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# Why We Smell Who We Are:

Viewing Odor Associations and “Cross-Culturality” through a Multi-Dimensional Lens

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People only accept what is good.

Which Preferences Influence the  
Consumers' Purchasing Decisions?

Which Aspects influence Consumers'  
Preferences?

# QUESTIONS...

## **1. Segmentation**

How are Sensory Panels for Cross-Cultural Research Selected?

## **2. Multi-Dimensionality of Culture and Odor Associations**

At Which Points do the 'Cultural' Dynamics interact with Preferences?

## **3. Integration: Defining Micro-Cultures**

How Can We Integrate the Multi-Dimensionality of Cultural Aspects into a Holistic Model for Sensory Research?

# Olfactory Experiences and Odor Associations

Olfactory Experiences and Odor Associations are Individual and Heterogeneous.

HOMOGENEITY?

# Culture, an Operational Definition

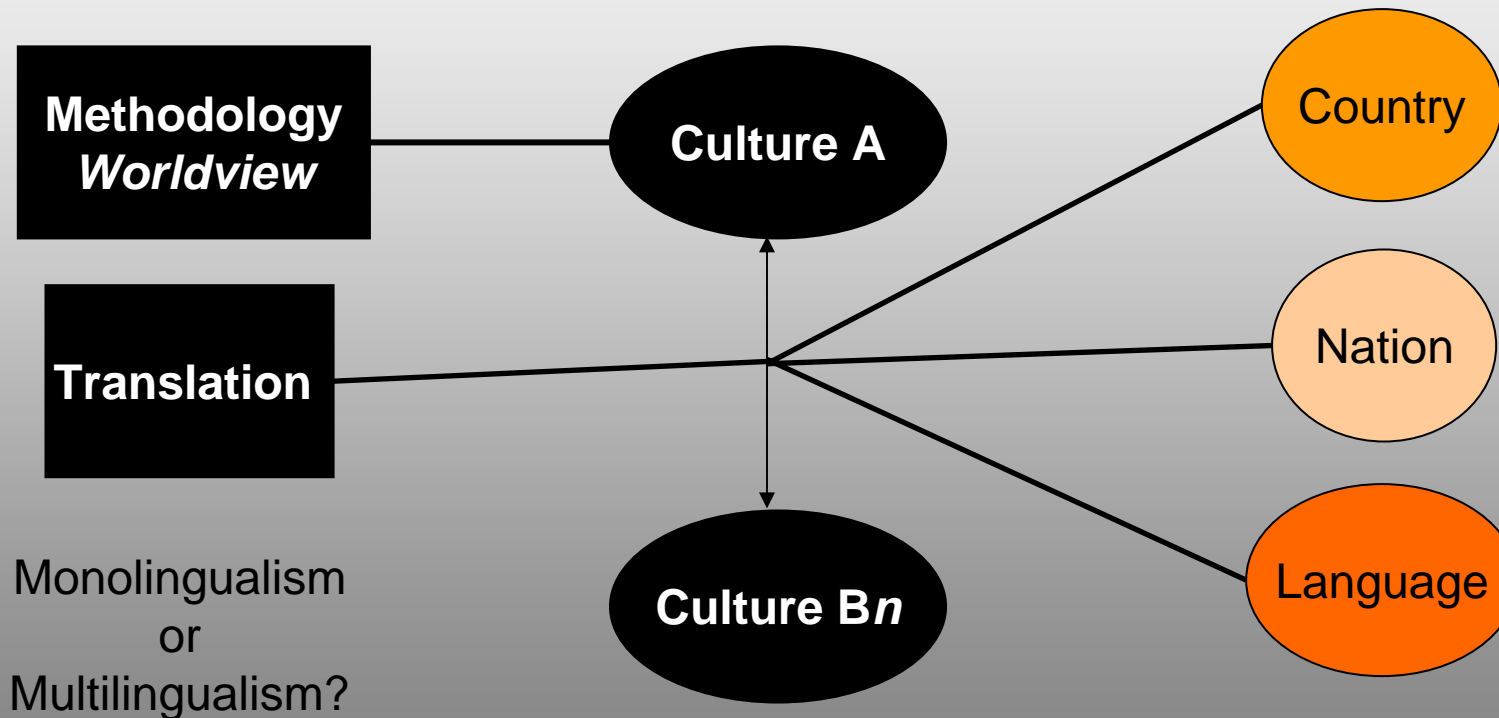
“A historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols [*Worldview*], a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms, by which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitude toward life”,  
(Geertz 1984, p. 89).

## **Consumer Culture Theory (CCT):**

A game where individuals improvise within the constraints of rules, which make certain understandings and behaviors more likely than others (Thompson 2005).

