

DEFENSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN IN THE SERVICES

Quarterly Meeting Minutes

6–7 December 2011

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) held full committee meetings on December 6th and December 7th, 2011. The meetings were held at the Hilton Washington Dulles Airport, 13869 Park Center Road, Herndon, Virginia, 20171.

6 December 2011

Opening Comments

The Designated Federal Officer and DACOWITS Military Director, COL Ines White, opened the meeting and introduced Ms. Nancy Duff Campbell, DACOWITS Vice Chair. Due to the resignation in September of DACOWITS Chair LTG (Ret.) Claudia Kennedy, Ms. Campbell explained that as Vice Chair she will serve as Acting Chair of the Committee until a new Chair is named. She thanked LTG Kennedy for her many contributions to the Committee during her time as Chair. At Ms. Campbell's request, all meeting attendees introduced themselves. The meeting agenda is at Tab A. ¹

2011 Report Review and Approval

Ms. Campbell summarized the 2011 DACOWITS Report. The report can be found in TAB B. Ms. Campbell explained that the Committee had divided its work into issues relating to Wellness and Assignments this year, and the Report is structured to reflect that division. To examine these issues, the Committee gathered both primary and secondary sources of information, including briefings from military representatives and subject matter experts; data from focus groups and surveys of military personnel at installations; and literature reviews, other survey data and available research and resources. The Committee discussed and approved its recommendations at its meeting in September.

Ms. Campbell read the 2011 recommendations and summarized the reasoning behind each recommendation. In addition to the recommendations, the Committee identified several issues of continuing concern and several best practices. These recommendations, continuing concerns, and best practices, as well as the Committee's research and reasoning behind each recommendation, can be found in the full 2011 Report.

¹ All TABs referenced in this document refer to materials enclosed in the binder entitled *DACOWITS Business Meeting 6-7 December 2011*, which was distributed to attendees.

Ms. Campbell added that, because the Committee had agreed at the September meeting to change the proposed leadership recommendation² to a best practice, but had not officially voted to do so, it needed to do so at this time. The Committee then voted unanimously in favor of approving the report as written, including keeping the leadership paragraph as a best practice (5 votes in favor; 0 votes against).

Committee members also voted (5 votes in favor; 0 votes against) to publish three separate versions of the report: an executive summary; an executive summary and text of the report, excluding the appendices; and an executive summary, text of the report and all appendices. The DACOWITS office was authorized to choose the most appropriate version for distribution to various audiences.

Integration of Women into the Canadian Forces Combat Arms

Ms. Karen Davis, Chief of Military Personnel, Canadian Forces Leadership Institute

Ms. Karen Davis briefed the Committee on the history and progress of gender integration in the Canadian Forces. Ms. Davis's prepared PowerPoint slides can be found in TAB C. A brief summary of Ms. Davis's presentation is provided below.

Following the Canadian Human Rights Act of 1978, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex, and a decision of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in 1989 giving the military ten years to integrate women into all environments and roles except submarines, all but the submarine restrictions on women in the Canadian Forces were lifted. In addition, Canada has continued both internal and external monitoring of integration, with appropriate modifications as necessary.

Ms. Davis recounted the results and lessons learned from integration. There were early challenges, especially in the infantry. Many women could not meet the entry-level infantry soldier training. Attrition rates were high – approximately two to six times higher for women than men – and the Commander of the Army ordered an investigation of the causes. The resulting report identified the following as areas contributing to the high attrition rate: peer discrimination, poor quality of the recruiting experience (i.e., recruiters were doing a poor job of selecting women who could meet applicable standards), and women coming into the military were generally unaware of the difficulties they would be facing. The report emphasized that committed leadership plays a critical role in the success of integration, and the Chief of Defence Staff sent out a message to this effect. Other steps were taken to address these issues and are continuing to be taken. Overall, the lessons learned from integration include: gender-neutral

² The recommendation was that "Leaders should adopt practices similar to those that were implemented during the process of the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell, in which they visibly support the integration of women into previously closed positions."

physical standards for occupations are essential and they must be based on what is required to do the job; critical mass – integrating women in sufficient numbers into a unit – helps, but is not effective by itself; women cannot be successfully integrated into units without addressing the behaviors and attitudes of their peers; perceptions matter (e.g., there was a perception that standards were lowered for women, and there was a perception that there was a quota for women, when in fact, neither of these things were true); unit culture matters – it is not enough that there are men in a unit supportive of women because the men alone cannot change the culture in a unit; success is shared by leaders, peers and subordinates and the onus cannot be put on individual women to meet all of the challenges in isolation. Ms. Davis stated that women have currently achieved high officer ranks in the infantry and are deployed in combat roles.

