

NADA Is Not a Government



Dr. Michael Smith at Poul nabrone dolmen, the Burren, County Clare, Ireland. Photo Courtesy of Jo Ann Lenney

NADA is not a government. It is a transitional organization to encourage the spread of a simple method which is a very useful first step in treatment, rescuing, gathering together, etc. Internationally it is not the state department or any such managing process. Every country has followed its own path with its own timetable. Each country followed a unique path, rarely following a lead even from a nearby country. If I had tried to manage the process at a distance, similarly it would have failed. Every once in a while, local people asked me to provide a certain kind of document (usually quite secondary) and I did. They never asked about standards of training, never. For years they were shy about telling other countries about their own training guidelines. I never pressed them. On my behalf it was often frustrating that these standards and arrangements were hidden. Like being a parent, or therapist, or consultant, or friend.

There can be an illusion that training is especially hard and risky. All of us know this. These illusions all have implied cultural contexts. We are rarely talking about actual training. More often it is about appeasing other professionals or getting more money or status. This is all tragic human reality, but it is seriously local.

Neo-colonial state department mimicry never does something beyond pushing odd issues and earning status points. Incidentally, loading the scene with complex interrelated subtleties always erodes living Qi.

Each country is fully separate, only the spirit and compassion are shared. Keep it simple. Let others have their own complexities. Make simple connections with local experts. Don't overlink people or ideas. Learn to accept the reality that many issues will remain muddy and imperfect for years. ♪

Michael O Smith



NADA's Mission

The National Acupuncture Detoxification Association (NADA), a not-for-profit training and advocacy organization, encourages community wellness through the use of a standardized auricular acupuncture protocol for behavioral health, including addictions, mental health, and disaster and emotional trauma. We work to improve access and effectiveness of care through promoting policies and practices which integrate NADA-style treatment with other Western behavioral health modalities.

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The Task at Hand

By Sara Bursac

I sit in Zagreb, Croatia, as I write this reflection while on a year-long working sabbatical, living in the city where I spent the first 12 years of my life. This January is a milestone for my time with NADA, first as its office manager and now as its the executive director – 10 years and running.

In the past several months, the NADA office team has been having more open communication – knowing that this can cause vulnerability and some disequilibrium but also knowing that this is a necessary part of healthy growth. We have been training ourselves to provide more active and direct feedback about our work interactions, and, while we are still in a learning curve, our feedback practice meetings have created some very positive moments of connection.¹

While exploring resources to help us be more open with each other, I learned about the emergence of a new understanding in organizational development, sometimes referred to as the Teal evolutionary model which is based on concepts of self-management and decentralization. I have immersed myself in learning more to see if this is a good fit as a direction for NADA to go in.

It hasn't taken me long to realize that the Bronx's Lincoln Recovery Center – Lincoln – operated as a Teal organization, functioning as a living organism or living system.²

In 1995 Ellinor Mitchell wrote: Lincoln “was created in the community-based self-help model, as a result of a community activist response to the growing drug problem and lack of services available. A small contingent of professional medical staff was supplemented by many neighborhood volunteers in a collective and non-hierarchical model.

“The circumstances which necessitated the program also shaped its design and growth. Those same grassroots strategies pervaded the spread of the acudetox culture with the development of the organization, NADA, and the proliferation of NADA-styled treatment programs across the country and around the world.”³

According to Michael Smith, Lincoln's director from 1974 to 2010, “The current staff design was born out of that need, from day one, of a support staff system that combined the knowledge and experience of former clients to augment the small clinical staff.”



Michael Smith and Sara Bursac at his office, 2011

From the lens of a Teal perspective, Lincoln was an organizational pioneer in the field of addiction treatment and recovery. When it held its last 2-week apprenticeship-based NADA training in December of 2010, there was no other program that could keep the torch going.

It wasn't all in the structure of its services – that acupuncture was offered every day, all day; and that staff took daily urines; that clients attended men's groups, women's groups, 12-step programs and reiki sessions; and that mothers checked in every day with Nancy Smalls in the Maternal Substance Abuse Services program. The unique alchemy that brought all the pieces together was the treatment philosophy.

