

**Society for
Interpersonal
Theory and
Research**

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

SITAR Newsletter

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President's Message Krista Trobst

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As I write this, my last SITAR President's message, we are five weeks away from our 8th annual meeting, to be held June 19th and 20th in beautiful Montreal. I am very much looking forward to the talks, but most of all I am looking forward to seeing many of you there. We again have a very full and impressive program that promises to be highly informative and stimulating. Beginning the meeting, we are very fortunate to have master interpersonal clinician and theorist Lorna Smith Benjamin delivering the keynote address discussing the history and current practice of Interpersonal Reconstructive Therapy, particularly as it applies to very complex cases. Approximately 20 additional speakers and 17 poster presentations will examine the application of interpersonal theory and methodology

to evolutionary, cross-cultural, and positive psychology as well as featuring interpersonal approaches to such topics as: psychotherapy; clinical diagnoses (e.g., anxiety, depression, social anxiety, personality disorders); complementarity; parenting; leadership; self-enhancement strategies; conflict; attachment; motives and goals; and, interpersonal dynamics in settings such as fraternities and the workplace.

As usual, the executive council will be convening prior to the meeting to discuss pending and ongoing SITAR business and to formulate the agenda for the annual business meeting to take place on Sunday afternoon. Included in the business meeting will be updates from our various committees regarding such ongoing matters as our

vision for membership expansion, our presence on the internet, and our plans for future meetings. If anyone has suggestions for other matters they would like to have addressed by the executive council and/or the full membership, please let me know (ktrobst@aol.com) and I will add these issues to the agenda.

There are a couple of business matters that we have discussed yearly that we will likely need to continue to revisit for some time to come. These involve the highly inter-related issues of membership expansion and our self-



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You Can Still Make Reservations for SITAR's 8th Annual Meeting in Montreal, QU, Canada

SITAR's 8th Annual Meeting, hosted by Debbie Moskowitz, will be held on June 19-20, 2005 at the Delta Montreal. See the enclosed hotel reservation form for additional information. For those who also plan to attend the Society for Psychotherapy Research (SPR) in Montreal June 22-26, the Delta Montreal is located near the meeting site for SPR. For more information about the hotel, check out their web site, www.deltamontreal.com

Those who are looking for more economical accommodations may: (1) Call the Student Residence Office at McGill, (514) 398-5200, to reserve a single room with a shared bath at Royal Victoria College (a McGill residence hall), or (2) Contact the Manoir Ambrose, a small European style inn (www.manoirambrose.com); they have a limited number of rooms available at the time of the conference.

Our Sunday night dinner will be at the delightful French restaurant, Le Caveau. To help us obtain an accurate count for meals, please indicate your interest in attending the dinner in advance of the meeting.

The onsite meeting registration fee, which includes breakfasts, lunches, and snacks, is US\$185 for members, US\$210 for non-members, and US\$160 for students.

Complementarity, College Roommates, and Reality Television by Patrick M. Markey and John E. Kurtz

One of the advantages of being a teacher is that you are able to select the topics you will discuss in class. So every year I (the first author) lecture on issues related to complementarity. Students seem to really enjoy learning about how our behaviors affect and are affected by the behaviors of our interaction partners. Specifically, they seem to be interested in Carson's (1969) notion of complementarity – individuals tend to act opposite in terms of dominance and similar in terms of warmth. The students appear to recognize how complementarity could impact their lives and daily interactions with friends, roommates, family, and romantic partners.

After piquing their interest in complementarity, I discuss empirical research that has supported Carson's definition of complementarity. They learn about research that has examined the behavior of participants while they interacted with confederates who were coached to act in a dominant or warm manner. Of course, being a modest individual, I also present one of my studies that examined the videotaped behaviors of strangers as they interacted with each other across various social situations in a laboratory (e.g., Markey, Funder, & Ozer, 2003).

Each year this lecture is very enjoyable to teach – I get my students excited about a topic, I provide some empirical evidence, and I even get to talk about my own research. However, last year my confidence in this lecture was slightly shaken when, at the conclusion of my lecture, I asked for questions. The first question I received was more of a critique than a question when a student remarked that he was “less than impressed” by these studies. Of course, my pride was a little hurt by this student's comment, so I asked him to expand upon his critique.

