

**NOVA SCOTIA COURT OF APPEAL**

**Citation:** *Desmond v. Holland*, 2007 NSCA 1

**Date:** 20070105

**Docket:** CA 268838

**Registry:** Halifax

**Between:**

Cleveland Hilton Desmond (Farrell)

Appellant

v.

Cedulea Rosalea Holland

Respondent

**Judge(s):**

Bateman, Saunders & Hamilton, JJ.A.

**Appeal Heard:**

November 30, 2006, in Halifax, Nova Scotia

**Held:**

Appeal dismissed, as per reasons for judgment of  
Hamilton, J.A., Bateman & Saunders, JJ.A. concurring

**Counsel:**

Cleveland Hilton Desmond (Farrell),  
self-represented appellant  
Lola Gilmer & Patricia Jones, Articled Clerk,  
for the respondent

## **Reasons for judgment:**

[1] The appellant father appeals the decision of Justice Beryl MacDonald and seeks to admit fresh evidence in support of his appeal. The judge awarded sole custody of the appellant's son, Cleveland Jalil Farrell-Holland, date of birth February 24, 2002, to the respondent, the child's mother, with access to the father. The father was represented by counsel at trial and represented himself on appeal. The mother was represented by counsel at both.

## **Facts**

[2] The facts are set out in detail in the judge's decision reported at [2006] N.S.J. No. 296, 2006 NSSC 230. The respondent's factum summarized the facts as follows:

1. The Appellant, Cleveland Desmond (Farrell) and the Respondent, Cedulea Holland, have one child together, Cleveland Jalil Farrell-Holland, born February 24, 2002. The parties are not married, but had a dating relationship. The child was born in Nova Scotia and resided with his mother, Cedulea Holland, and her two daughters from a previous relationship.

2. In September 2003, Ms. Holland and her three children moved to Ontario. There was no custody order in place at that time. On September 18, 2003, following Ms. Holland's move to Ontario with the child, Mr. Desmond filed an interim application and an affidavit with the Family Division, seeking an emergency hearing. The Court record indicates that this interim hearing was adjourned or rescheduled for a variety of reasons. Mr. Desmond did not pursue his application and the matter was adjourned without day, without an order regarding custody or access being granted.

3. During that time period, Mr. Desmond was visiting the child in Ontario. In August 2004, . . . Mr. Desmond [brought] the child to Nova Scotia . . . there was no custody order in place at that time. Mr. Desmond has stated that he never had any intention of returning the child to his mother in Ontario. Ms. Holland has stated that he informed her otherwise and kept promising to return the child to her, but failed to do so.

4. When Mr. Desmond did not return the child, Ms. Holland contacted legal aid in Ontario for assistance in obtaining a custody order. In May 2005, Ms. Holland learned that Mr. Desmond was incarcerated and the child was with his previous girlfriend, Zina Smith. Ms. Holland immediately came to Nova Scotia and filed

an interim application with the Family Division, seeking an emergency custody hearing. This hearing took place before the Honourable Justice Campbell on May 20, 2005. Justice Campbell delivered an oral decision on that date, stating he could not decide the matter on an emergency basis and dismissed Ms. Holland's interim application. Contrary to the Appellant's assertion, Justice Campbell did not grant custody to him. [At the conclusion of the emergency hearing, Justice Campbell attempted to arrange for the mother to have access with the child at Ms. Smith's residence before the mother returned to Toronto, but it did not occur.]

5. Mr. Desmond filed a further application for custody on June 3, 2005. An organizational pretrial conference took place on October 27, 2005 and trial dates were scheduled for May 2006, the earliest dates available. During this time, the child remained with Mr. Desmond in Nova Scotia.

...

7. [The trial was held.] The Honourable Justice MacDonald rendered a written decision on July 6, 2006, . . .

...

9. Ms. Holland travelled to Nova Scotia to pick up her son on July 31, 2006, the scheduled date for the return of the child to her. Since that time, the child has been living with Ms. Holland and his two half-sisters in Scarborough, Ontario. He started junior kindergarten in September.

