

Acknowledgements

This dissertation was conducted at the Center for Lifespan Psychology at the Max-Planck Institute of Human Development (Prof. Paul B. Baltes, Prof. Ulman Lindenberger) within the Wisdom Project (principal investigators: Paul B. Baltes, Ute Kunzmann). I am grateful to the Max-Planck Society who financed the dissertation through a pre-doctoral stipend.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my mentors Prof. Paul B. Baltes and Prof. Ute Kunzmann for their invaluable intellectual contributions to this thesis as well as their continuous support and encouragement. Prof. Paul B. Baltes has shaped my intellectual development in various ways by introducing me to the theoretical and methodological ideas of lifespan psychology. I am deeply indebted to Prof. Ute Kunzmann who has generously helped me with her feedback and support in all phases of this dissertation.

The Center of Lifespan Psychology at the Max Planck Institute of Human Development is a very stimulating intellectual environment. My thinking benefited a lot from the inspiring and creative atmosphere as well as the professional excellence of the scientists and visiting scientists.

Prof. Jacqui Smith has been a role model and a friend at the same time. Her unlimited willingness to invest herself into the guidance and support of young scientists and her ability to stimulate thinking and to encourage love for your work are unrivaled.

As a member of the graduate program „Neuropsychiatry and Psychology of Aging“ I had the opportunity to discuss my work in regular meetings. I am grateful to the members of the advisory board (Prof. Baltes, Prof. Heuser, Prof. Schwarzer) as well as the visiting scientists (Carolyn Aldwin, Margie Lachman, Rick Levenson) who have provided valuable suggestions and comments. I would like to thank Prof. Rainer Banse for his advice on the development of the video stimulus material.

During the late stages of this dissertation I was working at the Technical University of Dresden (Guest Professor Prof. Jacqui Smith), and at the Adult Development Lab (Prof. Fredda Blanchard-Fields) at the Georgia Institute of Technology, School of Psychology, Atlanta. I am very grateful to Prof. Fredda Blanchard-Fields for her support and encouragement.

Besides mentors, a dissertation is influenced by the contribution of peers: Dr. Florian Schmiedek and Daniel Grühn have shared an office with me at the MPI. Their collegiality and friendship have helped me in numerous ways. I would like to acknowledge the invaluable discussions with my Graduate program fellows, the friendship of my MPI doctoral fellows Dr. Justin Powell (who has given comments

on an earlier version of this thesis) and Dr. Jan Wagner, and the continuous support of Dr. Ines Schindler during my time in Dresden.

The MPI does not only consist of excellent scientists, but also excellent and devoted staff to whom I am deeply indebted: Kirsten Becker helped conducting the pilot study and recruiting. Amy Michelle and Dr. Julia Delius gave comments on earlier versions of this thesis. Werner Scholtysik helped with computer issues.

I am grateful to my parents, Marie-Luise and Lothar Stange, and my friends André Schütze, Andreas Batke, Anne Adams, Claus Karl Preisen, Laila Maija Hofmann, Nataliya Shmeleva, Srikanth Mallavarapu, Ute Fischer, and Ute Schulz for their love, encouragement, support, humor, and wisdom.