He informed me that, while I was teaching complementarity, he was applying it to the behaviors he had witnessed in various interactions. Specifically, he applied it to the interactions he observed on reality television shows such as “Survivor,” “The Apprentice,” “Big Brother,” and “The Real World.” In each of these shows, contestants live and work together and have their daily interactions tele-

vised. In this context, this student saw a multitude of interpersonal interactions that were rich in emotion and exciting to watch. In contrast to reality television, he felt the interactions that occurred in the research I discussed were boring and were simply “not real.”

Although I'm not sure if reality television is any more “real” than the experiments we conduct in our laboratories, this student may have a valid point. He was using reality television to argue that many of the research designs we employ when examining complementarity might not generalize to the real world. The mundane interaction tasks participants complete in our laboratories (e.g., building Tinker-Toys, playing the memory game *Simon*; Markey, Funder, & Ozer, 2003) are very different than the interactions they might encounter in their daily lives. This classroom discussion inspired me to further investigate the generalizability of traditional labora-



tory studies and to determine how one might examine complementarity in the real world.

There are several issues that might limit the generalizability of laboratory studies to the real world. Sadler and Woody (2003) have argued that research designs that utilize confederates are inconsistent with the principle of complementarity because *both* individuals mutually influence each other's interpersonal styles during a dyadic interaction. In order to overcome this concern, researchers have examined complementarity using dyads composed of two randomly paired strangers (e.g., Markey, Funder, & Ozer, 2003; Sadler & Woody, 2003). Although the use of randomly paired strangers creates a situation that allows both individuals to influence each other, it also creates a situation that has very little interpersonal importance from the perspective of the participants.

Participants are aware that at the conclusion of the experiment they will likely never interact with this stranger again. It is therefore unknown if results from these stranger dyads would generalize to the daily interactions we have in the real world with our family members, roommates, romantic partners, co-workers, or even to the behaviors of constants on reality television shows.

The generalizability of our laboratory research is also limited simply because, by definition, it is conducted in an unnatural and controlled environment. In such protocols, individuals are typically told to interact for a set amount of time, are videotaped interacting, and are rarely exposed to any of the distractions that might occur in a natural environment. Of course, in the natural environment there are a multitude of distractions that occur during interpersonal interactions – a third person might enter a room, a television might be turned on, a meal may be served, etc. In this manner, the controlled environment afforded by a laboratory might artificially increase how much the interpersonal styles of two people complement each other.

When researchers have examined complementarity outside of the laboratory, they have tended to use stable personality traits in order to provide information about which types of personalities “fit” best together. Although examining complementarity using stable personality traits is noteworthy, such personality traits only provide information about how a person typically behaves across different interaction partners. As noted by Tracey (2004), since the notion of complementarity suggests that the interpersonal styles of individuals are altered by the interpersonal styles of interaction partners, assessments of such stable personality traits may be limited in the information they can provide concerning complementarity in specific relationships. A better way to examine complementarity might be to assess how an individual tends to behave when he or she is in the presence of a specific interaction partner and how this specific interaction partner tends

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Patrick M. Markey and John E. Kurtz (cont.)

to behave when he or she is in the presence of the individual. One means of measuring these interpersonal styles in the natural environment would be to have each member of a dyad describe the interpersonal style of the other member of the dyad.

In order to investigate complementarity in the natural environment, John Kurtz and I (Markey & Kurtz, 2005) recently examined informant ratings of interpersonal styles among college roommates. College roommates provide several unique opportunities for testing the principles of complementarity that have not been fully explored in the existing literature. First, college roommates are often randomly paired by the institution, this serves to lesson various selection biases. Second, the exact dates of introduction can be easily obtained in order to precisely measure the length of acquaintanceship. Third, and perhaps most important, the social interactions of roommates occur in the close confines of a daily living situation that can be highly salient to a college student's personal, social, and academic life.