**HOMOGENEITY?** A Fragmented Fabric of Knowledge

# Cross-Cultural Research: Imagined Homogeneity



Similarities and Differences Do Exist.

CULTURE!  
WHY?

## **2. Multi-Dimensionality of Culture and of Odor Associations**

At Which Points do 'Cultural'  
Dynamics interact with  
Preferences

# Levels of Interactions: "Making Scents of Odorants"

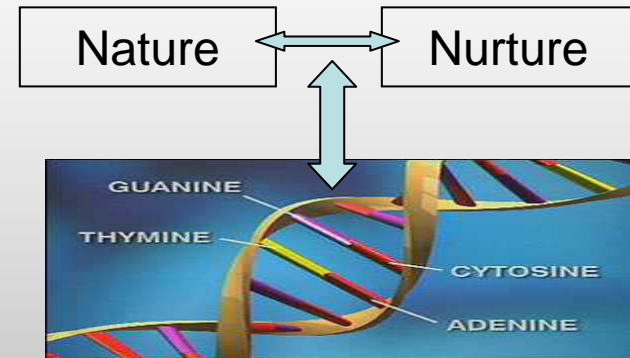
## Cultural and Biological Dimensions

Predisposition for Perception based on Mating Systems.

**Distribution of Genes responsible for Bitter Taste.**

**In-group marriage (caste system): limited gene pool**

**Out-group marriage: broader gene pool**



<http://www.genpage.com/genealogyDNA.html>

## Cognitive Dimensions

Content:	Social & Sensory Stimuli (Exposure)
Process:	How do We Handle Stimuli? (Implicit or Explicit Processes)
Structure:	How are Our Understandings of the World ( <i>Worldviews</i> ) Organized? (Holistically or Analytically)

## Historical Dimension

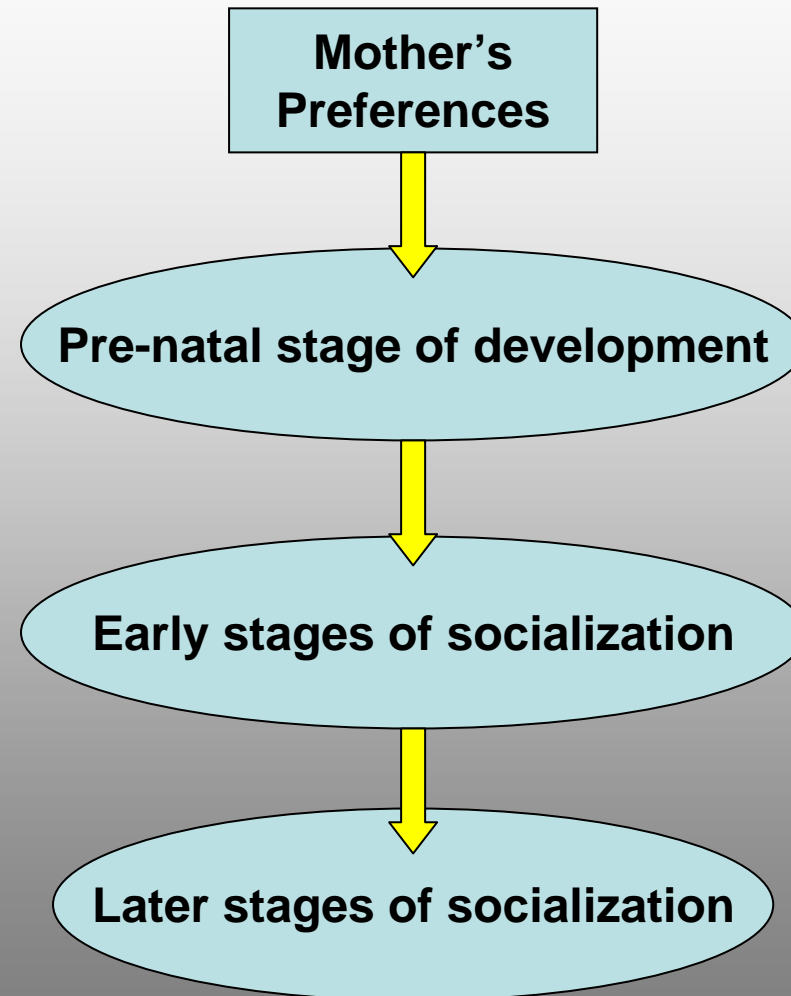
At Which Points in Time do Cultural, Biological and Cognitive Dimensions Interact with the Individual Who Generates Odor Associations?

