




# The Future of Sensory/Consumer Research Evolving to a better science...

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# The future: evolving to a better science

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- Where are we now? – Emotion, questionnaires, internet
  - Where are we going? – More representative samples
  - What I hope will change – Less scaling  
Less product-specific research  
Less country-specific research
  - Many issues apply to both sensory AND consumer science

- Long career in government research at Natick
- Journal editor and reviewer
- Review panels in government, industry, and academia
- Food and non-food
- *Targeting the Consumer* courses with Hal MacFie
- Every Pangborn & Eurosense



My Perspective: 49 years in the field

# Future sensory & consumer research



- Must-haves
- Need-to-haves
- Nice-to-haves

A young girl with long dark hair, wearing a bright yellow one-piece swimsuit, is captured mid-air as she jumps into a swimming pool. Her arms are outstretched to the sides, and her head is tilted back. The pool water is a clear, vibrant blue. In the background, there are palm trees, other people sitting on lounge chairs, and a building with a brown roof, suggesting a resort or poolside setting.

# 1. Health/Wellness: a great opportunity for sensory

- We will embrace Wellness as we have embraced Qualitative
- Wellness is defined by the consumer, not the manufacturer
- Our job is to determine how to measure and use it as a variable
- Consumers will not accept a trade-off of functional foods with less flavor/taste...Sensory can be important!

When: Now and will increase!

## 2. Move beyond the laboratory

- Better balance of control vs. real life
- Academia can learn from industry
- HUT, perhaps with internet reporting
- Data collection via internet tech
- Simulated/imagined environments




When: 5-10 years

### 3. Trained panels vs. consumer panels

When: Now-5 years


- The line will continue to blur and tasks will be assigned to efficiently solve the problem
- The line between sensory and consumer science will blur also
- Trained panel members are people...they are consumers!
- If seen as machines, they're not part of this field
- If viewed as trained consumers, they are part of sensory and consumer science

## 4. People, Consumers, Subjects

- 
- We will develop better standards of “Representative Consumers”
  - We will become more skeptical of convenience samples
  - Are students representative people?...No!
  - Is that an issue for both sensory and consumer science?...Yes!



## 4. People, Consumers, Subjects

- 
- A man with a beard and mustache is looking at a product box in a grocery store aisle. The shelves behind him are stocked with various products, including boxes of Rice Milk and cartons of Lactose Free Milk. The store has a grid ceiling with recessed lighting.
- Industry uses product users vs. convenience samples
  - We will describe and segment consumers on their psychology
  - Psychographics will be used as regularly as demographics
  - Actual (vs. reported) behavior will be used as both dependent and independent variables

# 5. Number of people – is more better?

- Minimum numbers in consumer/sensory research will increase
- Increased segmentation will drive larger numbers – you cannot segment small samples...
- When do we need segmented vs. unsegmented studies?
- We need to stop generalizing from small convenience samples to large populations

When: Now-5 years

## 6. Scaling

- Scaling, and measurement, have had a traditional place in sensory research.
- In the future we will (finally) accept that all scales produce the same ranking of products.
- We will stop arguing that there are good scales and bad scales.
- Good and bad for what purpose?
- We will use scales that are most efficient and consumer friendly
- We will specify scales to achieve specific results

**When: Soon, I hope...**

A silhouette of a person standing with their arms raised, holding a large sign that says '#Like'. The background is a sunset or sunrise over a body of water, with the sun low on the horizon and its reflection visible. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue.

#Like

## 7. Measuring beyond liking

- We will make greater use of broader measurements such as satisfaction, in addition to liking
- We will increase measurement of behavior vs. measurement of liking and questionnaires
- There will be less use of blind products and more use of brands