In this study, 102 roommate dyads (204 participants) described each other's interpersonal styles after living together for two weeks and again after living together for 15 weeks. These informant-reports of roommate interpersonal styles were utilized in order to obtain a fairly non-obtrusive assessment of how a person tended to act when they were in the presence of their roommate. By collecting these informant-reports at two time points, we could examine if the interpersonal styles of the roommates were altered in a manner that established greater complementarity as the relationship progressed (Kiesler, 1983). Results indicated that after living together for two weeks, roommates did not perceive each other to have complementing interpersonal styles. However, after cohabitating for 15 weeks, perceptions of interpersonal style seemed to be altered in a manner consistent with Carson's notion of complementarity – roommates appeared to act opposite to each other in terms of dominance and the same as each other in terms of warmth.

Consistent with previous laboratory research, we found that after living together for 15 weeks the interpersonal

styles of roommates appeared to complement each other. However, findings from this study also substantiated some concerns about the generalizability of laboratory research. Whereas past laboratory studies suggested that individual's interpersonal styles start to complement each other very quickly, the current study found that the interpersonal styles of roommates failed to complement each other after living together for two weeks. This discrepant finding might have occurred because in the laboratory participants interact in a controlled environment where there is little chance of unexpected interruptions or diversions. In contrast, during the first two weeks of living together, the participants in the current study probably experienced many distractions during their interactions. During this time, participants might have been unpacking and settling into their new rooms, doing homework, eating dinners, attending parties, watching reality television shows, and talking to others while in the presence of their roommates. It is likely that the richness (i.e., unmeasured noise) of this natural environment might explain why complementarity was not detected as quickly in the current study as in past laboratory studies.

As researchers we are sometimes so concerned about carefully controlling every aspect of our experiment that we might unknowingly create environments that are unlikely to occur in real life. When my student noted that he was "less than impressed" with my laboratory research because it was not like reality television, he made me think of a means to examine complementarity in the real world. Although it may be difficult to know if one is ever truly studying "real life," by utilizing informant reports of college roommates, we were able to investigate the changes in complementarity that took place as important relationships developed through interactions that occurred in a natural environment.

Author Note: For more information about this research contact Patrick Markey at patrick.markey@villanova.edu

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President's Message (cont.)

definition as a Society. Our current description of SITAR indicates that we are "an international, multidisciplinary, scientific association devoted to the advancement of interpersonal theory and research." Clearly, this definition is broad enough to continue to serve our purposes even if we expand significantly, but how we define what we deem to be "interpersonal" is what is likely to evolve as our Society expands and as we go in search of new recruits. I believe our goals for our Society have always been both agentic and communal in nature. At present, we are a small, highly dedicated, collegial, and close-knit group and I believe that we would like to keep these communal qualities paramount. But expansion has its benefits, including infusing the Society with fresh perspectives, expanding our scope, providing additional monies and new bodies to assume leadership roles, increasing our presence and influence and our security and likely longevity as we develop greater strength in numbers. As I have stated in the past, careful, targeted, growth should remain our goal, pursuing our agentic desires while maintaining our communal character.

The close of our upcoming meeting will signal the end of my term as President. It has truly been an honour and a pleasure to serve our beloved little group and I will look forward to many devoted years ahead as I join the most impressive company that I will keep with the other past presidents along the sidelines of this great Society. I will be "passing the gavel" to the eminently capable Professor Debbie Moskowitz, and the highly adept Professor Terry Tracey will then assume the role of President-Elect. For the foreseeable future, SITAR is in very good hands indeed!

Handbook of Personology and Psychopathology*

by Stephen Strack

This collection of 29 chapters by some of the most influential theorists, researchers, and clinicians of this generation gives a state-of-the-art overview of the evolving field of personology and psychopathology as it has emerged into the first decade of the 21st century. I know you may be saying to yourself that “personology” and “psychopathology” are really separate fields, and you are right, as historically they were largely independent during most of the last century. But the integrationist movement in psychology and psychiatry that began in the 1980s has given us a hybrid field that brings together the best ideas and methods from each domain.

