

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation study was conducted in the context of the Berlin Aging Study project (principal investigators: Prof. Dr. Paul B. Baltes, Prof. Dr. Ulman Lindenberger, and Prof. Dr. Jacqui Smith) at the Center for Lifespan Psychology of the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin. I am grateful to the principal investigators for providing me with the opportunity to work in an excellent academic environment and to the Max Planck Society, which financed the dissertation with a pre-doctoral stipend.

I wish to express my special gratitude to both of my mentors Paul B. Baltes and Jacqui Smith. I would like to thank Paul B. Baltes for generously supporting the dissertation with his scientific expertise and for opening my view to a systemic perspective on lifespan development. Jacqui Smith contributed invaluable to this work. I deeply appreciate how much time she devoted to providing skillful comments and helpful advice in every phase of my dissertation. I am thankful for her continuing support of my academic development. I also want to thank Prof. Dr. Ralf Schwarzer for accepting the position of the ‘Gutachter’ and Prof. Dr. Hans Westmeyer, Prof. Dr. Clemens Tesch-Römer, and Dr. Jens Eisermann for having agreed to participate in the dissertation committee.

While working on my dissertation, I profited a lot from the many opportunities to present and discuss my work-in-progress in various LIP meetings at the Max Planck Institute and Fall Academies in the context of the Graduate Program ‘Psychology and Psychiatry of Aging’, which was conjointly supported by the German Research Council, the Free University in Berlin, and the Max Planck Institute. My special gratitude goes to the faculty, the numerous visiting scholars, and the fellows, especially Susanne Scheibe and Sabine Schäfer who shared an office with me at the MPI.

I am very grateful to all the people who provided feedback and support at various phases of the dissertation: Julia Delius, Anna Kleinspehn, Christina Röcke, Jochen Ziegelmann, Youlia Spivak, all the people in room 50, and of course, my fellows at Derfflinger Strasse, and at Graefestrasse: Christiane Hoppmann and Thomas Mell. I also want to mention the EDV unit including Wolfgang Assmann, Marion Neumann, Renè König, and Werner Scholtysik for providing technical support and for not getting annoyed when I had yet another special request.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the emotional and social support from my friends and family: Special thanks go to Mathias, Sandra, Broder, Katja and Stefan, and to my parents, my brother and his family, and grandpa. Sorry, grandma, that it took me too long.