Michael Smith wrote that: “The first principle of treatment at Lincoln Recovery Center is safety. Patients need to be welcomed into a calm, sober, and tolerant environment. The primary counselor's job is to listen to the patient's story and accept the patient's life as it is.”

After describing all the services that clients can participate in, he added: “Achieving and maintaining sobriety is primarily the patients' responsibility. Patients ‘write’ their own letter to the judge by producing negative toxicology reports. We cannot micro-manage patients' lives. The quality of each patient's day-to-day participation in the Lincoln Recovery Center depends on choices made by that particular patient. Our role is to support the patient in making the best possible choices.”

That support manifested in a horizontal, non-hierarchical, self-management staff structure which made it possible to work with hundreds of clients on a daily basis. As long as Lincoln Recovery Center could keep itself independent of the top-down hierarchical structure of the larger Lincoln Hospital, it could stay authentic to its client-centered environment and workflow.

NADA owes its existence to Lincoln's evolved organizational consciousness. The respect given to all human beings who walked through its doors birthed a global movement in how we provide care to people in crisis. Michael Smith, the director of Lincoln of four decades, unequivocally believed that self-healing is our animal birthright. His implicit trust that people can *help others* with the NADA protocol, and that people can *help themselves* with the NADA protocol, is an essential aspect of the Spirit of NADA.

Thirty-five years after its inception, our organization is dynamic and purposeful, but sometimes emotionally intense and immature. I say that because within the handiwork of our training and advocacy, there is a tense thread of personality conflicts, competitiveness and rigidity about how the NADA protocol is taught.

Reflecting on the choice of a name for our organization, Michael Smith said many times that "NADA is a simple, Taoist-centered concept of acting without acting; NADA has to be simple because everything else is so complicated." How are we honoring our own name?

Michael Smith shared a suggestion –

"Don't call them trainers, maybe even call them coordinators, because you can't have a hierarchical system. The less social distance between the teacher and the student, the better.

"The word training emphasizes a clinical approach. How much better to teach and to learn the auricular acupuncture technique; to partner with the client, assisting in the recovery process; to recognize the communal treatment approach; and to recognize and support the client's safe space."

What better way to develop a safe space than to remove barriers between "you" and "me", or, "trainer" and "trainee," or, "client" and "provider."

How to evolve ourselves into that simplicity –

We must become conscious of one of our biggest liabilities and that is the risk of becoming enamored with professionalization. This is often paired with a string of letters that get added to our name, as though they are an actual part of our identity. At one of our national conferences, a speaker gave me his title, BTDT, to add after his name. As I hadn't heard of it before, I asked what it meant: Been There Done That. Of course. Thank you. It made it into the program.

Michael Smith said, "Acupuncture simply helps addiction, but the basic issues of self-esteem, family repair, and an

almost hourly search for a cooperative way of life are quite difficult. Our method was to have the acupuncture ALL done by beginning students, and the addiction work by experienced experts who were nevertheless not molded by school learning."

As a living and organic reality, NADA can grow everywhere – in community spaces, as well as places designated for recovery and healing. How far and wide it spreads is entirely up to us – and our ability to embrace our Taoist nature, to act without acting.

I trust that none of our growing pains of the past 35 years are actual impediments. I consider our strongest values the belief in the power of an individual's self-reliance, healing in community, and our interdependence, as people connected by the Spirit of NADA.☯

¹ About learning to provide active and direct feedback in the workplace, there are many online resources for [the non-violent communication model](#), developed by Marshall Rosenberg.

² For further reading about the [Teal evolutionary organizational model: Reinventing Organizations](#), Frederic Laloux (2014).

³ History of NADA in its early days: Fighting Drug Abuse with Acupuncture, Ellinor Mitchell (1995). *Ed: Ellinor Mitchell passed away in November, 2019. A fuller story about her life and contributions with this book coming in the Spring 2020 issue.*

Michael Smith's writing comes from several separate essays, talks and email correspondence compiled by Jo Ann Lenney.

I Love You for What You Are

I love you for what you are,
but I love you yet more for what you are going to be.
I love you not so much for your realities as for your ideals.
I pray for your desires that they may be great,
rather than for your satisfactions, which may be so
hazardously little.

A satisfied flower is one whose petals are about to fall.
The most beautiful rose is one hardly more than a bud
wherein the pangs and ecstasies of desire are working
for a larger and finer growth.

