

PAUL B. BALTES

June 18, 1939 – November 7, 2006

Paul B. Baltes was Director of the Center of Lifespan Psychology at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin, Professor of Psychology at the Free University of Berlin, and Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia. He received his doctorate from the University of Saarbrücken (Saarland, Germany) in 1967. Before returning to Germany in 1980, Baltes spent 12 years as professor of psychology and/or human development at several American institutions including Pennsylvania State University where he directed the Division of Individual and Family Studies.

As to research and theory, Baltes was interested in advancing a lifespan view of human ontogenesis that considers behavioral and cognitive functioning from childhood into old age. Substantive topics included work on historical cohort effects, cognitive development, and a dual-process conception of lifespan intelligence, and the study of wisdom. His interests also included models of successful development (including aging) and the cross-cultural comparative study of self-related agency beliefs in the context of child development and school performance. Together with his late wife, Margret Baltes, he proposed a systemic metatheory of ontogeny which characterizes lifespan development as the orchestration of three processes: selection, optimization, and compensation.

Baltes was active in various national and international organizations including the US Social Science Research Council (where he served as chair of the Board of Directors from 1996 until 2000), the German-American Academy Council, the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences, and the European Academy of Science. Regarding interdisciplinarity, Baltes was engaged primarily in two projects: he chaired (together with Karl Ulrich Mayer) the Berlin Aging Study and, together with the Sociologist Neil Smelser, he was co-editor-in-chief of the 26-volume *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Elsevier) which appeared in 2001.

Paul B. Baltes was author or editor of 18 books and more than 250 scholarly articles and chapters. For his work, he was honored with numerous awards including honorary doctorates and election as foreign member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, and in 2000 to the German order Pour le mérite of Science and the Arts.