The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior:

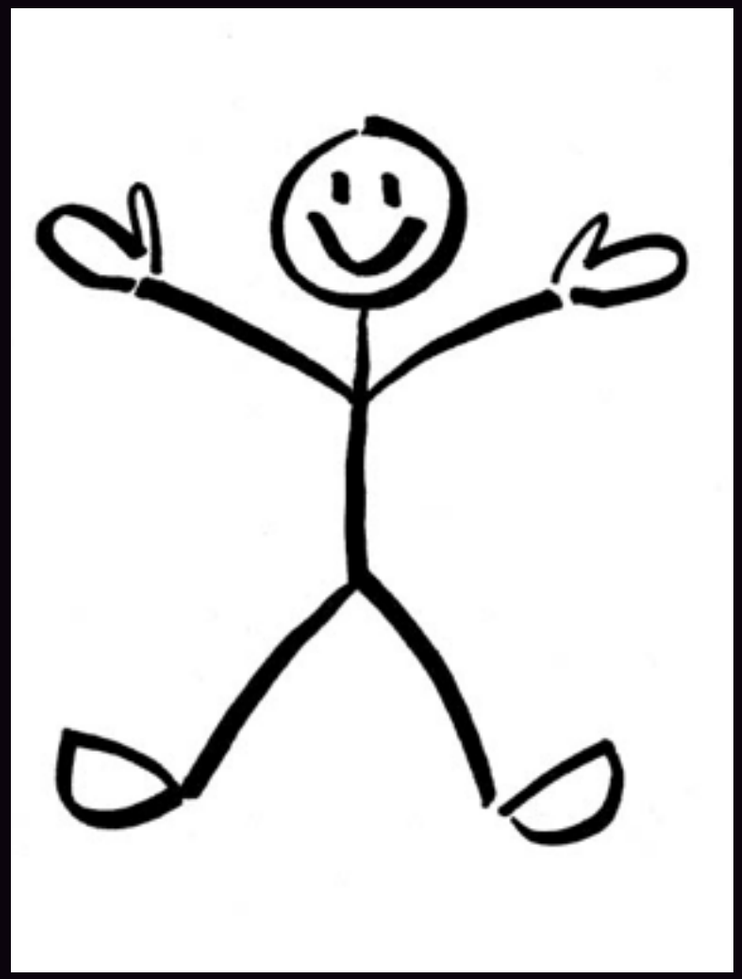
- Demonstrates the importance of culture
- Culture affects all life stages - childhood, adolescence & adulthood
- Demonstrates the roles and expectations of Maasai warriors

Cognitive Development in Cross-cultural perspective

Lecture 11

composition of household (Malinowski, W & W "household structure," W and Child)

culture (Mead, Benidict, Malinowski, W & Edwards (and biology)



socioeconomic system (W & W)

socio-economic conditions (LeVine, Chase)

values (Preschool in Three Cultures)

mother's duties (W & Child)

Variables that influence child development

Differences in cognitive performance found in cross-cultural studies:

1. Sensori-motor stage:

- different social classes among whites and African Americans - no differences.

- Konner and Lee - !Kung and Mary Ainsworth - Uganda

- ahead of Am babies: certain motor areas, cognitive development in first 6 months (LeVine - Nigeria - movement/manipulation of objects)

- African Infant Precocity Hypothesis.

- Why?