## **Fresh Evidence**

[3] I will first deal with the father's application to admit fresh evidence, including:

1. the February 9, 2004 sentencing decision of Justice Suzanne M. Hood that followed his guilty plea to offences of dangerous driving causing bodily harm and breach of recognizance;
2. the transcript of a November 25, 2002 hearing before Justice Robert W. Wright relating to those same offences;
3. his February 20, 2003 pre-sentence report. The mother, who was his girlfriend at that time, is reported in the pre-sentence report to have said that

the father was “a nice person who thinks a lot of others, is hard working and a good provider for his children;”

4. an October 26, 2006 letter to him from the New Brunswick Provincial Court confirming that a charge against him in 2000 for possession of stolen property had been withdrawn on March 13, 2001, following his guilty plea, appeal and remittance to the Provincial Court;

5. a round trip air plane ticket that he provided for the mother to visit Nova Scotia in the fall of 2003;

6. a document he obtained from the Dartmouth Provincial Court, which he thought contained the full criminal record of Ms. Smith, the caregiver of the child while he was living in Nova Scotia and the mother of one of the father’s other children;

7. similar records from the Dartmouth Provincial Court relating to Ashley Delaney Fraser and Brent Symonds;

8. a Provincial Court recognizance he entered into on January 19, 2001, with the mother as surety;

9. an audiotape of his telephone conversations with three hospitals and with the mother after the mother telephoned him to tell him the child had fallen from a bunk bed;

10. Aliant telephone records in his name, as evidence of when the above telephone calls were made;

11. Telus telephone records in Ms. Smith’s name;

12. three affidavits of Jerry Pleasant, Cameron Laughlin and Dorothy Adams, and a letter from Ms. Adams dated October 20, 2003;

13. records from Western Union relating to money he sent the mother;

14. child protection case recording reports of the Department of Community Services relating to the mother and her children that were

produced pursuant to an order for production granted by the judge but that were not introduced into evidence at trial.

[4] The father sought to have this proposed new evidence admitted for a number of reasons. He argued some of this proposed evidence supported his testimony at trial proving that his testimony was credible, contrary to the judge's determination. He stated that as far as he was concerned the "judge didn't listen to anything" he said in court, that as far as he could tell from the decision he "wasn't in the same courtroom" as the judge. He argued other proposed evidence contradicted the mother's testimony proving her evidence was not credible, again contrary to the judge's determination.

[5] The father argued his pre-sentence report supported his position that he did not physically abuse the mother. He argued that the criminal records relating to Ms. Smith showed the judge erred when she stated in her reasons that Ms. Smith had been convicted of "assault, robbery and shoplifting" because there was no robbery conviction shown in this record. He argued his recognizance showed the judge also erred in her reasons when she stated that "the parties never lived together although the father would often stay in the mother's residence." He argued the Telus telephone records should be admitted to prove he phoned the mother to tell her she could call the child. He argued the affidavits should be admitted to show the close bond he had with the child and that custody should have been given to him. He argued the child protection records should be admitted because they showed the mother has previously had one of her children taken into temporary care and showed the condition of her residence.

[6] The four principles to be considered in determining whether this Court will admit fresh evidence are:

(1) The evidence should generally not be admitted if, by due diligence, it could have been adduced at trial provided that this general principle will not be applied as strictly in a criminal case as in civil cases: see **McMartin v. The Queen**, [[1964] S.C.R. 484].

(2) The evidence must be relevant in the sense that it bears upon a decisive or potentially decisive issue in the trial.

(3) The evidence must be credible in the sense that it is reasonably capable of belief, and

(4) It must be such that if believed it could reasonably, when taken with the other evidence adduced at trial, be expected to have affected the result.

**Murphy v. Wulkowicz** (2005), 238 N.S.R. (2d) 304, ¶ 14.

[7] Several pieces of proposed evidence are not in admissible form. None of the material sought to be admitted by the father is new evidence arising since the trial or evidence that could not have been discovered by him prior to the trial. Much of the proposed evidence is not relevant. The fourth principle to be considered is whether the proposed evidence could reasonably, when taken with the other evidence adduced at trial, be expected to have affected the result.