The publication of DSM-III in 1980 is largely credited with sparking this integration by relinquishing its antiquated theoretical underpinnings and by placing personality disorders (PDs) on a separate axis from other mental disorders. Like deregulation in the modern economic marketplace, by cutting itself loose from the past DSM-III gave free reign to the scientific community to step in and fill the knowledge gaps created by the new system. This alone brought a tidal wave of new theorists and researchers into the area. But just as central is that by giving PDs their own axis, and asking clinicians to consider the stable trait characteristics of all their patients, personality was elevated to a level of importance it had never had before. A consequence of this is that many more patients were diagnosed with PDs. With more PD patients to treat, better treatments were needed. More money poured into PD research, and of course, this attracted more people into the area.

Many individuals have contributed to the hybrid field of personology and psychopathology, but perhaps none is more exemplary than Theodore Millon (1969/1983, 1990, 1996) who, in 1969, began to build a comprehensive model of personality and psychopathology that

could encompass the full spectrum of normal and abnormal behavior. His goal was to move beyond then current conceptions of behavior that focused on specific aspects of human functioning without reference to the whole person to create a theory-driven system for understanding human behavior at the personologic level that would draw on the best ideas from psychology and adjacent disciplines. His thinking was based on the idea that “persons” are the only organically integrated system in the psychological domain, evolved through the millennia and inherently created as natural entities rather than culture-bound and experience-derived gestalts (Millon 1999, 2003).

Coining the term “psychosynergy” for his effort, Millon (1999) has labored for 35+ years to resynthesize and integrate science, theory, classification, assessment, and therapy so that we will have a coherent system for understanding how people develop and live their lives; that is, think, feel, behave, love, work, relate, become ill, and get well.

This *Handbook* was conceived and developed by its contributors as an overview of the science of personology and psychopathology in recognition of the central—indeed seminal—role played by Theodore Millon in shaping the field as it exists today. A *festschrift*, the volume is divided into five sections that reflect Millon’s blueprint for a clinical science: First, conceptual issues are reviewed that help define the boundaries of theoretical models (section two) designed to provide coherent, empirically-supportable propositions that can then lead to coherent taxonomies and classification systems (section three). The value of assessment methods (section four) can be gauged based on how well they operationalize the theory-derived classification systems that precede them. Finally, in section five, there is a review of therapeutic techniques that were derived from coherent theories and taxonomies and integrated with appropriate assessment methods.

The list of contributors is too long to detail here but includes many writers you will be familiar with: Aaron and Judy Beck, Roger Blashfield, Paul Costa,

Jerry Gold, Otto Kernberg, John Livesley, Drew Westen, and Irving Weiner. SITAR members will find much of interest, including chapter 7, *The Interpersonal Nexus of Personality Disorders*, where Aaron Pincus offers new ideas on how interpersonal theory can help resolve some of the existing problems in diagnosis and classification of PDs. In chapter 23, Lorna Benjamin explains the rationale behind *Interpersonal Reconstructive Therapy* and how it can be used to help change maladaptive behavior. In chapter 27 Len Horowitz and Kelly Wilson show how interpersonal motives can be used to explain some of the more puzzling behaviors offered by people with PDs. The last chapter was written by Theodore Millon, who gives his thoughts on the future of personology and psychopathology. An added feature of the book is a biographical time line that highlights major events in Millon’s life and career.

In preparing their contributions authors were asked to write for the growing number of mental health clinicians, researchers, and students who want to know about current directions in the field of personology and psychopathology, but may be unfamiliar with some concepts and methods. In addition to providing an overview of their particular area of expertise, authors were asked to stretch themselves to help bridge existing gaps and to suggest avenues for future inquiry. Because of this the book should be a welcome addition to the library of graduate students as well as seasoned clinicians and researchers.

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*The *Handbook of Personology and Psychopathology*, edited by S. Strack (2005; 580 pages; ISBN 0-471-45907-0), is published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., of Hoboken, NJ.