Not always shall you be what you are now.

You are going forward toward something great.
I am on the way with you and therefore I love you.

—Carl Sandburg

Humility

By Joan Chittister

Tradition is clearly not about holding on to past forms of it. It is about holding on to the roots of a common purpose while we prune some of its dead limbs.

It's about understanding why we exist and being willing to start over again, if necessary, to maintain that. It is about listening again to the hard-won wisdom of the generations before us and making it real in our own times.

It is not about turning life into a wax museum of exotic but useless oddities. It's about bringing new fire to light from old coals in a dimmed and dreary time.

It's change that is undertaken with the tradition in mind that counts. And for that, a sense of history becomes a kind of angelic guide through a tsunami of possibilities. Every community needs a community memory to help it trace the values and purpose that drove the high and low points of its development.

It is the memory of the community – its recollection of opportunities missed, its recall of life-changing risks that catapulted the community into a totally new life cycle of success – that makes change a sacrament of hope.

Humility liberates us from slavish commitment to the customs of the past. It frees us to move into the light of the Spirit with hope and with faith. Then, breathing the freedom tradition brings, the next period of our lives will be even more attuned to our place in the present than the last. It frees us to accept the grace of change.

“It's not the actual way we did things in the past that counts. That's simply traditionalism. It's why we do what we do that is of the essence of tradition.”

Our communities free us from having to reinvent for ourselves all the wheels of life. In every group is the wisdom of the universe. It is a matter of wanting to tap into it. In every group is the answer to itself.

We don't go to a group to lose ourselves. We go to groups in order to become our best selves while we enable everybody else there to become their best selves, too. We come to find the acumen we ourselves lack and become part of the enlightenment, the tradition, that is at the heart of the group itself.

From where I stand, our communities are the world in microcosm. It's there that we can see the value of tradition and the depth of communal wisdom. Dynamic groups shake off the dry leaves of the past. They prune the tree of the tradition over and over again so that in every age it lives on. And so, the tradition moves on from generation to generation, flowing here, being pruned there, always adapting to the soil in which it's planted. And so do we as people.

And all the while, the message is clear: There is no room in a group for rigidity, for the worship of the past, for the fear of the future. It's exactly here where we can ourselves become the tradition and seed the future with the wisdom of its past because living things are meant to grow, not to fossilize. ∞

Joan Chittister, a Benedictine Sister of Erie, is an outspoken advocate of justice, peace and equality and has been one of America's visionary spiritual voices for more than 30 years. Her questions to both church and society focus on the empowerment of women, the development of contemporary spirituality, and justice for the oppressed and marginalized, particularly those in prison.

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Reflections From NADA Staff of the Past 10 Years



Carrie Hargrove and friends sorting files at the NADA office in 2010

Carrie Hargrove
Columbia, Missouri
Membership Coordinator, 2010-11

My name is Carrie Hargrove, and I have the honor of saying that I was Sara's first employee. I worked for her starting in early 2010. Becoming the administrative assistant at the NADA office was my first job post-college. At NADA, I helped out by keeping memberships up to date. I worked part-time for the organization for just over a year. Outside of work, I spent most of my free time starting another non-profit organization, the Columbia Center for Urban Agriculture (CCUA). It's an organization that works to connect Columbians with food, agriculture, and nature through hands-on learning activities from seed to plate. I was hired full-time by CCUA in 2011, which is why I ended up leaving NADA.

Fast forward 10 years, and I am still growing CCUA and connecting more people with good food and the skills to grow it. We have made so much impact in our first decade: over one hundred thousand pounds of produce has been donated to hunger relief outlets and thousands of community members have participated in our programming.

Currently, we are in the process of developing Missouri's first Agriculture Park with the goal of making local foods more accessible to everyone in Columbia, as well as pioneering a partnership with our local VA hospital to make a veteran-centric urban farm that will be a space for holistic therapy for Missouri's veteran community.