[8] As the judge set out in her reasons, her paramount consideration was the best interests of the child. There was no question at trial that the father had a serious and substantial criminal record and that the mother had no criminal record. It was also clear Ms. Smith, who the judge found provided the majority of child care when the child lived in Nova Scotia, ¶ 24 of decision, had a criminal record. The record indicates the mother's involvement in the adult entertainment business was before the judge, as was the fact one of her children had been taken into temporary care by a child protection agency approximately eight years earlier. She was aware of the inconsistencies in the evidence given by the mother before her and given by her at the emergency hearing one year earlier. It was clear the mother no longer had a relationship with the boyfriend with whom the appellant indicates Ms. Holland moved to Toronto in September, 2003. There was also evidence before the judge about each party's plans for the care of the child if he or she was given custody.

[9] In addition, there was substantial evidence before the judge about the parties' relationship with one another and with the child from which the judge could make her determination of credibility and her findings of fact with respect to physical abuse of the mother, the parties' residences, the relationship the parties had with the child, the agreement between the parties when the father brought the child back to Nova Scotia in September 2004, the fitness of the parties as custodial parents and the money the father sent to the mother.

[10] Some of the proposed new evidence does not support the father's arguments, such as the pre-sentence report, the audiotape, the Aliant telephone records and the

air plane ticket. Several pieces of proposed new evidence simply support testimony the father already gave at trial, mostly details of his criminal record. The Western Union records and the fact of the father's telephone call to the mother on August 5 to tell the mother she could telephone the child, shown on the Telus telephone records, were part of the evidence before the judge.

[11] Applying the four principles referred to in ¶ 6 above, I am satisfied the proposed new evidence, when considered in light of the record as a whole, could not be expected to have affected the judge's decision. Accordingly, I would not admit the proposed fresh evidence.

### **Removal of Material from Appeal Book**

[12] There is one other preliminary matter that I should deal with before considering the merits of the appeal. The mother applied to have certain material removed from the appeal book filed by the father on the basis it was not before the judge. These included trial logs prepared by court reporters, an order for substituted service that related to an earlier proceeding, an affidavit of the mother filed in an Ontario proceeding, the father's criminal record, the Department of Community Services case recording reports the father sought to have admitted as fresh evidence and other material from earlier proceedings. I agree with the mother that these documents do not form part of the record and should not be considered on appeal because they were not before the judge.

### **Merits of the Appeal**

[13] I will now deal with the merits of the appeal. The father set out eight grounds of appeal in his notice of appeal, which he consolidated into three arguments at the hearing. He argued that the judge erred by misapprehending the evidence, that there is a reasonable apprehension of bias with respect to her decision and that his counsel was incompetent.

[14] This Court has a narrow scope of review in custody cases such as this. It is not for us to retry the case. We may only intervene in the decision of the judge if there is material error, a serious misapprehension of the evidence or an error in law, **Hickey v Hickey**, [1999] 2 S.C.R. 518, ¶10 and 11 and **Van de Perre v. Edwards**, [2001] 2 S.C.R. 1014:

[11] In reviewing the decisions of trial judges in all cases, including family law cases involving custody, it is important that the appellate court remind itself of the narrow scope of appellate review. L'Heureux-Dubé J. stated in *Hickey v. Hickey*, [1999] 2 S.C.R. 518, at paras. 10 and 12:

[Trial judges] must balance the objectives and factors set out in the *Divorce Act* or in provincial support statutes with an appreciation of the particular facts of the case. It is a difficult but important determination, which is critical to the lives of the parties and to their children. Because of its fact-based and discretionary nature, trial judges must be given considerable deference by appellate courts when such decisions are reviewed.

. . .

There are strong reasons for the significant deference that must be given to trial judges in relation to support orders. This standard of appellate review recognizes that the discretion involved in making a support order is best exercised by the judge who has heard the parties directly. It avoids giving parties an incentive to appeal judgments and incur added expenses in the hope that the appeal court will have a different appreciation of the relevant factors and evidence. This approach promotes finality in family law litigation and recognizes the importance of the appreciation of the facts by the trial judge. **Though an appeal court must intervene when there is a material error, a serious misapprehension of the evidence, or an error in law, it is not entitled to overturn a support order simply because it would have made a different decision or balanced the factors differently.** [Emphasis added] [Bolding Mine]

[12] *Hickey* involved the appellate review of support orders, but the principles related to appellate review discussed therein are equally applicable to orders concerning child custody.