# Cognitive and Historical Dimensions: Content & Process

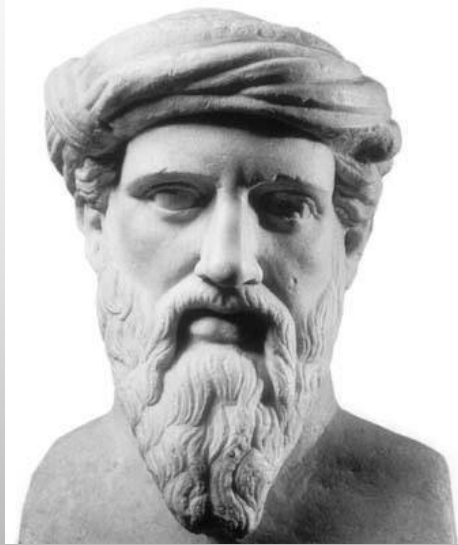
Which Stimuli are We Exposed to?

Which Levels of Historicity are reflected in our Preferences?

Preferences are often reproduced from one generation to another/one group to another. BUT they can change in persons and hence across generations and groups.



# Cognitive and Historical Dimensions: Structure of *Worldviews*



Pythagoras, Greek Philosopher  
(approx. 584-495 B.C.E.)

Analytical  
Processing of Stimuli

Focus on Object

Visual Stimuli!

ODORANTS?



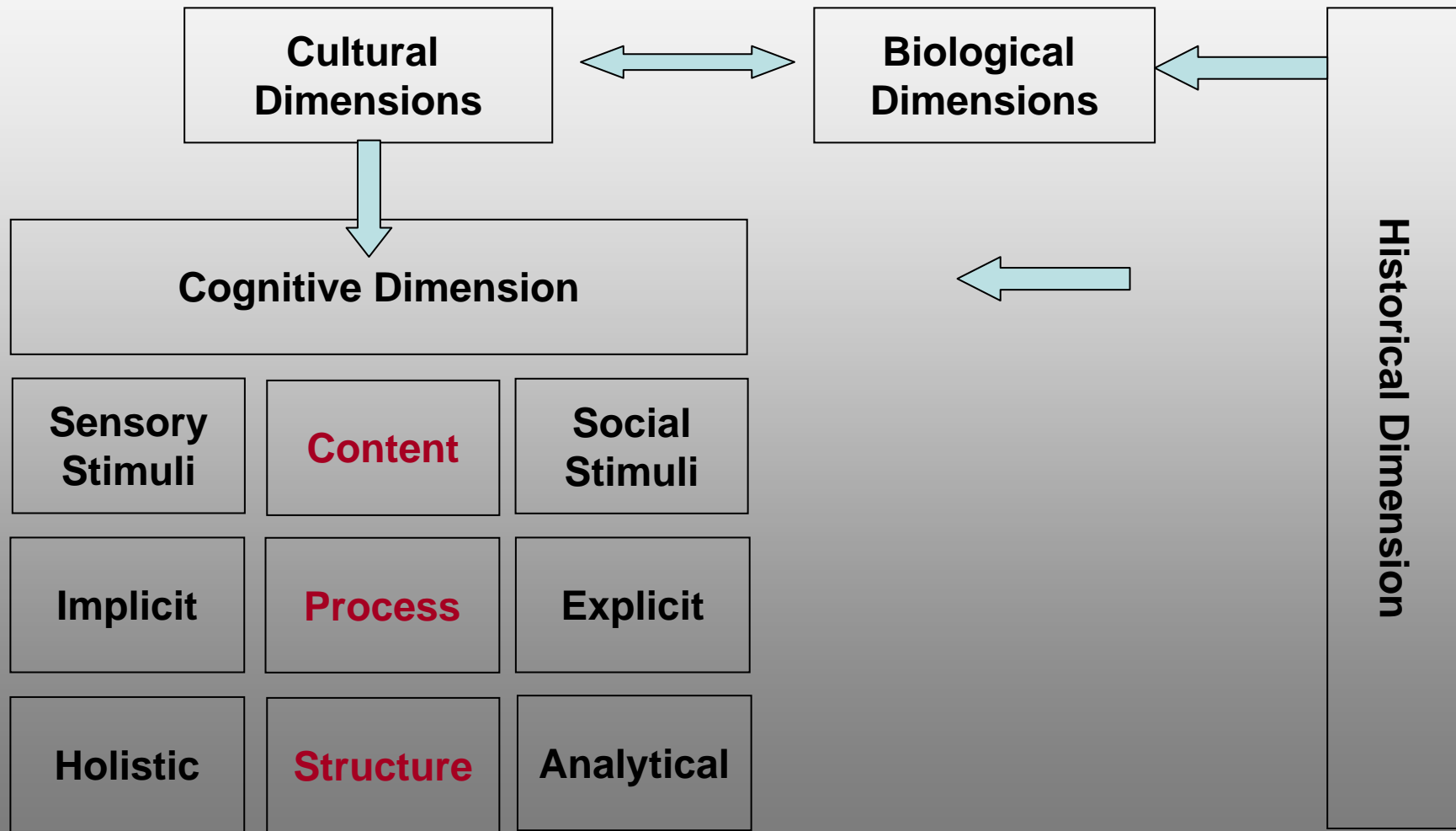
Confucius, Chinese Philosopher  
(approx. 551-479 B.C.E.)

