

IN MEMORY OF PAUL B. BALTES

It is now almost a year since Paul B. Baltes died on November 7, 2006, at the young age of 67 after an intense battle with cancer. After the illness was diagnosed in January 2006, Paul along with his medical advisors and colleagues collaborated in maintaining the hope that his treatment would give him some additional years to enjoy with his family and to bring his many projects to completion. Indeed, those who did not see him on a day-to-day basis may not have known that he was ill: His e-mails, letters, and telephone conversations focused on work and he continued his busy schedule of trips, meetings, and writing obligations. At the time of his death, he was Director of the International Max Planck Research Network on Aging (MaxnetAging) located in Berlin, Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia, and Speaker of the International Max Planck Research School (LIFE). He died on the day that the fourth Conference of MaxnetAging opened in Naples, a meeting which he had planned to attend until the last.

ISSBD was an important element in the international career of Paul B. Baltes. He was President of the Society from 1983 to 1987, organized the Biennial Meetings in Munich (1983), played a leading role in the Meetings in Tours (1985) and Tokyo (1987), attended subsequent Meetings on a regular basis, and provided his support and advice to the Presidents who followed him. Over the years, Paul was instrumental in negotiating substantial financial support for Society activities from the Swiss-based Jacobs Foundation. In addition, from 1982 to mid-1999, the Society Newsletter was produced and distributed from the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin using funds and resources acquired by Paul Baltes from the Max Planck Society.

Allow me to mention here a few of the many snapshots of ISSBD occasions involving Paul Baltes that I have in my memory. I will then leave the reader to recall and savor her or his own experiences. I often recall the wonderful 1987 ISSBD Meeting in Tokyo where Paul handed over the Presidency to Harold W. Stevenson. I shared a hotel room with six colleagues from Berlin and the USA. The camaraderie developed in our cramped space not only added to the enjoyment of the meeting but fostered professional connections that remain today. Following the Meeting, many ISSBD members were fortunate to be invited to attend a satellite conference in Beijing, which Paul Baltes and Harold Stevenson had co-sponsored on behalf of ISSBD with Chinese developmental scholars, and to travel afterwards to various parts of China.

Fortunately, Paul himself wrote about the various influences on his work and his international career in a chapter titled: *Autobiographical reflections: From developmental methodology and lifespan psychology to gerontology* (Baltes, 2000). I highly recommend this chapter to those interested. Needless to say, he also leaves an extensive legacy of scholarly writings, many of which have already transformed the field of human development and will continue to do so. From 1970 to 1990, for example, Baltes and colleagues edited an influential series on *Life-Span Developmental Psychology* and *Life-Span Development and Behavior*. The chapters in these books document the historical context and evolution of ideas in the field of lifespan development over two decades and

the role of Baltes in this process. Along with his first publication in English (Baltes, 1968), which is now a citation classic on the difficulties of separating age and cohort effects, in my opinion two central journal articles (Baltes, 1987; 1997) are the best sources for his framework for lifespan developmental research and theoretical ideas about ontogeny. These papers outline his proposals about (1) the multi-level systems of influences on development (e.g., biopsychosocial, historical, contextual), (2) the ontogenetic design of these influences, and (3) the potential and limits of plasticity across the lifespan. Together with his first wife, Margret Baltes, Paul fostered research on successful aging and a model of three processes underlying successful development, selection, optimization, and compensation (SOC). He was particularly interested in illustrating the many faces of cognitive aging, from negative decline and loss to aspects of growth and maintenance in late life (e.g., wisdom). The multidisciplinary Berlin Aging Study (BASE), a longitudinal study of men and women aged 70 to 100 which Paul Baltes co-founded in 1989, is an instantiation of his belief that development and aging should be studied as complex multi-level systems.

Paul Baltes was the mentor to many cohorts of students in the USA and Germany and to researchers around the world. Many of his colleagues and academic kin gathered in early July 2004 in Berlin to celebrate him on the occasion of his career transition at age 65. The guestlist was a "who's who" in psychology and lifespan research. It was a tribute to the time and effort that he invested into building networks among fellow researchers, fostering scientific excellence, and managing science politics on an international level. I had the privilege to collaborate with Paul Baltes for 22 years and to experience at first hand his own academic growth during this period. Inevitably, from 1995 onwards as he became more and more involved in science management within the Max Planck Society and many other national and international organizations, he had less time to be involved fully in day-to-day research. Paul nevertheless always found time to apply his insight and ability to decipher key research issues in ongoing projects and to provide advice. Many who worked with him treasure his advice over the years: He remains one of the "inner voices" in our minds.

References

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