The following are points from the question-and-comment period after the briefing:

- In response to several questions about the Canadian Forces' gender-neutral physical standards, Ms. Davis first clarified that there are general physical standards – for example, a 13-kilometer march carrying a kit weighing approximately 35 pounds, which everyone must accomplish in a set period of time. This standard is not specific to the combat arms positions, but there are gender-neutral physical standards for the combat arms. Over the years, the standards have become more linked to what is necessary to perform the job and the standards are now used in both recruiting and training. Previously the recruiters simply “visually assessed” female recruits to see if they could meet the required physical standards, and as a result the women didn't always measure up.
- Ms. Davis stated that women have said using the same standards for both women and men has been important to their achieving acceptance.
- Ms. Davis stated that a research team led by Dr. Wayne Lee was instrumental in developing the standards. Ms. Davis acknowledged that the physical standards have not been completely validated as bona fide occupational qualifications.
- Ms. Davis reported that the Australian Defence Force is currently integrating women into combat units and could provide additional insight into their process, which has been similar to that of the Canadians. She added that Dr. Megan Mackenzie from the University of Wellington in New Zealand is examining the concept of cohesion in Canada and the U.S. and the way in which that affects women's integration into combat units. She offered to provide the Committee with a copy of the Canadian standards and said that Dr. Lee's reports are also available.
- Ms. Davis elaborated on other efforts to address the causes of attrition for the first women integrated into the combat arms in the 1990s. For example, because strong social and psychological pressures accounted for the largest source of attrition, there are now standards on integrating effectively into the unit. Some women were also told that they did not have a strong enough leadership presence. The attrition study in 1997-98 recommended actions to address the high attrition among women. She agreed to forward

a copy of the study, including the message from the Chief of Defence Staff addressing the issue.

- With respect to mentoring, Ms. Davis reported there was no formal process for pairing up women, since this might hold back women due to the low numbers of women in the military, though they try to pair up women whenever possible. There is a formal mentoring program, but it is not geared toward women specifically. She has heard repeatedly from women that mentoring is important to them.
- Ms. Davis said that the perception of a quota for women arose because the Employment Equity Act set target proportions for women. She said that misunderstanding about these targets continues, and some simply do not believe that targets are not, in fact, strict quotas.
- The OSD Military Personnel Policy Office representative, LtCol Mark Horner, said that DoD has published an occupational standards guide for military positions since 2000, which is available for review and, in his view, is legally defensible.

Update on Army Assignment Policy

MAJ Trina Rice, Women in the Army Assignment Policy Manager

MAJ Trina Rice briefed the Committee on recent updates to the Army's assignment policy. MAJ Rice's prepared PowerPoint slides can be found in TAB D. A brief summary of additional information presented by MAJ Rice is provided below.

MAJ Rice said that, as part of the three-year cyclic review, the Army undertook an assessment of the MOSs currently closed to women. The goal of this assignment review was for the Army to align its policy with DOD policy and remove the collocation restriction; open MOSs, units, and positions to women; increase career opportunities and recruitment of women; and ensure balanced manning of force structure and soldiers' career development. This review was completed in early 2011 but the results have been held pending the completion of the DoD Women in the Services Restrictions (WISR) review mandated by the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 11, which is expected to be released in January 2012.

MAJ Rice said the Army is recommending an alignment of Army policy with DOD assignment policy with respect to the definition of direct ground combat and the elimination of the collocation restriction. As a result, six MOSs and 80 units would be newly opened to women, which would result in approximately 13,200 additional positions for women. Before these changes can occur, Army must inform DoD and the Secretary of Defense must provide a report to Congress justifying the changes. The changes may be implemented only after Congress has been in session for 30 continuous days from the time it receives the Secretary's report. In the WISR report itself, both DoD and Army are expected to announce these and potentially other changes to their assignment policies, the aim of which is to better reflect the realities of the

current operational landscape and to continue to offer women opportunities to excel in the military.