Selected Abstracts of Posters Presented at the 7th Annual Meeting in Toronto, ON

Behavioural Inhibition, Behavioural Activation, and Perceived Inclusion

Author(s): Lena C. Quilty, Shannon M. Gifford, & Jonathan M. Oakman
Affiliation: University of Waterloo

Recent integrative work suggests that two fundamental biological systems are responsible for emotional and behavioural regulation: approach and withdrawal. Gray's behavioural activation system (BAS) and behavioural inhibition system (BIS), representing approach and withdrawal motivation, respectively, offer considerable promise in explaining a variety of normal and pathological behavior. Much research has been dedicated to the impact of these systems upon performance in the achievement domain; however, relatively less attention has been paid to their predictive power within the social domain. It is plausible that individual differences in these activation and inhibition systems may contribute to differential sensitivities to cues of social reward and punishment, and ultimately to social inclusion or belongingness. A trait-level questionnaire study revealed that both behavioural inhibition and activation predict perceived social inclusion. However, a state-level study revealed a more complicated picture, such that an interaction between inhibition and activation more accurately described perceived inclusion following a dyadic interaction. It appears that strong inhibition reduces feelings of inclusion regardless of activation level, whereas at low inhibition levels, higher activation results in higher perceived inclusion.

Accuracy of Moment-to-Moment Perceptions of Social Behaviour and Its Relation to Interpersonal Problems

Author(s): David Duong & Pamela Sadler
Affiliation: Wilfrid Laurier University

During social interactions people continuously and mutually influence each

other. This process depends on real-time interpretations of people's social behaviors. However, perceptions of interpersonal behaviors can be highly variable, and some individuals may make less accurate assessments than others. Consistently inaccurate or biased views of others' social behaviors may lead to unsatisfying patterns of interaction and a decreased capability to skillfully manage social interactions. Some interpersonal researchers have also argued that people tend to misperceive others' behavior in ways that are consistent with their own interpersonal style. For example, people with more hostile interpersonal styles may tend to see more hostile behavior in others than do those with friendly interpersonal styles. Therefore, individuals' moment-to-moment assessments may be biased in ways that are consistent with their general interpersonal style. To evaluate these ideas, we had sixty participants view several video clips of interactions between two strangers, while making real-time evaluations of each person's dominance and friendliness using a computer joystick. Afterwards, participants completed questionnaires about their own interpersonal problems, social avoidance, social competence, and mood. We expect that people who show less accurate moment-to-moment interpersonal perceptions will report lower social competence and mood, and greater interpersonal problems, social avoidance, and general distress.

Change in Psychotherapy: The Moderating Effects of Ego-Resiliency and Decisional Procrastination

Author(s): Chad Sobotka, Heather Hutchensen, Michelle J. McDonald, & Robert J. Budny
Affiliation: University of Wisconsin – Parkside, St. Luke's Hospital

Research indicates that one of the best predictors of change in psychotherapy is the strength of alliance between the client and the therapist (Barber, 2000).

This research investigated variables that potentially moderate the predictive relationship between therapeutic alliance and therapy outcome (as defined by a significant decrease in symptomatology as therapy progresses). Two moderating variables were explored: ego-resiliency and decisional procrastination. The first, ego-resiliency, is a stress-resistance factor, which is associated with emotional adjustment (Klohn, 1996) and a faster recovery from emotional distress (Garmerzy, 1991). Decisional procrastination, the tendency to delay important decisions when faced with conflicts and choices, is associated with perfectionism (Ferrari & Dovidio, 2000), which, in turn, is associated with a host of psychological problems (Pacht, 1984). We hypothesized that ego-resiliency would moderate the relationship between alliance and outcome such that clients higher in this characteristic would be more likely to report positive outcomes when an alliance was present. Decisional procrastination was hypothesized to decrease the predictive relationship between alliance and reported improvement in therapy. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to analyze data from 84 outpatient psychotherapy clients at a midsize midwestern hospital. Results are discussed in the context of interpersonal theory.

Are there implicit interpersonal styles? Differentiating implicit vs. explicit traits of dominance and friendliness

Author(s): Nicole Ethier & Pamela Sadler
Affiliation: Wilfrid Laurier University

Recent research suggests that traits may be measured at two distinguishable levels: an explicit level of the trait that is predictive of controlled or voluntary behaviour, and an implicit level that is predictive of automatic or habitual behaviour (Asendorpf, 2002). Particular interest has centered on individuals for whom the two levels of the trait are inconsistent, yielding problematic patterns of behavior and stress (Jordan, 2003; Langens, 2001). To illustrate,

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SITAR: Mission, Aims, and Activities

The Society is an international, multidisciplinary, scientific association devoted to interpersonal theory and research. By encouraging systematic theory and empirical research, it seeks to clarify the processes and mechanisms of interpersonal interactions that explain interpersonal and intrapersonal phenomena of normal and abnormal psychology.