## First Argument



[15] The father's first argument is that the judge seriously misapprehended the evidence. In support of this argument the father pointed to several alleged errors in the judge's reasons:

- (1) that Ms. Smith had been convicted of robbery when the record confirms that Ms. Smith's testimony about her criminal record was that she had convictions for theft (shoplifting) and assault;
- (2) that the police raided his house looking for drugs when he was asleep, when the evidence was that he and his son were not at his home when the raid began;
- (3) that the mother was out of the adult entertainment business as of January, 2005, when the mother's testimony before Justice Campbell at the emergency application was that she was still involved on and off in this business in May, 2005;
- (4) that the father and mother had not lived together, when they had;
- (5) that the father had not provided the mother with "any regular money for child support," when he had;
- (6) that the father had physically abused the mother when her neighbour, Ms. Doucette, who would have seen the mother more often than the witnesses who testified to the abuse, did not give evidence of any physical abuse; and
- (7) that Ms. Smith prevented the mother from having access with the child at Ms. Smith's residence following the emergency application before Justice Campbell, that the judge had arranged. He argued the missed access between the mother and the child was not the fault of Ms. Smith, but the fault of the mother.

[16] The father is correct that there was no evidence to support the judge's statements that Ms. Smith had been convicted of robbery or that he was sleeping when the police raided his home for drugs. The evidence of Ms. Smith with respect to her criminal record was that she had been convicted of assault and theft

(shoplifting) and that the father and the child were not at home when the police raid began. The father is also correct that the mother testified that she was in and out of the adult entertainment business in May, 2005, four months after January, 2005, the date the judge referred to in her reasons as being the date the mother stopped working in that business.

[17] Unfortunately these errors left the father with the impression that the judge was predisposed to adopt evidence which presented him in the most negative light. This relates to his second ground of appeal, a reasonable apprehension of bias. However, for the reasons discussed below I am not persuaded that these factual errors represent so serious a misapprehension of the evidence as to lead me to conclude that but for these errors the result would have been different.

[18] While the criminal record of Ms. Smith is relevant because she was the child's care-giver when he lived in Nova Scotia, it was the father's fitness as a parent that the judge focussed on when considering the child's best interests. The fact the father and the son did not happen to be home when the police raid began does not alter the fact that the raid occurred and that the child could have been there at the time, perhaps exposing the child to danger. It was clear to the judge that no charges were laid against the father as a result of the raid. The mother's involvement in the adult entertainment business was certainly relevant when the judge was considering the best interests of the child. The judge was aware of this involvement. The fact she thought the mother's involvement had ended in January 2005, four months prior to the mother's testimony before Justice Campbell, is not so serious as to justify a retrial.

[19] Applying the test in **Van de Perre**, supra, I am not satisfied these three misstatements on fairly minor issues amount to a serious misapprehension of the evidence warranting this court's intervention.

[20] Furthermore, I am not satisfied the judge misapprehended the evidence with respect to the father's place of residence or his providing money to the mother for child support. There was evidence to support the judge's findings on both of these matters.

[21] Nor is the father's argument concerning the judge's finding that he physically abused the mother convincing. There was nothing to prevent him from

cross-examining Ms. Doucette about her knowledge of physical abuse had he wished to.

[22] His argument that the judge erred in finding Ms. Smith had prevented the mother from having access with the child following the emergency application is nothing more than his disagreement with a fact found by the judge. Findings of fact are within the judge's jurisdiction. Her findings disclose no error.

[23] The father has not satisfied me that the judge seriously misapprehended the evidence and accordingly, I would dismiss this ground of appeal.

## **Second Argument**

[24] The father's second argument was that the judge's decision gives rise to a reasonable apprehension of bias.

[25] The test for a reasonable apprehension of bias is set out in **R. v. R.D.S.**, [1997] 3 S.C.R. 484:

[31] The test for reasonable apprehension of bias is that set out by de Grandpré J. in *Committee for Justice and Liberty v. National Energy Board*, [1978] 1 S.C.R. 369. Though he wrote dissenting reasons, de Grandpré J.'s articulation of the test for bias was adopted by the majority of the Court, and has been consistently endorsed by this Court in the intervening two decades: see, for example, *Valente v. The Queen*, [1985] 2 S.C.R. 673; *R. v. Lippé*, [1991] 2 S.C.R. 114; *Ruffo v. Conseil de la magistrature*, [1995] 4 S.C.R. 267. De Grandpré J. stated, at pp. 394-95:

. . . the apprehension of bias must be a reasonable one, held by reasonable and right-minded persons, applying themselves to the question and obtaining thereon the required information . . . .  
[T]hat test is "what would an informed person, viewing the matter realistically and practically – and having thought the matter through – conclude. Would he think that it is more likely than not that [the decision-maker], whether consciously or unconsciously, would not decide fairly."