- sensory-motor dev. period - strong universal

2. Preoperations/Concrete Operations

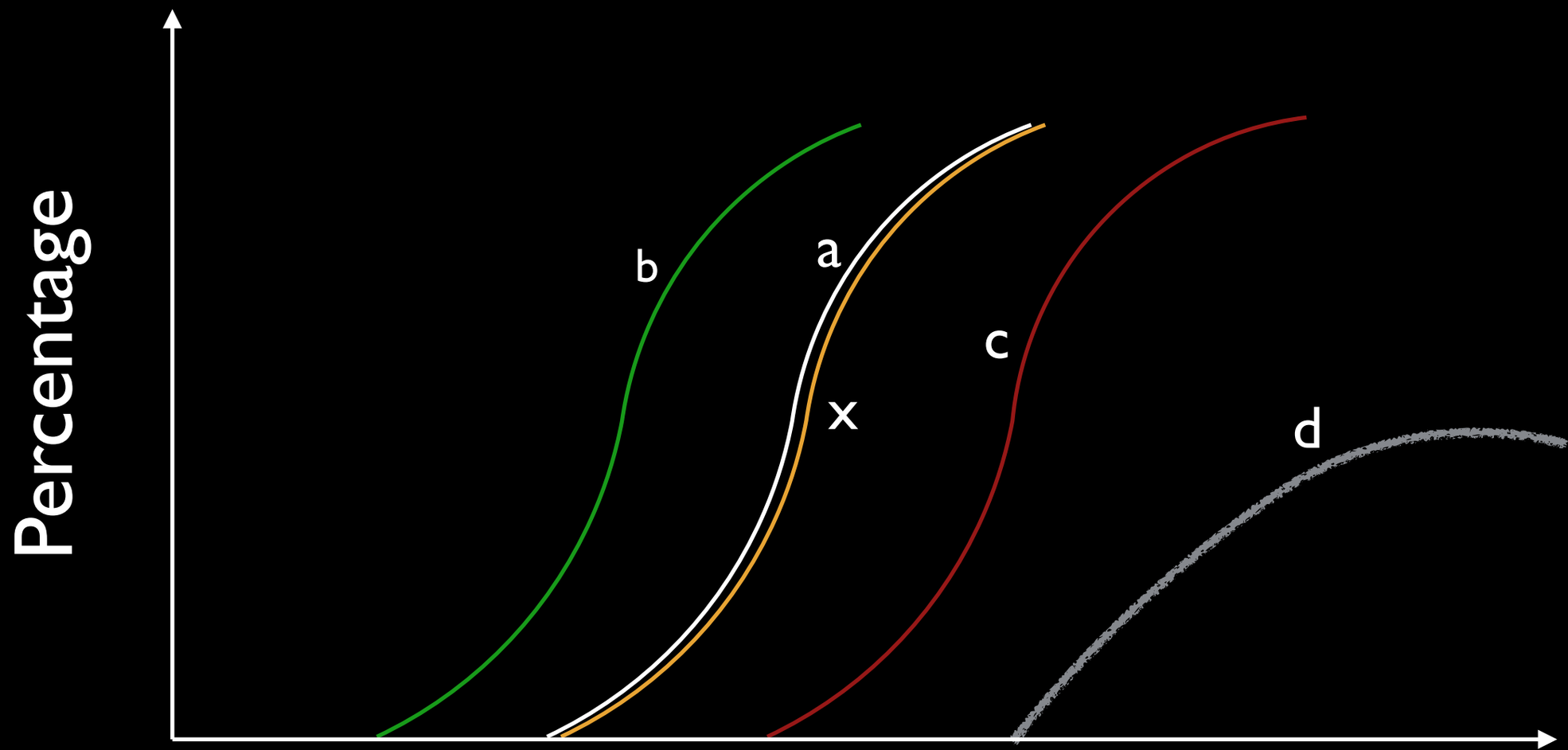
- Most studies
- All report that some subjects in all cultures attain the concrete operational stage.
- At what age?

Dasen (1972) - European children v.s. children in different cultures on tests of conservation:

- a - Same time - Nigerian, Europeans in Hong Kong, Middle-class AM, Chinese working class, Tehran

- b - Earlier - Asians in CA

- c - Later - non-western, low - socioeconomic, Inuit, Canadian Indians



Percentage of subjects attaining the concrete operational stage as a function of age

- d - In some studies did not reach concrete operations- Thai, Zulu, New Guinea, Australian Aborigines, Amazon, illiterate adults in Algeria and Sardinia

Remember Piaget's warning

culture imp!