The goals of the Society are (1) to encourage the development of this research, (2) to foster the communication, understanding, and application of research findings, and (3) to enhance the scientific and social value of this research.

The activities of the Society include: (1) regular meetings for the communication of current research ideas, methods, and findings; (2) discussion of work in progress; (3) maintenance of an inventory of data and data-gathering resources available for use by members of the Society; and (4) facilitation of collaborative research.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICER WANTED—Steve Strack has notified the Executive Council of his desire to step down from the job of Executive Officer (EO) when his term expires in May 2005. As outlined in the By Laws, the EO serves in a number of important roles. Among these are: (1) Serve as the Secretary-Treasurer General of the Society; (2) serve as member of the Executive Council; (3) supervise the timely collection and circulation of minutes of the annual session of the Convention and of Executive Council meetings; (4) maintain the official records of the Society; (5) receive, manage, and disburse the funds of the Society; and (6) handle legal correspondence concerning SITAR's incorporation and tax exempt status.

Interested persons are encouraged to contact Steve Strack as soon as possible to discuss the position and their qualifications. Steve may be reached at snstrack@aol.com

Abstracts (cont.)

someone who thinks of herself as behaving warmly may inadvertently show habitual stiff and cold types of behaviour. Accordingly, for sixty undergraduate students, we obtained measures of explicit and implicit dominance and affiliation, interpersonal problems, psychological well-being, and informant (friend) reports of interpersonal style. Our main hypothesis is that discrepancies in the implicit and explicit personality traits of dominance and affiliation should predict increased interpersonal problems and diminished well-being. In addition, because individuals may be unaware of their implicit traits, we further hypothesized that implicit traits should predict friend assessments of interpersonal style over and above explicit self-reports. In the present study, we hope to demonstrate that the implicit level of an interpersonal trait can be distinguished meaningfully from the explicit level of that trait, suggesting that there may be two coexisting facets of interpersonal style. In addition, the combination of these implicit and explicit levels may lead to better understanding of the forces that shape social interaction.

Lorna Smith Benjamin Featured Keynote Speaker at SITAR's 8th Annual Meeting in Montreal, QC

Lorna Smith Benjamin, Ph.D., is a professor in the Department of Psychology and adjunct professor of Psychiatry at the University of Utah. She is Co-Director of the Interpersonal Reconstructive Therapy clinic at the University of Utah Neuropsychiatric Institute. Born and raised in Rochester, New York, Dr. Benjamin obtained her Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Wisconsin in 1960.

Internationally renowned scholar, clinician, researcher and teacher, Dr. Benjamin has published over 80 articles and chapters, served as Consulting Editor for a number of psychological and psychiatric journals, and authored several books including *Interpersonal Diagnosis and Treatment of Personality Disorders* (1996, 2nd Edition), and *Interpersonal Reconstructive Therapy: Promoting Change in Nonresponders* (2003). These books have received wide acclaim. For example, in a recent review of her 2003 book in the journal *Psychiatry*, Richard S. Epstein concluded, "I recommend that this text be required reading in all psychotherapy training programs."



Dr. Benjamin's groundbreaking development of the Structural Analysis of Social Behavior (SASB), a dimensional model elucidating the interpersonal and intrapsychic patterns underlying maladaptive behaviors, has greatly enhanced the application of psychotherapy research to practice. Her honors and accomplishments include: Past President of the International Society for Psychotherapy Research; 2002 Recipient of the Distinguished Research Career Award from SPR; 2002 Recipient of the Distinguished Research Award from the Utah Psychological Association; Recipient of the Superior Research Award in 1993 and the Superior Teaching Award in 2001 from the University of Utah; advisor to the DSM-IV Work Group for Axis II Disorders; invited presenter at the 2002 Master Therapist Workshop sponsored by the University of Connecticut; and invited plenary speaker at the 2002 Annual Psychotherapiewochen (Psychoanalytic) Meetings in Lindau, Germany.