ISSUES IN PSYCHOLOGY

ETHNOCENTRISM OF PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH
DESCRIPTION OF ETHNOCENTRISM

• This refers to the belief that one’s own group (e.g., ethnic, social, cultural) is the most important and superior to that of others.

• As individuals & groups we find it hard to think beyond our own cultural experience

• This means that research may be biased: psychologists may design research or draw conclusions that makes sense or applies to their own cultural group only.
ETHNOCENTRIC RESEARCH

• Much research is based on American / European groups.

• Eg: Piliavin’s observations on helping behaviour were limited to observations of New Yorkers

• Research into stress: Holmes & Rahe, & Kanner assumed that life events & daily hassles apply universally

• The DSM-1V may be biased & lack validity when applied to non-Western countries.
STRENGTHS OF STUDYING ETHNOCENTRISM

• Allows us to discover the diversity of behaviour & experience throughout the world.

• Encourages researchers to be wary of assuming their culture is superior and making biased conclusions about human behaviour.

• By understanding the mechanisms of ethnocentrism, we may be able to improve society. (eg; Reicher & Haslam)

• It may allow us to discover which behaviours are inherited and which are learned (cross-cultural studies) (eg; Autism is found in all cultures, social groups, etc.)
WEAKNESSES OF STUDYING ETHNOCENTRISM

• Difficulty in comparing cultures with diverse philosophies. (see Chadda & Ahuja, 1990)

• Language/interpretation difficulties in cross-cultural research

• Samples from studies may be small and unrepresentative, & difficult to generalise.

• Eg: Mental illness in Indian subcontinent (‘Dhat”), diagnosed with depression. Only 7 participants (Chadda & Ahuja, 1990)
ETHNOCENTRISM OF PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH
This means:

Strengths of studying

Evidence:

Weaknesses of studying