The grounds for this apprehension must, however, be substantial and I ... refus[e] to accept the suggestion that the test be related to the "very sensitive or scrupulous conscience".

[26] In support of this argument the father pointed to the judge's criticism of him for not filing tax returns (¶ 16 of decision) while not commenting negatively about the mother's failure to file tax returns. The mother's testimony was that she does file tax returns but does not disclose her income from the adult entertainment business in her returns.

[27] He pointed to the judge's finding that he is manipulative, suggesting this shows a reasonable apprehension bias.

[28] Also in support of this argument, the father points to the judge's finding that the mother was credible despite the many inconsistencies in her testimony. He argued that the mother is a chronic liar. There were inconsistencies in the mother's testimony; such as her testimony concerning when she last worked in the adult entertainment business. There were also inconsistencies in the father's testimony; such as the currency of his problems with the law, the length of time since the mother had seen the child, whether he was on good terms with the mothers of all of his children, whether he knew the mother was moving to Toronto with the child in September 2003 and when he stated certain criminal charges against him were "unfounded and unsubstantiated" when he had been convicted of them.

[29] The father argued that the judge's reference in her reasons to his only having paid \$100 towards his \$1,150 fine was an indication of the judge taking a "dig" at him, showing a reasonable apprehension of bias because he is allowed to take time to pay the balance of his fine.

[30] The father also argued a reasonable apprehension of bias was shown by the judge's acceptance of the mother's evidence that he used hard drugs. He argued that if this were true the mother would have raised it at the prior emergency hearing, which she did not.

[31] The father has interpreted these findings and statements by the judge as giving rise to a reasonable apprehension of bias. However, for the following reasons I am not persuaded that these statements and findings, or for that matter my review of the record as a whole, disclose a reasonable apprehension of bias.

[32] It is the judge's responsibility to listen to the evidence, make determinations of credibility and findings of fact, apply the law to those facts and provide her

reasons for her decision. Her reasons make it clear this is what she did. She is not required to refer to each piece of evidence before her. Based on the evidence before her, including the affidavit of Tabatha Holland, it was certainly open to the judge to find that the appellant was manipulative. Saying so in her reasons was an important finding - exactly the kind of assessment trial judges are required to make every day - and the judge can in no way be criticised for coming to such a conclusion.

[33] The fact there were inconsistencies in the mother's testimony does not mean the judge cannot accept the mother's evidence on relevant facts. A judge may accept part, all or none of any witness' testimony. Findings by the judge at the conclusion of the trial that do not favour the party do not usually give rise to a reasonable apprehension of bias. If that were so, the losing party would always have such a ground of appeal.

[34] The mother's testimony at trial was given one year after her evidence before Justice Campbell on the emergency application. There was substantially more time for her to prepare for the trial than there was for her to prepare for the earlier emergency hearing. Justice Campbell noted this in his decision:

An emergency application like this is not an opportunity for either side to bring all of the evidence forward in a full and complete way that needs to be done.

...

I don't believe that [the mother has] she's had a full and complete opportunity to bring all of the evidence before me that she could do in order to present her case.

On the other hand, I don't think Mr. Desmond has had an opportunity to bring all the evidence that he would like to bring forward to try to support those parts of the evidence that are in very serious conflict.

[35] Applying the test for reasonable apprehension of bias to the record before us, I would dismiss this ground of appeal.

[36] Finally, the father argued that his trial counsel was incompetent. In support of this the father pointed to the three affidavits that were not introduced into

evidence at trial because they were provided late. These were the three affidavits the father sought to have admitted as fresh evidence. He also pointed to questions that were asked of him without his counsel's objection, such as the question of whether he sold drugs to an undercover policeman when he has no drug trafficking convictions, about his prior abusive relationship with Ms. Chambers, about his criminal record, about his unpaid fine and about his Rottweiler dog being a danger to the child.