The following are points from the question-and-comment period after the briefing:

- MAJ Rice clarified that Army is still looking at the direct ground combat policy, and noted she could not comment on that until the WISR Report is released.
- MAJ Rice said that the FY 2011 numbers shown in Tab D, slide 13, do not account for the collocation change, and that the numbers of occupations and positions open to women would increase further with that change.
- MAJ Rice explained that, for all Services, it is currently optional with the Service as to whether women can be assigned to Special Operations and Army did not examine this issue in its cyclical review.
- In response to a question on whether the remaining closed MOSs were closed because of the direct ground combat rule or optional Army policies, MAJ Rice stated that she could not comment further on this until the WISR Report is released.
- The Military Personnel Policy Office representative and Chair of the WISR Working group, LtCol Mark Horner, stated that there had been a delay in the release of the WISR report, which former Undersecretary for Personnel and Readiness Clifford Stanley had told the Committee would be released in October. The delay is due to the fact that Secretary Panetta in August “remissioned” the Working Group to go further in its efforts to look at ways in which individual qualifications might be considered without regard to gender.

Cultural Support Program

CPT Adrienne Bryant, Army Cultural Support Team Program Manager, Ft. Bragg, NC

CPT Adrienne Bryant provided a briefing on the Army’s Cultural Support Teams (CSTs). CPT Bryant’s prepared PowerPoint slides can be found in TAB E. A brief summary of CPT Bryant’s presentation is provided below.

CPT Bryant stated that there is an ongoing need for CSTs, which are all-female volunteers, because CSTs support combat units as enablers, accomplishing tasks that would be deemed culturally inappropriate for male soldiers. She presented an overview of the CST program’s requirements and training. The training is in Afghan culture, weapons familiarization, battle drills, village stability operations, search techniques, and tactical questioning techniques. CPT Bryant reviewed the ways in which CST recruits are evaluated on these abilities. She said that in the future, CSTs will become part of the Civil Affairs Program.

The following are points from the question-and-comment period after the briefing:

- CPT Bryant said that 31 women graduated from the program in the first class and 54 in the second class. The third class is still in training. After graduation these soldiers face four to six weeks of additional training before being attached to and engaged in further training with the unit they will be supporting.
- CPT Bryant explained that women are currently attached, rather than assigned, to combat (Special Forces) units. They are currently attached to these units because women in this program come from different MOSs that are assigned to other units, so they can only be attached, not assigned, to work outside their assigned units and only for up to one year. In the future, they will be assigned to Civil Affairs units, which routinely work with Special Operations units.
- With respect to future uses of CSTs, CPT Bryant noted that the program can be gender-neutral, depending on the specific circumstances in the countries in which the Army is deployed. In other words, mixed-gender teams might be used to accomplish similar cultural support missions in other countries or cultures.
- With respect to the credit that women receive for this service, CPT Bryant stated that the women receive a professional skill development identifier. Their records show that they volunteered for this service and it should be recognized as service that is “above and beyond.” In response to a concern expressed that promotion boards may not recognize that participation in the program in this way, a military representative replied that G3 Special Operations has met with G1 Personnel to bring the value of this service to the attention of Army staff and board members so that they are aware of the significance of this skill identifier.
- CPT Bryant confirmed that other Services have participated in the Army CST training but said that Army is no longer taking members from outside Services into the program because other Services now have their own training.
- Addressing how the cultural and community building aspects and intelligence gathering aspects of the program are reconciled and whether these two sides conflict, CPT Bryant acknowledged that this is a difficult aspect of the job, as rapport building can be difficult after having searched local women, but she said that the individuals in the program are trained specifically on these potentially conflicting aspects of their duties.
- CPT Bryant explained that this program does not replace the Female Engagement Teams (FETs) because the CST program was specifically designed to support Special Operations.
- CPT Bryant provided further information on the selection of program recruits and their success rate. In the first class, 70 women were assessed for the program, 32 were selected for training, and 31 graduated and deployed. There were personal reasons, not reasons of qualification, that one individual did not graduate. In the second class, over 200 applicants received some pre-screening, 70 made it through the first round, 59 were selected for training, and 54 graduated and deployed. A Committee member commented that the initial assessment of the CST applicants is very effective given the high graduation rates from the program.

