

## **Multiple influences on the transmission of food preferences: from biology to culture**

**Benoist SCHAAL**

Centre des Sciences du Goût, CNRS, Université de Bourgogne, Dijon.

Developing humans are unavoidably exposed to chemosensory information in the species- and culture-typical succession of environments that are mediated by the mother. The properties of these environmental influences pertain to life history and local conditions from which individuals derive their social network, diet, comfort habits, all aspects that define culture in humans.

This culturally-constructed odour and flavour information transfer from mother to infant shapes: i) the offspring's processing abilities at neuro-cognitive levels and concurrent adaptive responses leading to very first selective responses, and ii) sets the context for responses and states in future development. These early influences generally lead the offspring to more or less reproduce the food preferences of the parent.

We will present data on when infants do begin to process culturally-constructed information based on chemosensory cues, which perceptual and cognitive mechanisms are involved, and which long-term effects are observed in older children, adolescents and adults.

## Benoist Schaal



Benoist Schaal was born in Alsace in 1956. He obtained Masters in Behavioural Biology (jointly from the universities of Strasbourg, Besançon, and Nancy, 1979) and in Anthropology from Université Marc Bloch, Strasbourg (1980). He got his PhD in Neurosciences from the University of Franche-Comté (1984), and his Habilitation from Université Claude Bernard, Lyon (2000). He was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Montréal, Canada (1985-86). In 1988, he got a position of Chargé de Recherche at the CNRS, conducting work on the psychophysiological and behavioural development of sensory systems in mammalian, including human, foetuses and infants. Since 2000, he holds a Directeur de Recherche position at the CNRS. He has been the director of the Centre des Sciences du Goût, in Dijon, France, from 2001 to 2009, in which he currently leads the Research Group on Developmental Ethology and Cognitive Psychology. The Centre des Sciences du Goût is a CNRS-run multidisciplinary institute devoted to the study of smell, taste, and ingestive behavior. The red line that goes through his research interests relates to the ways animals, including humans, use odours and pheromones to organize their affects and knowledge, and to direct their attention, behaviour, and choices at both individual and social levels. He is also involved in experimental research on the role of flavours and odours in the regulation of feeding behavior. In 2004, he got the Wiley Award from the International Society for Developmental Psychobiology for his work on the early development of olfaction. He has published 200 papers, reviews and book chapters, and edited or co-edited three volumes: *Smell in Infants and Children*, 1997, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris (in French); *Olfaction, Taste, and Cognition*, 2003, Cambridge University Press, New York; *Children facing Food*, 2008, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris (in French).