[37] The father indicated he was uncomfortable with his counsel prior to the trial. However he did not raise this concern with the judge prior to or at the trial, did not request the judge to grant an adjournment to give him an opportunity to obtain different counsel and did not choose to represent himself at trial. His complaints are only made following the decision.

[38] The general approach for an appeal court to take when faced with an argument of incompetent counsel was dealt with in **R. v. G.D.B.**, [2000] 1 S.C.R. 520:

(2) General Approach to the Issue

[26] The approach to an ineffectiveness claim is explained in *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668 (1984), *per* O'Connor J. The reasons contain a performance component and a prejudice component. For an appeal to succeed, it must be established, first, that counsel's acts or omissions constituted incompetence and second, that a miscarriage of justice resulted.

[27] Incompetence is determined by a reasonableness standard. The analysis proceeds upon a strong presumption that counsel's conduct fell within the wide range of reasonable professional assistance. The onus is on the appellant to establish the acts or omissions of counsel that are alleged not to have been the result of reasonable professional judgment. The wisdom of hindsight has no place in this assessment.

[28] Miscarriages of justice may take many forms in this context. In some instances, counsel's performance may have resulted in procedural unfairness. In others, the reliability of the trial's result may have been compromised.

[29] In those cases where it is apparent that no prejudice has occurred, it will usually be undesirable for appellate courts to consider the performance component of the analysis. The object of an ineffectiveness claim is not to grade

counsel's performance or professional conduct. The latter is left to the profession's self-governing body. If it is appropriate to dispose of an ineffectiveness claim on the ground of no prejudice having occurred, that is the course to follow (*Strickland, supra*, at p. 697).

[39] This approach, as set out in the **Strickland** case referred to therein, has been applied when an argument of incompetent counsel is raised in civil cases; **Noble v. Lourensse**, 2001 NBQB 251, ¶ 66-68 (aff'd at 2002 NBCA 85); **S.P. v. H.P.**, 2003 BCSC 588, ¶ 33-35 and **D.B. v. British Columbia (Director of Child, Family and Community Service)**, 2002 BCCA 55, at ¶ 27-28, 55-63 and 71.

[40] It would have been preferable had the father's counsel provided two of the three affidavits to the mother's counsel in order that they could have been admitted into evidence at trial and the affiants cross-examined as was intended. It may also have been preferable if the third affidavit, that of Ms. Adams that was filed without the knowledge of the father's counsel, had been admitted at trial although the father's plan for the child's care in the event he was given custody was that Ms. Smith would provide child care not Ms. Adams. However, I am not persuaded that there is a reasonable probability that the result of the hearing would have been different with the admission of these affidavits; **D.B. v. British Columbia (Director of Child, Family and Community Service)**, *supra*, ¶ 28.

[41] There was nothing improper in the father being asked the questions he complained of. As set out by John Sopinka, Sidney N. Lederman & Alan W. Bryant in *The Law of Evidence in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Butterworths, 1999), p. 934, the scope of cross-examination in a civil case is broad:

§ 16.99 The oft-quoted words of Wigmore that cross-examination is "beyond any doubt the greatest legal engine ever invented for the discovery of truth" indicate its great value in the conduct of litigation. Three purposes are generally attributed to cross-examination:

- (1) to weaken, qualify or destroy the opponent's case;
- (2) to support the party's own case through the testimony of the opponent's witnesses;
- (3) to discredit the witness.

To accomplish these ends, counsel is given wide latitude and there are, accordingly, very few restrictions placed on the questions that may be asked or the manner in which they may be put. Any question which is relevant to the substantive issues or to the witness' credibility is allowed. It appears that the scope of cross-examination is wide enough to permit questions which suggest facts which cannot be proved by other evidence. Lord Radcliffe in *Fox v. General Medical Council* ([1960] 3 All E.R. 225, 1 W.L.R. 1017 (P.C.)) at p. 1023 put the point as follows:

An advocate is entitled to use his discretion as to whether to put questions in the course of cross-examination which are based on material which he is not in a position to prove directly. The penalty is that, if he gets a denial or some answer that does not suit him, the answer stands against him for what it is worth. . . . (Bolding Mine)

[42] The questions put to the father were relevant to the issue before the judge.

[43] Accordingly, I would dismiss this appeal without costs since the mother was represented by legal aid.

Hamilton, J.A.

Concurred in:

Bateman, J.A.

Saunders, J.A.