I really enjoyed working with Sara and the rest of the NADA family; I think about her often and know that NADA is in good hands while she is in charge. ♡

Kara Carr
Boynton Beach, Florida
Membership Coordinator, 2011-12

My time working with NADA was extremely valuable. I learned so much about managing a small office that I still use today as the director of student affairs for a company that provides continuing education to licensed massage therapists. Particularly setting up remote office features during the transition from Missouri to Wyoming. Things like how to set up a file-naming system and geeky spreadsheet applications that make my coworkers think I'm some kind of wizard (I'm not, but I'll let them believe that!). Learning that working in a daily

office with its typical monotony doesn't HAVE to feel like a grind, and that there are places that treat their employees and students with care was paradigm shifting for me coming from working for a major university.

Watching practitioners of the protocol using these techniques in loving service in their communities, and sometimes far beyond, was transformative in that I started to really look for ways that I could participate and be of service in my communities. Working for NADA provided me with a stepping stone from a dead-end career path into creating a career and life that was meaningful and abundant for me. I can say, unequivocally, that working with Sara and NADA changed my life! ♡

Megan Kelly
Freiburg, Germany
Scanner of Membership Files, 2011

NADA was my first job, and I still remember my time in your home office fondly. My time at NADA allowed me to learn about different communities, paths and possibilities. I recently received my MA at the University of Freiburg and I'm currently waiting for funding approval to start my PhD in Switzerland.

My research focus is on male supremacist groups, radicalization narratives, and online hate speech. My MA was a global studies program and required that I study two semesters in Freiburg, and a semester in Cape Town and Bangkok. My MA thesis was on incels and violence promotion.

It definitely was a beat program, and research on this subject is rather new. I'm involved with some other researchers at this recently founded institute (all online for now). If you are interested here's the website: www.malesupremacism.org. ♡

Sydney Reitz
St. Louis, Missouri
Scanner of Membership Files, 2011

NADA was also my first job, and I loved the casual comfort of working in your home office with you surrounded by the dog (and on one brief occasion, the chickens!!). Furthermore, I think NADA provided a really formative intro to Eastern medicine and treatment, really the only glimpse of alternative treatment I got before jumping straight into the medical field.

In college at the University of Chicago, I majored in comparative human development, which is kind of just an amalgam of biology and psychology, and I worked in a lab researching the relationship between estrogen and recovery following ischemic stroke. I then worked as a technician in a lab at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston that used the olfactory system to study neurodegenerative diseases. Now, I'm back in Missouri in the third year of a neuroscience PhD program studying mechanisms of synaptic loss following traumatic brain injury. 🐾

Mara Sobotka
Albuquerque, NM
Membership Coordinator, 2012-13

It seems weird to talk about NADA as just a place where I learned job skills. Sure, that was a happy result, but what I always remember are the people. From the people who ran the office itself, to the NADA community, the most important lessons I learned came from all of you.

While I was working in the office, Dr. Smith enlisted my help with one of his transcripts. I didn't know much about his story then, or about the stories of those who worked closest to him. As we worked on the project, I began to understand what trauma and healing are, and how we all carry it with us and what it means to help support another person's growth.

That year, I applied to the comparative

religion program at the University of Washington, with the aim of becoming a teacher and writer. Today, that's exactly what I'm doing. As a religion instructor at Central New Mexico Community College, my job is to offer some of the wisdom of human experience to my students, but never to dictate to them how they should use it. They know that I do not have all the answers, and that is exactly how it should be. I truly believe that this path started with my time at NADA. I know I'm not done yet. 🐾

Michaela Kaszuba
Laramie, Wyoming
Interim Office Manager, 2013
Membership Coordinator, 2014-16

It is hard to believe that I started my journey with NADA about eight years ago. What I remember most about the NADA office is the growth. We started in a room in your house, used the dining room table for packing up membership materials, my desk was a table just outside the door. There were two main employees: a membership coordinator and manager. We then moved to a larger space on First Street where a media coordinator and social work interns joined the team. We touched so many more lives.

I am opening a business called Serendipity Space, a place for meditation, yoga and fiber arts. My philosophy is to help people find inner balance with meditation and yoga, regardless of experience, age or ability. 🐾

Sidney Navarro
Mountain Home, Arkansas
Scanner of Membership Files, 2013
Media Coordinator, 2013-15

I want to thank NADA for giving me the opportunity to learn and be involved with an amazing organization. I'm also thankful to NADA for teaching me to listen to my inner voice and to learn to love and take care of myself.