All cultures reach all stages in areas important to them

Formal operations

- Few studies
- confirmed in most Western populations, at least in some areas and some of the time.
- In non-Western cultures there is very little research and charting unsuccessful.
- found difference in formal operations of some groups

Why?

- verbal facility of the child (not all cultures encourage - Gussi)
- special knowledge and may reflect skills learned in schools
- Testing and materials problematic

Surprising

- Because can function at level of formal operations in spheres familiar to them

What variables in the environment CAN account for differences in cognitive performance?

two different types:

situational

Social Class

Rural/urban

Schooling/
Non-schooling

Differences in cognitive performance

Differences in cognitive performance

cultural

Need for skills in the environment

Structure of Tests

Contact with Western Cultures

Type of childrearing

Projective systems

Familiarity with Practice

Language

Materials Used

EXAMPLES - INTERACTION OF ENVIRONMENT AND COGNITIVE SKILLS

Gay and Cole (1967)

Kpelle of the West African nation of Liberia

- hard time learning math in Western schools
- better than Americans at estimating # of cups of rice (main food - useful at market)
- # of stones in a pile (markers)
- certain types of logical problems as long as fit their culture/lives

Conclude:

- underlying cognitive processes are everywhere the same, surface manifestations shaped by culture and situation

Pierre Dasen and John Berry studies:

Berry "Ecological and Cultural factors in Spatial Perceptual Development" (1971)

- Hypothesized that nomadic hunting people would need to have higher levels of spatial and perceptual skills than sedentary people.
- water!
- songlines = an intricate series of song cycles that indicate landmarks and subtle tracking mechanisms for navigation.

aboriginal numbers

- 1, 2, 2-1, 2 - 2, open hand, “many” or “big mob”

findings:

- Aborigines did better on spatial tests than on tests involving measurement

Dasen "Concrete Operational Development in Three Cultures" (1975)

- tested connection between cognitive development & "ecological demands"
- rural school children 6 -14

3 groups with different "ecological demands"

- Central Eskimo (traditionally H&Gs)
- Australian Aborigines –(traditionally H & G's)
- Ebrie Africans (agriculture) (food produced, harvested = saved, sold at market) (#, quantity, vol)

findings:

- H&G better on spacial tasks
- Agriculturalists better on conservation (but only sig 12 - 14)
- Why? age exposed?

Conclude:

- There is a correlation between ecology and culture on the one hand and cognitive development on the other

Importance of culture!

Ages the stages are reached is not universal - Piaget

I. projective system= beliefs & values

- Ex. Guatemalan village:
- intelligence = self-sufficiency, obedience, respect, attention to details, willingness to work, management of younger siblings.
- NOT verbal fluency, independence, creative thought, personal expression = defects and curtailed as soon as possible

BATTLE HYMN OF THE TIGER MOTHER

This is a story about a mother, two daughters, and two dogs.

This was *supposed* to be a story of how Chinese parents are better at raising kids than Western ones.

But instead, it's about a bitter clash of cultures, a fleeting taste of glory, and how I was humbled by a thirteen-year-old.

AMY CHUA

2011

"I genuinely believe that there are many ways of being a good parent. We all want our kids to grow up happy, strong, and self-reliant. But different cultures have very different ideas about the best way to do that. And we should all be able to learn from each other."

Amy Chua

culture!

- Demonstrates how cultural practices and values can increase academic success, not just biology.
- Nurture vs. Nature