- With regard to weapons training received, CPT Bryant explained that when women begin training, they are expected to already be weapons-qualified. Upon attachment to the Special Operations unit, they receive advanced weapons training in order to qualify on the weapons appropriate to that unit.

Public Comments on Possible DACOWITS Study Topics for 2012

Ms. Campbell opened the floor to military representatives and audience members to suggest possible topics for DACOWITS to examine in 2012. An audience member suggested that DACOWITS continue its work to eliminate the direct ground combat exclusion policy if the upcoming WISR Report does not fully address this issue.

Gender Disparities in Suicides of Active Duty Army Service Members

*Dr. Amy Millikan, Manager, Behavioral and Social Health Outcomes Program,
Army Institute of Public Health*

Dr. Amy Millikan briefed the Committee on suicide trends of active duty Army Service members, with a focus on gender disparities in suicide. Dr. Millikan's prepared PowerPoint slides can be found in TAB F. A brief summary of Dr. Millikan's presentation is provided below.

Dr. Millikan reported that there is little gender research on suicides in the Army, partly because of the low numbers of female suicides. Suicide rates are also prone to random fluctuations because suicide is such a rare event, making year-to-year comparisons difficult. Moreover, her numbers are not the official Army data on suicide rates. She said that this does not affect her description of the trends, but means that actual numbers may vary slightly. Over the past 10 years, the Army suicide rate has increased in proportion to the civilian suicide rate, but in 2008 the Army suicide rate exceeded the civilian rate for the first time. Dr. Millikan said that this is especially concerning because the Army population has historically been younger and healthier than the civilian population, and receives universal, standardized medical/behavioral health screening and care.

Suicide rates for men and women have increased by the same magnitude since 2001, but the recent increase in suicides has largely been driven by an increase in the male suicide rate, because most suicides are committed by men. Consistent with the civilian population, men in the military *commit* suicide at a higher rate than women, while women in the military *attempt* suicide at a higher rate than men. Dr. Millikan also reviewed the relationship between suicides and deployment history. Adjusting for demographic and other factors, the proportion of Army members with at least one deployment who have committed suicide has increased, but the increase is not statistically significant. However, service members with one previous deployment appear to be at greater risk for suicide than both service members who have never deployed and service members with two-plus prior deployments. A caveat is that determining the

effect of deployment is limited by a lack of suicide data on soldiers who leave service following deployment.

The following are points from the question-and-comment period after the briefing:

- Responding to an inquiry about whether the rates for suicide among deployed Service members had shown a greater increase for women than men, Dr. Millikan said she did not have enough data to tell that, but that may have been a finding from Army STARRS (Study to Assess Risk and Resilience of Service Members) data, which is being gathered over five years by several universities. Her group has not analyzed data specifically on deployed women because the number of suicides in that group is very small. She noted that the STARRS group mined existing data and did find differences in the risk of suicide for men/women based on the number of deployments. She did not know whether women have a greater tendency than men to commit suicide after leaving the military.
- In response to an inquiry about what the Army is doing to address suicide risk, Dr. Millikan said that in 2007-2008 there was a significant increase in hiring of behavioral health personnel and an expansion of urgent care. Innovative strategies, including by focusing on building resilience, are also in place. There is also a robust suicide prevention training program and an effort to de-stigmatize the need for care. There is also an increased focus on the transition period when soldiers move to and from deployments.
- A military representative observed that the information from the briefing applies to active duty personnel only and not Guard/Reserve. Last year, the Army Guard's total suicide number was 113, eight of whom were women. This year the total number is 97, of whom only two were women. Most of the women and men have never deployed and of those who have deployed, the suicides were a year or so after deployment. Dr. Millikan confirmed that her organization has been involved in the Deployment Health Assessment Program and in the Army's effort for more robust screening for PTSD and suicide. Survey forms are currently in the process of revision. However, soldiers are often not forthright about their experiences if it will affect their ability to go home or deploy, or if they are afraid it will have other detrimental effects on their careers. As a result, there is massive underreporting of problems. But there are some members who do say they need help.
- Dr. Millikan said that there has been data mining to examine ways in which recruiting standards potentially affect propensity for violence, but not suicide. From a data mining perspective, there is not conclusive research on whether recruiting waivers have affected suicide rates.