My favorite moments were interviewing Mike, visiting the Philippines and

documenting NADA's reach there, seeing and witnessing positive NADA legislature pass, and interacting with the NADA family.

When I first met Mike, I was so nervous because of his iconic founding role in NADA and the constant praise from the treatment and acudetox community. He asked me if I enjoyed living in Laramie and immediately asked me about my aspirations in my career. I said I wanted to finish my degree, have a career in journalism/communications, and ultimately go back home to Arizona and help my Diné tribal community in terms of poverty and addiction. To help find solutions to issues they face at the tribal and federal levels.

Throughout my day interviewing Mike, he continuously intertwined my own career goals into his responses about NADA and the importance of acudetox. I quickly understood that Mike was determined, kind, and full of knowledge, willing to share that knowledge with anyone. After that, our interactions always included some nudges from Mike, and it pushed me to learn more and more. I'm grateful for the time we spent together in the NADA office and helping him research various topics. I still have my "Mike's Research" Favorites tab on my laptop and think of him often.

Within the NADA office, I also enjoyed working with Sara, Michaela, Shiloh, and our interns, Bratati and Dri. I miss it very much. However, NADA also gave me direction to seek a career within advocacy or the non-profit sector, neither of which I was aware before I began working for NADA.

I am living in North Central Arkansas and working as a product technician for a family-run graphic design company. My position is focused on customer service and creating products for the non-profit organization, Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association. This quickly became a rewarding job and I'm truly thankful for the environment I work in.

In my spare time, I enjoy my dogs, advocating for my Diné communities,



(left to right) Sidney Navarro, Shiloh Bayne, Sara Bursac

and I'm also involved in the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Woman and Relatives movement through the coalition, Stop Violence Against Native Women (covanw.org/mmiw/). ☞

Sue Heller

Laramie, Wyoming

Membership Coordinator, 2016-18

Contractor, 2018-19

Membership Assistant, 2019-Present

I had never heard of NADA before I worked for it. This surprised me, as I have been involved in recovery communities around the country for many years. I have to say I was skeptical about acudetox when I first started working here. Frankly, I thought it was a bunch of New Age hoopla, from people who had no experience with trauma and addiction. I soon discovered how wrong I was. Sara recommended I read *Transformation and Recovery*, by Alex Brumbaugh, as well as Mike's essays. I was surprised and pleased with how these works resonated with me, and opened some new awareness. More than these readings, however, it was the history of NADA and acudetox that endeared this organization and the Spirit of NADA to me. Reading about the revolutionary spirit of a grassroots movement which fought for its communities, when no one else would, was not only inspiring, it made me very proud to be part of this organization.

I feel I am very lucky to have had the chance to not only meet the OGs, who

were with NADA in the very beginning, but also the new members who are keeping that revolutionary spirit, of fighting for what's right, alive. Those people – you people – are the pulse of NADA. You are the Spirit of NADA, and I feel fortunate to be among you for the past four years.

I have stepped back from NADA in recent times, still working on some special projects, and doing odds and ends around the office. I have gone back to school, and hope to work in Atmospheric Science, focusing on issues relating to Climate Change. I would not have had the faith in myself to undergo this challenge, if it was not for the NADA office and Sara giving me plenty of opportunity and good faith. ☞

Ashkia Campbell

Laramie, Wyoming

Membership Assistant, Summer 2017

While working in the NADA office I found great compassion and empathy for those individuals that may be labeled as dysfunctional by society. I learned to see the world and the people in it in a whole different light. NADA helped me to grow and showed me a way to help others in an empowering and supportive way. It's a beautiful thing to have been a part of the light and understanding that this world so desperately needs.