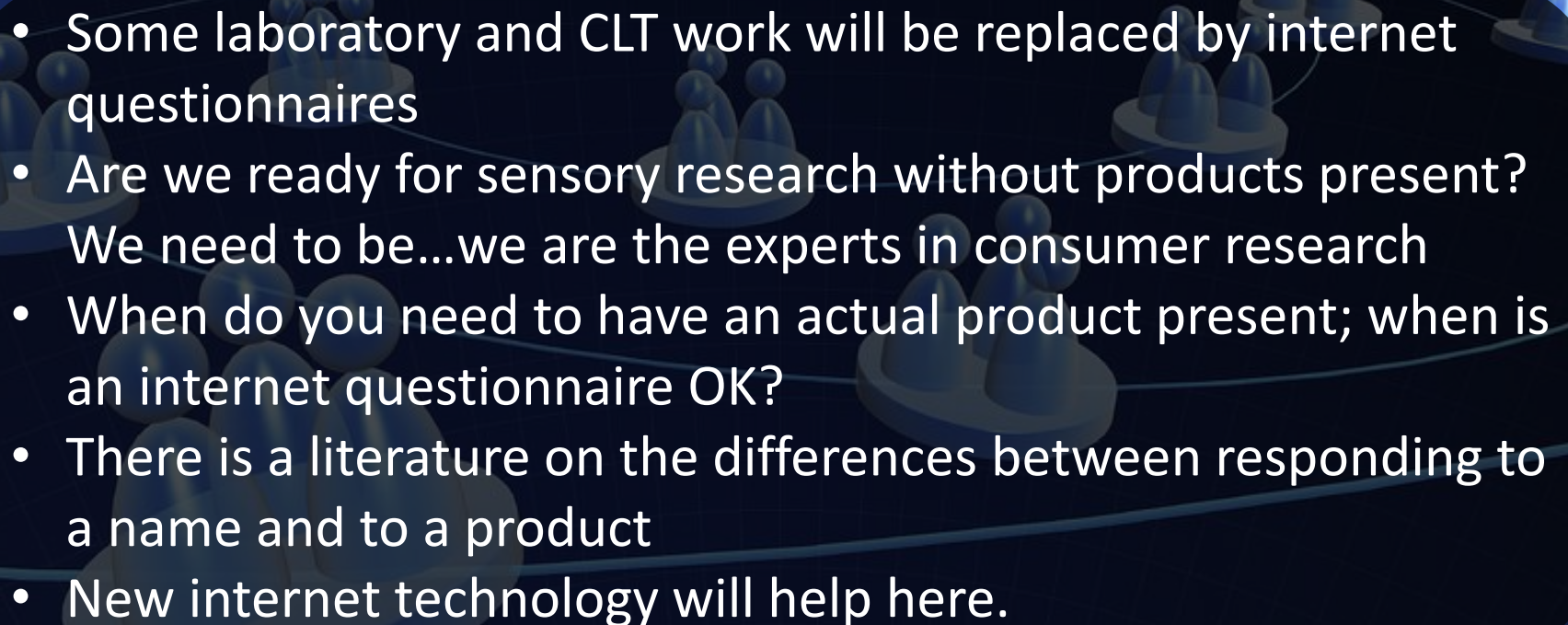
When: Now-5 years

## 8. Ritual and Habit

- We will recognize much of consumer behavior is not about choice, but rather about ritual and habit
- Habit is controlled by environment, making its study important
- Many products are used together or in sequence for rituals
- While we currently study products in isolation, we will begin to study them together since they are used together