Gender Gap in Retention

Ms. Angella McGinnis, Defense Manpower Data Center

Ms. Angella McGinnis briefed the Committee on the gender gap in military retention. Ms. McGinnis's prepared PowerPoint slides can be found in TAB H. A brief summary of Dr. Millikan's presentation, including the follow-up discussion from Committee and audience members, is provided below.

Ms. McGinnis said that continuation rates were used as an estimate of service member retention in the same Service, component, and rank in subsequent years. She then provided an overview of continuation rates for men and women, across Services, in officer vs. enlisted ranks, and in active duty service members and Guard/Reserve. The continuation reports use a base population of military strength for a particular year and track the retention rate for that population after four years. Across nearly all Services, ranks, and fiscal years, continuation rates for women were lower than for their male counterparts. Committee and audience members asked for clarification on the methodology employed to calculate the continuation rates, but Ms. McGinnis was not able to provide it. She agreed she would follow up with DMDC to provide answers to DACOWITS on these questions.

Retention at the OSD and Service Level

COL White reported that the Services, for the most part, have said that they do not have a retention problem. Committee members had an open discussion with the military representatives on the gender gap in retention specifically by Service and the potential effect of troop draw-down on the retention of women.

7 December 2011

COL Ines White, DACOWITS' Designated Federal Officer and Ms. Nancy Duff Campbell, DACOWITS Acting Chair, opened the day's meeting.

2012 Study Topics Presentation and Discussion

BG (Ret) Julia Cleckley presented the 2012 study topics for the Assignments Subcommittee:

1. Continued work on the effective and full integration of women into ground combat units. This topic is based on the Committee's 2010 and 2011 recommendations to end all gender-related assignment restrictions and 2011 suggested best practices for effective integration of women into combat units. The Assignments group is interested in learning about DoD's WISR Report to Congress on policies restricting the service of female members of the armed forces, the rationale and plans going forward; current efforts by the Australia Defence Force to integrate women into ground combat units; lessons learned by the Canadian Defence Force on their integration experience; and progress of the USMC on its study of opening ground combat assignments to women.

2. Effectiveness of mentoring programs. This topic relates to a best practice identified by the Committee in its 2011 report. The Assignments group is interested in learning about the Navy's e-mentoring program and the expansion of that program to other Services.
3. Retention gap between men and women in a drawdown environment. The Military Leadership Diversity Commission in its 2011 report recommended that DACOWITS explore why women are less likely than men to view the military as a career and identify ways to reduce this retention gap; briefings received by DACOWITS suggest that coming draw-downs may have an effect on the gap. Both Subcommittees are interested in learning about the extent of the gap and plans to address it, including strategies for retaining qualified women in time of overall reductions.³

Ms. Holly Hemphill presented the 2012 study topics for the Wellness Subcommittee:

1. Prevention of sexual harassment, as distinct from sexual assault. This topic was a continuing concern from the Committee's 2011 report. The Wellness group is interested in learning about DoD's response to the recent GAO report on preventing sexual harassment, cooperative efforts between EO and SAPRO, and how complaints of harassment and other discrimination based on sexual orientation will be handled.
2. The possibility of including measures of effectiveness in combating sexual harassment and sexual assault as part of individual performance evaluations of installation commanders and other military leaders. This topic was a continuing concern from the Committee's 2011 report and is related to the Committee's recommendation to include measures of sexual assault/sexual harassment in command climate assessments. The Wellness group is interested in learning more about ways in which DoD and the Services can focus on accountability of commanders.
3. Health of military women in the field. This topic relates to the Committee's 2010 and 2011 recommendations to end all gender-related assignment restrictions, thereby opening ground combat units to women. The Wellness group is interested in learning, after years of deployments in which women have been performing in field environments, whether particular health issues have arisen, and if so, how they have been addressed and what issues remain to be addressed.

Ms. Campbell opened the floor for Committee members, military representatives, and audience members to discuss the 2012 study topics.

Veteran Suicide Rates

³ Retention gap topics were identified by both Wellness and Assignments Subcommittees. The Committee agreed to combine the topics as part of the Assignments Subcommittee's work in 2012.