I am now running my own outdoor yoga business, Buffalo Om Yoga, and will be starting a job as a 911 dispatcher. ☞

KC Vernon

Laramie, Wyoming

Membership Assistant, Summer 2017

I loved working for NADA. It was always an environment that felt very supportive, and I learned a lot. I just finished my first semester of law school, but I still feel close to the NADA family. ☞

Ginger Mehaffey

Laramie, Wyoming

Meetings Assistant, 2018

Contractor, 2018

In making calls to potential participants of regional meetings and conferences, I enjoyed the interest, excitement, and passion of the people I spoke with concerning the possibilities of getting together as a larger group. I felt so much camaraderie with members who wanted to share their experience. It was a pleasure communicating and working with members in reaching their goals of being able to attend the meetings. It was also enjoyable to connect with people in the NADA community in answering questions for possible future events and get-togethers. I am currently pursuing an online Masters of Business Administration program with the University of the Southwest (2019-2021). ☞

Mary Walle

Berlin, Germany

**Program Development Coordinator,
2017-Present**

The idea of acupuncture was foreign to me before the NADA community drew me in. It was the 2017 conference in Delaware where I had come to accompany Mike and help the NADA team run its national conference that made me want to learn more.

There in Delaware, I remember Carlos Alvarez showing a film about Lincoln in the '80s which said something to the effect that, "This is NADA!" I listened to more talks and testimonials. I heard story after story. I heard the words: grassroots, community-centered, non-

hierarchical, holistic, healing. These ideas resonated. The people I connected with felt genuine and real. My interest was piqued. And then Sara was there, present, ready for my energy and interest which had manifested (finally).

It's 2020 and I've been NADA trained for about a year, worked for the office for three. I haven't yet found a consistent clinic to do NADA, but it's becoming more natural to offer it to anyone in a stressful situation. I've offered NADA to friends and family, and given treatments to total strangers. Each experience is a little different and yet a core of sameness remains – whether in a park, my childhood living room, a college fair or a holistic drop-in clinic for refugees.

It's 2020 and now I'm working with members across North America to organize regional meetings, reflect and amplify our work in social media channels, expand funding and more. Working for NADA, connecting with the NADA community here in Europe, and getting trained myself as an acudetox specialist has kept me grounded while I'm also working toward my graduate

degree in Global History.

The NADA community draws me in and inspires me, and my NADA team sustains me. Working for NADA has been professionally and personally healing. There are constantly new things to learn: how to improve access, change laws, support new ADSes, and build our own staff capacity. Working part-time with a small team trying to serve thousands of members is a creative challenge.

Reflecting on my time working for NADA, I am especially grateful to Sara – for her initial invitation, for her support, and her example of what leadership can look like. A leadership which cares more about people, trust, and process than about any predetermined product or



(left to right) Sue Heller and Mary Walle

Soonahai Marsh
Laramie, Wyoming
Office Associate, 2020-Present

I have recently had the pleasure of joining the NADA team as an office associate here in Laramie, Wyoming.

I have always been intrigued with acupuncture, and the health benefits it offers. Over the years, I have studied aromatherapy as well as foot massage. I started yoga before my oldest daughter was born. My skills and talents have included designing and assembling baby clothes and outdoor gear, as well as crafting stained glass and pottery. I also enjoy gardening and landscaping.

It appeared that, until recently, those would be some of the few skills and talents I had to offer. Now, I have been given the opportunity to not only learn about NADA, but to become a part of this community. I have always enjoyed helping others in any way that I can contribute.

I am honored and thankful for being invited into the world of NADA. ☯

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NADA Quarterly News

Winter 2019/20

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NADA Finland's 20th Anniversary



Elisa Alakahri of NADA Finland leaving an impromptu meeting with the bovine board. Michael Smith wrote: "Any psychotherapist that loves and respects people and also feels the same about cows should be a leadership model for all of us." *Photo courtesy of Jo Ann Lenney.*

In honor of this anniversary, [NADA Suomi-Finland](#) asked us to write something to help them celebrate. We thought, why not let Dr. Smith say a few words about them. He visited Finland often, and, on October 10, 2013, he wrote:

“Today I did what I have done many times: survey various NADA people about how they use acudetox. I heard about different addiction and mental health programs. All the protocols were different, all involved widely different staff doing NADA and working with people in very flexible ways. Finland has a range

of process-oriented, socially creative psychotherapy programs that is the best host setting for NADA that I have ever seen. They take advantage of many of these opportunities. Training is easily shared among many job categories in many settings. They readily understand that learning NADA mainly relates to how you affect the social context, not just how you stick in pins. Their appreciation of the value of intention and helping others was very encouraging. Their skill relates to group process, valid intention and grounded long term benefit – not doctorish data in isolated, artificial, temporary situations.”