



Stimpunks Foundation

Mutual Aid and Human-Centered Learning for Neurodivergent and Disabled People

Neurocentrism

If ethnocentrism is judging another culture solely by the **values** and standards of one's own culture, then what we often see in these papers is a kind of neurocentrism, judging another neurology by the capabilities and standards of one's own neurology. Mottron and his research associate Michelle Dawson use the term "normocentrism": if a non-autistic person does something it's **normal**, but if an **autistic** person does it, it's abnormal.

AUTISTICS: LESS BIASED. RESEARCHERS?

When it comes to academic research, we presume that researchers are doing their best to be rigorous and objective, which includes avoiding bias. But when it comes to studies involving autistic subjects, are they?

We know that the way information is presented influences our judgement and decision-making: the **framing** effect. How we “**frame**” information has an impact on how we treat it, and thus on outcomes. So if your research project is based on the assumption that your subjects have a disorder or a deficit, that presumption will be reflected in both your process and your results.

What we see in research involving autistic subjects is that **autism is frequently **framed** as “non-neurotypical”, i.e. autistics are measured against people who are non-autistic and thus end up being defined by what they aren’t.** For a comparison, imagine a linguistic study of a Swedish-speaking **community** by French academics where the conclusion is “they can’t speak French”. **If ethnocentrism is judging another culture solely by the values and standards of one’s own culture, then what we often see in these papers is a kind of neurocentrism, judging another neurology by the capabilities and standards of one’s own neurology. Mottron and his research associate Michelle Dawson use the term “normocentrism”: if a non-autistic person does something it’s normal, but if an autistic person does it, it’s abnormal.**

It’s an understatement to say that there is a bias in autism studies. **Autistic people are not being well-served by this research, if we’re being served at all.** In the world of academia, strict procedures are in place to ensure that impartiality is maintained: conflict of interest declarations, rules on plagiarism and ethics, independent peer-review prior to publication etc. **But many of these studies are biased towards autism as a deficiency and an incapability, which has a predictable impact on the outcomes.**

[Autistics: less biased. Researchers?](#)

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