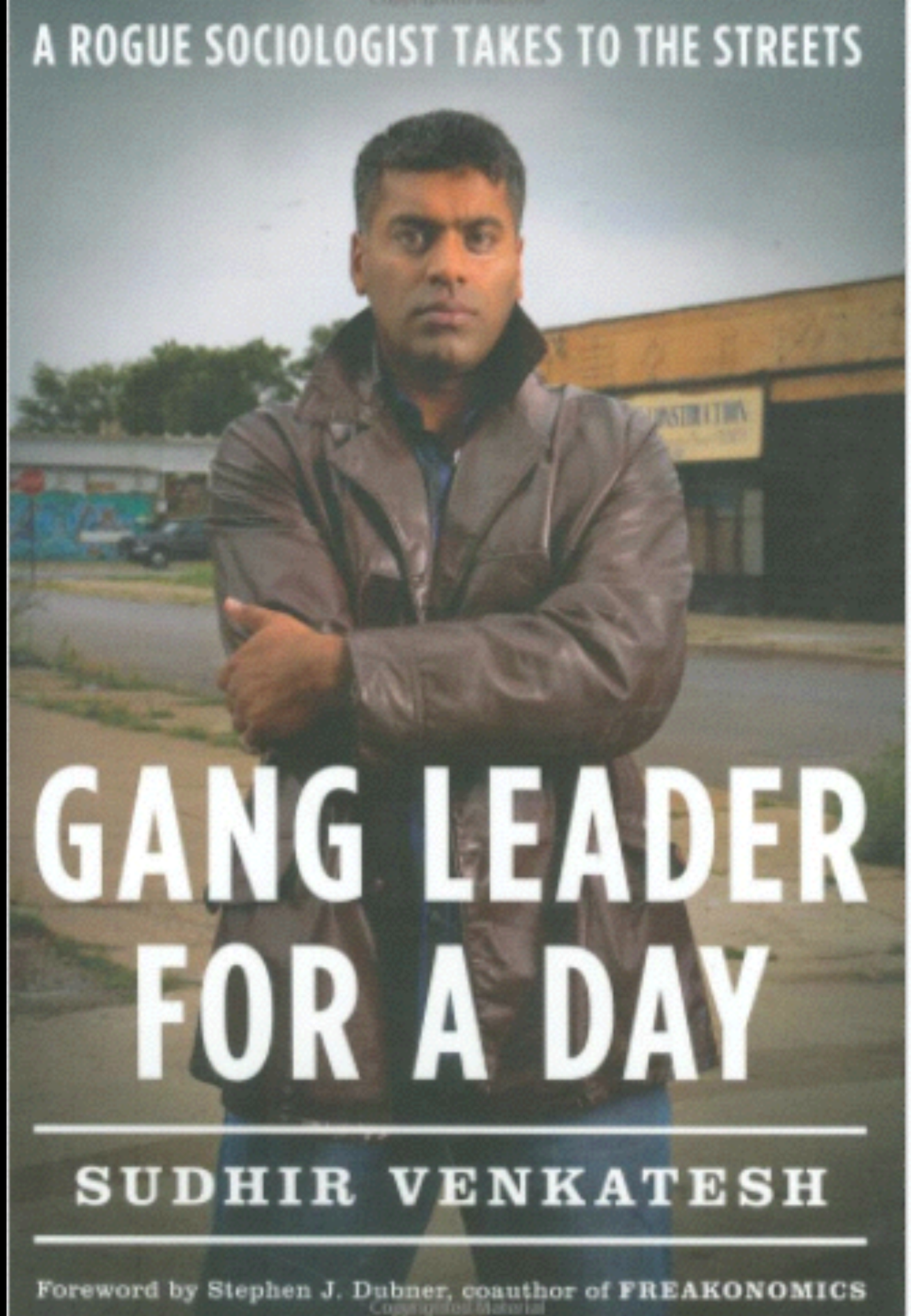
Conclusion:

- culture and cognition are inseparable and interactive
- underlying cognitive processes are the same everywhere (universal) but surface manifestations are shaped by cultures and everyday situations

Reading:

- Venkatesh, Preface, Chapters 1 & 2 (up to page 39)

A ROGUE SOCIOLOGIST TAKES TO THE STREETS



GANG LEADER FOR A DAY

SUDHIR VENKATESH

Foreword by Stephen J. Dubner, coauthor of **FREAKONOMICS**

What to look for:

- The correlation between socio-economic conditions and the treatment/expectations of children (& adolescents)
- Why does the underground economy (including dealing drugs) flourish?
- What are the work conditions for the drug dealers?