Dr. Janet Kemp, Mental Health Program Director, Suicide Prevention, Department of Veteran Affairs

Dr. Kemp briefed the Committee on suicides among veterans, with a focus on gender disparities in veteran suicides. Dr. Kemp's prepared PowerPoint slides can be found in TAB G. A brief summary of Dr. Kemp's presentation is provided below.

Dr. Kemp presented statistics on veteran suicides, broken out by OIF/OEF and non-OIF/OEF veterans, and broken out by men and women, dating from FY 2001 to FY 2008. Approximately 20% of the individuals dying from suicides in the U.S. each year are veterans. The number of female OIF/OEF veterans committing suicide is very low, which can lead to random fluctuations in the suicide rate. There are challenges in collecting suicide data for veterans because researchers rely on death certificates in each state that are not routinely verified. Additionally, veteran status information need not currently be submitted to the National Death Reporting System and data on suicides are at least three years old before the VA receives them.

With these caveats, Dr. Kemp said that VA is stepping up its efforts to address the number of veterans who are committing suicide. The Veterans Crisis Line was recently opened for veterans and their families, and the volume of calls to the line suggests it is being utilized by a significant number of individuals. The line is not just to address suicide prevention, but to provide help for emotional crises of any kind. Dr. Kemp also provided various other statistics on suicide attempts and suicide risk factors.

The following are points from the question-and-comment period after the briefing:

- Dr. Kemp elaborated on the statistic she provided that veterans account for 20% of suicides in the U.S. She said that less than 20% of the total U.S. population is veterans. She noted that the suicide rate among veterans is 1.8 to 2 times higher than the suicide rate among the rest of the population.
- Dr. Kemp said that approximately 52% of veterans from OIF, OEF and Operation New Dawn are coming to the VA for services, which is the highest rate of all veteran cohorts. Essentially, the VA is now seeing unprecedented numbers of veterans seeking care from recent operations.
- In response to a question about the spike of OIF/OEF veterans committing suicide in 2004, Dr. Kemp explained that year-to-year fluctuations can be influenced by recruitment strategies, operational tempos, and many other factors.
- Dr. Kemp has not studied whether there is any correlation between rising veteran suicide rates and rising homelessness among veterans and the economic recession, as the VA is just now receiving suicide data from three years prior.
- Dr. Kemp said that there is no demonstrated link between suicide and physical disability. She noted that there is a link between traumatic brain injury and suicide, depression and

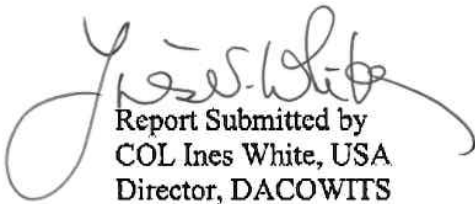
suicide, PTSD (apart from depression) and suicide, and that the highest risk for suicide exists when both depression and substance abuse are present.


- Dr. Kemp explained that no truly reliable and valid suicide screening tool exists currently. While there are certain risk factors for suicide, these risk factors are not weighted and are unreliable. Further, risk factors need to be looked at along with protective factors. Dr. Kemp noted the importance of health care professionals picking up on subtle warning signals presented by potentially suicidal individuals.
- Dr. Kemp elaborated on ways in which recruiting strategies may affect the suicide rate, saying that waivers were granted for a period of time during recruitment to give people the “benefit of a doubt” on various risk factors. These waivers may have increased the percentage of Service members more prone to suicide.
- Addressing the ways in which researchers account for people who end their life because of chronic illness, Dr. Kemp said that it depends on the way the medical examiner classifies the death; these deaths are often classified as complications from their illness.

Public Forum

DACOWITS’ Navy Point of Contact provided information on the Joint Women’s Leadership Symposium, 5–6 March, 2012.

Meeting was adjourned.


Report Submitted by
COL Ines White, USA
Director, DACOWITS


Report Certified by
Ms. Nancy Duff Campbell
DACOWITS Acting Chair

DACOWITS MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ms. Nancy Duff Campbell
Ms. Holly Hemphill
The Honorable Ruby DeMesme (Morning of 6 December)
BG (Ret) Maureen LeBoeuf
The Honorable Deborah James
COL (Ret) Margarethe Cammermeyer
BG (Ret) Julia Cleckley