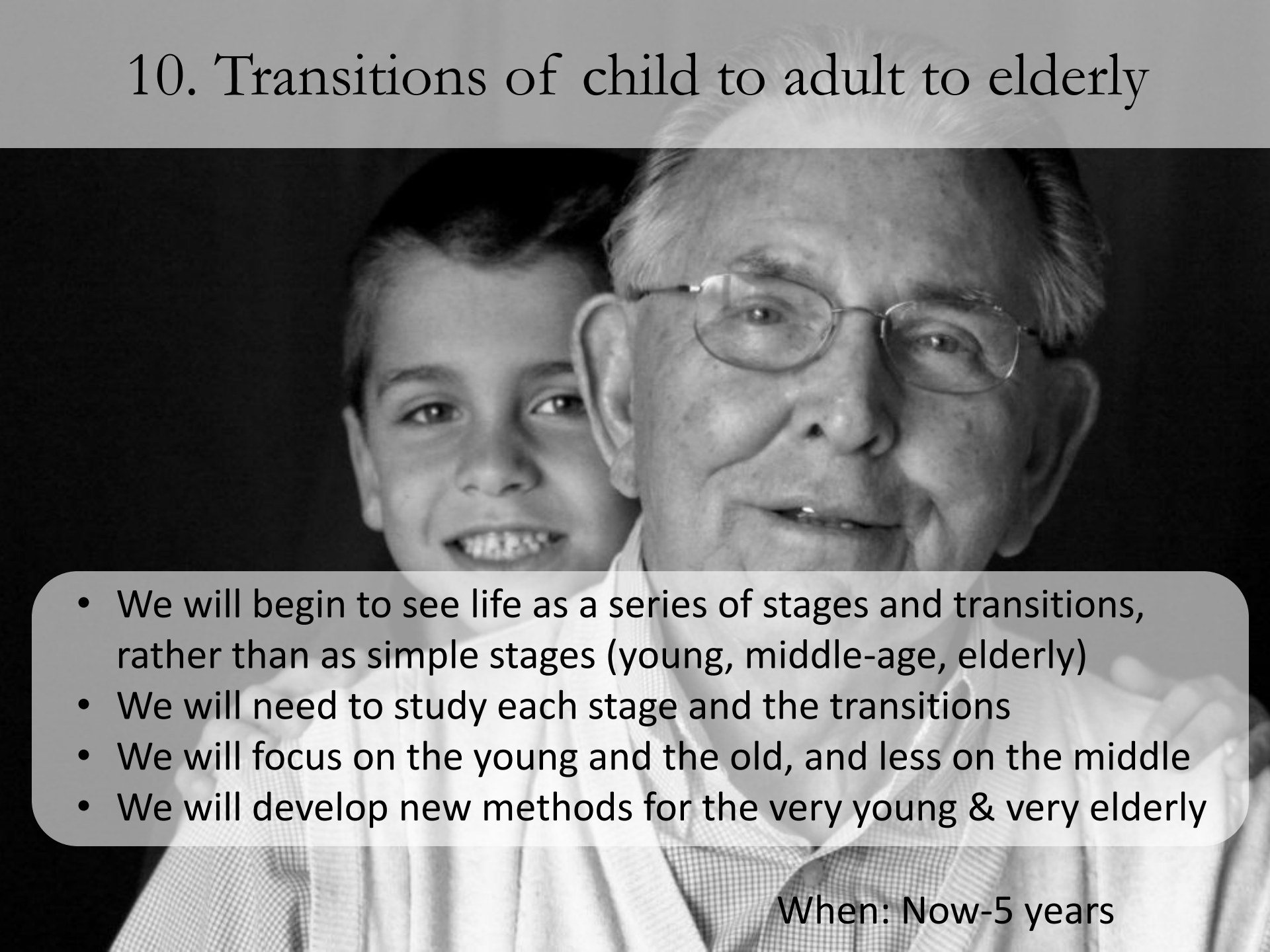
When: 10 years

# 9. Internet Questionnaires

- 
- Some laboratory and CLT work will be replaced by internet questionnaires
  - Are we ready for sensory research without products present?  
We need to be...we are the experts in consumer research
  - When do you need to have an actual product present; when is an internet questionnaire OK?
  - There is a literature on the differences between responding to a name and to a product
  - New internet technology will help here.

When: Now and will increase rapidly

## 10. Transitions of child to adult to elderly

- 
- We will begin to see life as a series of stages and transitions, rather than as simple stages (young, middle-age, elderly)
  - We will need to study each stage and the transitions
  - We will focus on the young and the old, and less on the middle
  - We will develop new methods for the very young & very elderly

When: Now-5 years

# 11. Cross-cultural: global products/global issues

- 
- We will view problems and products globally
  - We will need to feed a world with 10 billion people in cities.
  - I predict that in 30 years we will all eat a diet of global foods, designed and processed to look and taste fresh.
  - The current trends in local, regional, authentic, traditional food will need to be brought into the processed food industry.

When: Now and will  
increase over 5-10 years



- Sensory and consumer science will support this globalization of food and other non-food products.
- We will develop evaluation methods which work globally.
- We will develop consumer language which spans cultures and countries.
- We will identify consumer issues which are global? Neophobia?
- We will continue to organize sensory and consumer research globally (Pangborn , Eurosense, European Sensory Network, Society of Sensory Professionals, Sensiber, Sensometrics,...)

11. Cross-cultural: global products/global issues

Now

Soon

3 Yrs

5 Yrs

10 Yrs

• Scaling

• Internet  
Questionnaires

• More Health/Wellness

• Cross-Cultural /  
Global Issues

• Life Transitions

• Measuring Beyond  
Liking

• Number of People

• Trained v. Consumer  
Panels

• Move Beyond The Lab

• Representative Subjects

• Ritual and Habit


Nice

Need

Must

Importance

# Summary: Future Trends



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