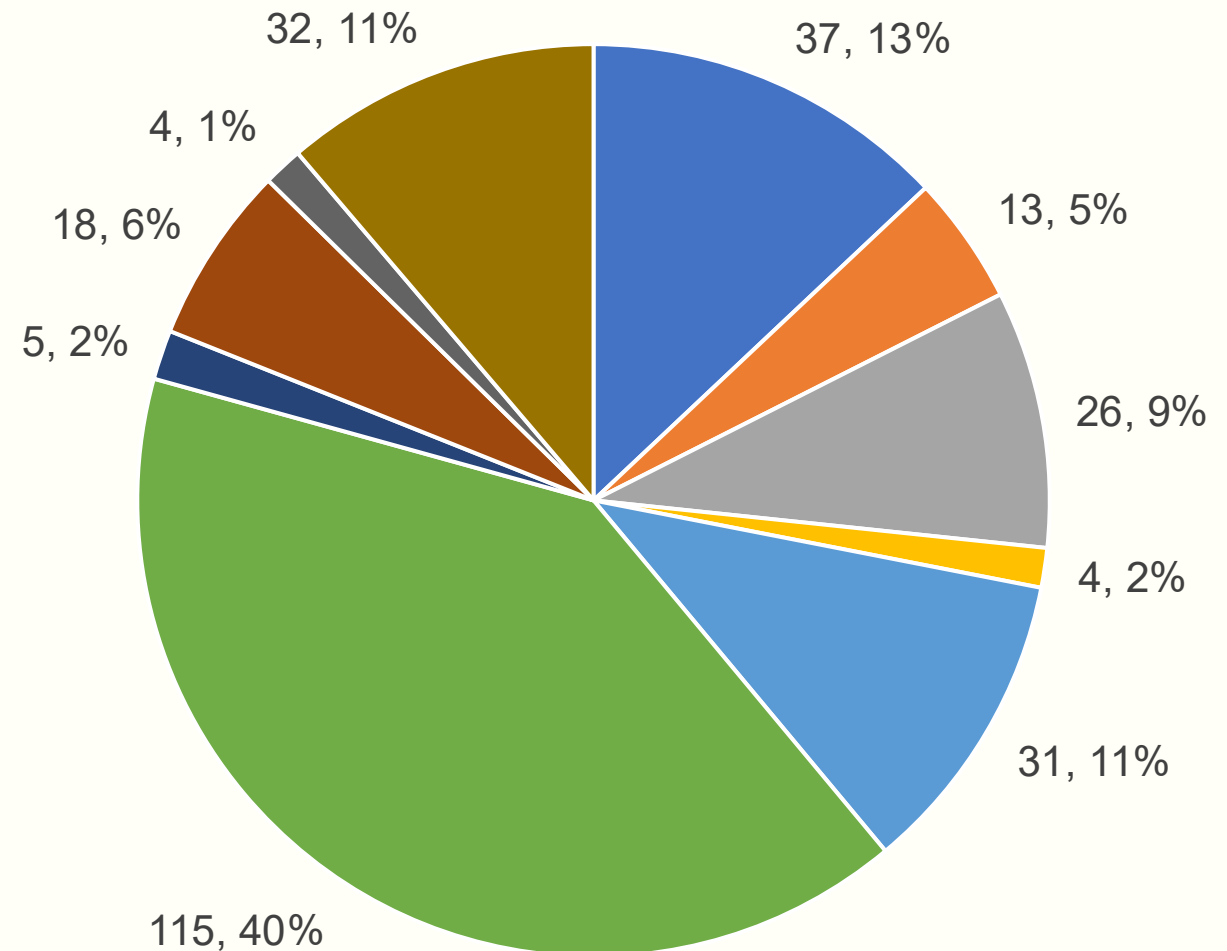
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- Search produced approximately 200 results, reduced to 176 after criterion were devised:
 1. Must be IR
 2. Must not be a direct reference to autism “as is”
 3. Must be from an academic source

- Data recorded e.g. author, article, and journal name; year of publication; what type of metaphor quotes and page numbers when an autism metaphor was used; what is diagnosed as autistic
- Trends and patterns identified

FINDINGS

- Disease
- Aloneness/Loneliness
- Violence/Hostility/Danger
- Immaturity
- Insanity/Unreality/Irrationality
- Insularity/Asociality
- Emotionlessness
- Unchanging
- Passivity
- Not Defined/Sui Generis

Number of IR Publications by Autism Metaphor Type



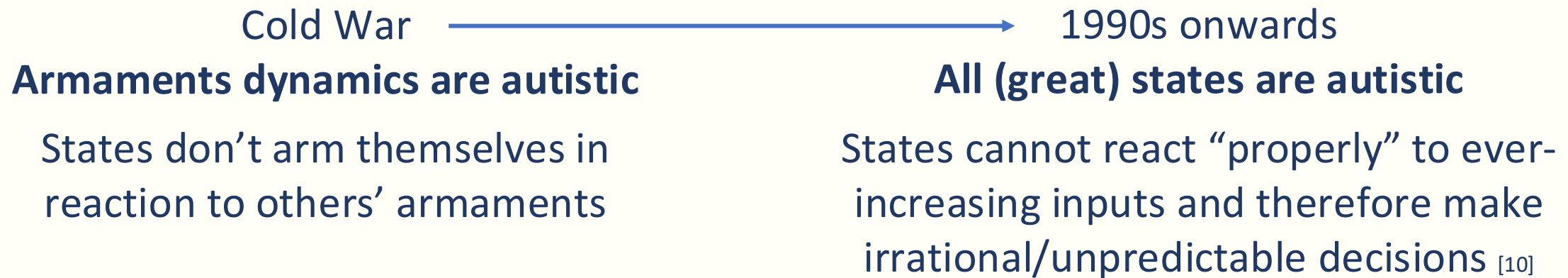
HOW DO AUTISM METAPHORS SPREAD?

- Epicentres of autism metaphor publication



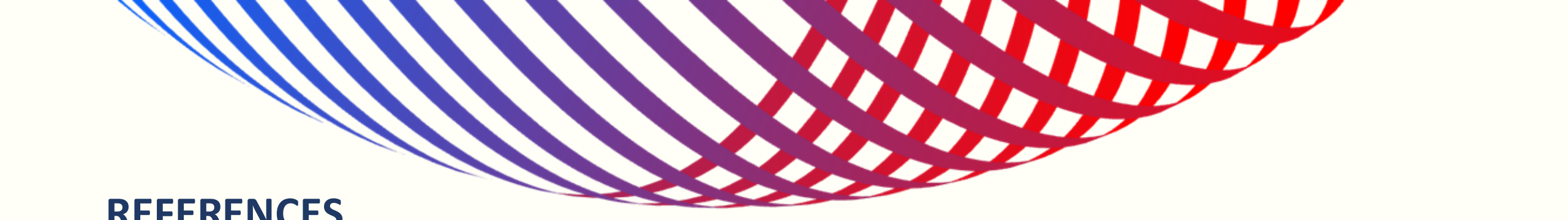
HOW DO AUTISM METAPHORS SPREAD?

- Evolving metaphors



- Uncritical use
 - Autism metaphors go unchallenged and reiterated ad nauseum





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