Holistic  
Processing of Stimuli

Object in Relation  
to its Context

**HOMOGENEITY!**

# Multidimensionality of Odor Associations



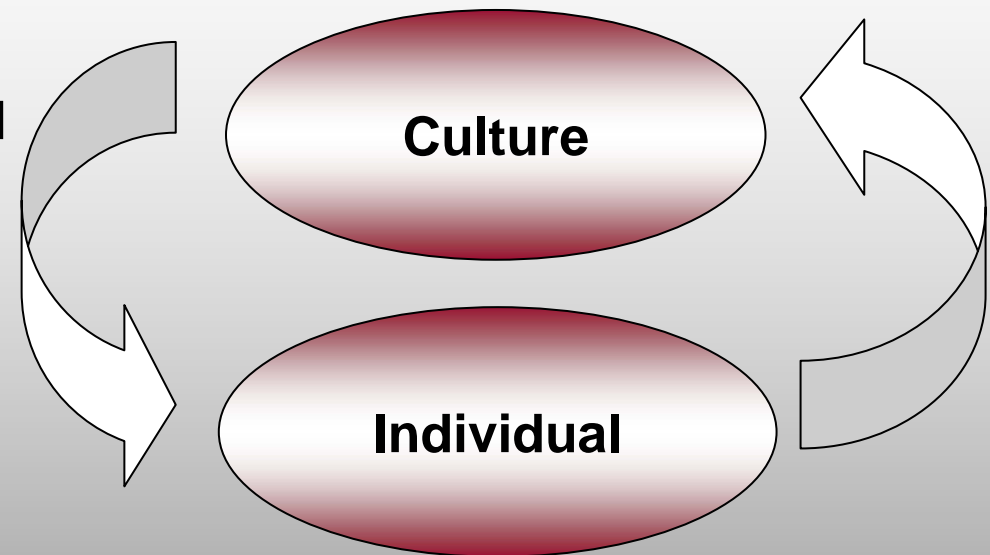
# **3. Integration: Defining Micro-Cultures**

How Can We Integrate the Multi-Dimensionality of “Culturality” and Odor Associations into a Holistic Model for Sensory Research?

# Finding Homogeneity within Heterogeneity

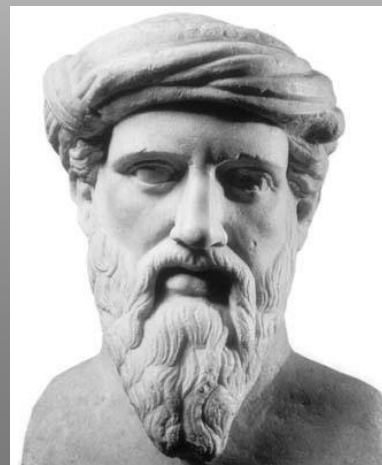
Olfactory Experiences and Odor Associations are Individual and Heterogeneous.

But they are simultaneously the Result of Interactions between Sociohistorical as well as Sensory Stimuli and Aspects on Biological, Cognitive and Historical Dimensions.



Culture is Heterogeneous:

But the Structure of *Worldviews* reveals possible Anchors (holistic versus analytic), which we can Employ aiming at Understanding how Stimuli are processed.



# Defining Micro-Cultures

**Cultural and Biological Dimensions:** Historical and Anthropological Data, e.g. Odor Symbolism and Mating Systems

**Cognitive Dimensions:** *Worldviews* and Level of Cultural Orientation (Adhesion to Cultural Values); Content (Environment) and Structure (Analytical or Holistic *Worldview*), Language Proficiency (Mono- or Multilingualism)

**Historical Vectors** to which Participants have been exposed to, e.g. Birth Place, Residencies, Acculturation, Genealogies (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation)

**Micro-Cultures based on Consumer's attitude towards specific types of and adhesions to Cultural Knowledge and Behavior**, e.g. Health, Cosmetic, Fragrance, Home, Workplace, Occupation,

**Demographic Information**, e.g. Age, Sex but also Gender, Education, Interests

WHY do Similarities and Differences Exist....

Thank You.