

FILED
Court of Appeals
Division III
State of Washington
11/26/2018 10:46 AM

FILED
DEC 05 2018
WASHINGTON STATE
SUPREME COURT

Supreme Court No. 96587-1
Court of Appeals No. 35208-1-III

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

STATE OF WASHINGTON,

Respondent,

v.

AMIE N. MELAND,

Petitioner.

ON APPEAL FROM THE SUPERIOR COURT
OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON FOR SPOKANE COUNTY

PETITION FOR REVIEW

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A. IDENTITY OF PETITIONER

Petitioner Amie N. Meland, the appellant below, asks this Court to review the majority decision of the Court of Appeals, Division Three referred to in section B.

B. COURT OF APPEALS DECISION

Meland seeks review of the Court of Appeals unpublished opinion in *State v. Amie N. Meland*, No. 35208-1-III, filed on September 13, 2018, attached as an appendix. The Court of Appeals majority denied Meland's motion for reconsideration on October 23, 2018.

C. ISSUE PRESENTED FOR REVIEW

The right to a fair trial is a fundamental liberty secured by the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendment and article I, section 22 of the Washington Constitution. *In re Personal Restraint of Glasmann*, 175 Wn.2d 696, 703, 286 P.3d 673 (2012). Accordingly, jury instructions must be manifestly clear because the court instructs the jury that the "law is contained in my instructions to you." When the jury is uncertain about the law because of an ambiguous instruction, the accused is denied a fair trial. Jury Instruction No. 7 states, "Manufacture means the direct or indirect production, preparation, propagation or processing of any controlled substance." In referring to the instruction during closing argument, the prosecutor misstated the law. Is reversal required because the ambiguity of the jury

instruction compounded by the prosecutor's misstatement of the law misled the jury and denied Meland her constitutional right to a fair trial?

D. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

1. Procedure

On September 29, 2015, the State charged appellant, Amie Nicole Meland, with one count of manufacture of a controlled substance: marijuana. CP 1; RCW 69.50.401.¹ Following pretrial hearings, the case proceeded to trial on March 6, 2017. 03/06/17 RP 6. A jury found Meland guilty as charged. 03/07/17 RP 231-33; CP 86. The court sentenced Meland to one day in confinement with credit for time served and imposed legal financial obligations. 03/28/17 RP 245; CP 92-103. Meland filed a timely notice of appeal. CP 104-05. A majority of the Court of Appeals, Division Three affirmed Meland's conviction on September 13, 2018.

2. Facts

a. The Investigation

On September 21, 2015, the Spokane Police Department received a complaint of an assault. The complainant also reported that there was a marijuana grow in the backyard of a home at 3117 East Carlisle. A record

¹ "Except as authorized by this chapter, it is unlawful for any person to manufacture, deliver, or possess with intent to manufacture or deliver, a controlled substance."

check confirmed that the address matched Meland's address and showed a warrant for her arrest for driving while license was suspended. 03/06/17 RP 67-68, 89-91. Officers went to the house to investigate allegations of the assault and marijuana grow and to follow up on the warrant. When they knocked on the front door, no one answered. As an officer walked along a driveway to a door on the side of the house, he saw a marijuana grow in the backyard in open view. 03/06/17 RP 54-56, 69-70, 92-94.

Another officer spoke with Meland when she came to the side door. He asked her about an altercation earlier that day and she explained what happened. The officer determined he could not establish probable cause for an assault, but he advised Meland of the warrant, placed her under arrest, and transported her to jail. 03/06/16 RP 70-71.

After obtaining a warrant, officers went through the backyard, cut the plants and bagged them. They searched the house and collected evidence, including what appeared to be marijuana. 03/06/17 RP 71-80. The Washington State Patrol Crime Lab analyzed the material and concluded it was marijuana. 03/06/17 RP 119-21.

b. House at 3117 East Carlisle

Meland's former mother-in-law, Christina Rosman, owns the house located at 3117 East Carlisle. 03/06/17 RP 48-49. In September 2015, Meland lived at the house with her three children. Other people had lived

there over the course of time. Rosman and Meland did not have a written agreement and Meland did not need her consent to allow others to live at the house. 03/06/17 RP 49-51.

Meland testified that in September 2015, she was living at the house with her boyfriend Devon Porter, his brother Darrell Porter, and her two younger children. Devon Porter and his brother moved into the house in January 2013. 03/07/17 RP 176-77.

The Sunday before September 21, 2015, Meland had a "football party" at the house with friends until 11 o'clock that night. 03/07/17 RP 178. They consumed marijuana legally purchased from a store using marijuana smoking devices, leaving the house pretty messy the next day. The marijuana was used in the bedrooms downstairs where the children are not allowed. 03/07/17 RP 178-79, 181, 185-86.

Meland knew her boyfriend had a marijuana grow in the backyard, but she was not involved with the grow and told him to get rid of it. She told him not to bring the marijuana into the house to protect her children. He would not listen to her but she did not tell him to move out because she loved him. 03/07/17 RP 179-80, 184-87.

During the time that Meland lived at the house, she and Rosman did not have a written agreement. Rosman permitted Meland to have other

people live at the house and she met Devin and Darrell Porter and had several conversations with them. 03/07/17 RP 182-84.

Officer Daniel Strassenberg testified that evidence discovered during a search of the house revealed that Meland, Devin Porter, and Darrell Porter lived there. 03/06/17 RP 81-82. Officers found documents in the home that confirm "that Devon Porter is a primary resident" along with Meland. 03/06/17 RP 97-101.

c. Marijuana Grow

Officers collected 27 marijuana plants from the backyard. 03/06/17 RP 86-87. While searching the house, they uncovered marijuana laying next to a Crock-Pot, dried marijuana in various places, scissors with green smudging or residue on the blades, and several glass pipes. 03/06/17 RP 75-80.

Detective John Willard, who obtained the search warrant, testified that he named Amie Meland and Devon Porter as residents of the house at 3117 East Carlisle. 03/07/17 RP 144-46. Willard included in his affidavit that Porter was convicted in 2010 for possessing, manufacturing, and delivering a controlled substance, cocaine, and arrested in 2014 for possession of a controlled substance, methamphetamine. He did not note any criminal history for Meland. There was no evidence of Meland being involved with growing marijuana other than living at the house. 03/07/17

RP 162-64. Willard checked the electric company records which named Meland as the subscriber, but the power usage did not indicate that marijuana was grown in the house. 03/07/17 RP 161-62, 167.

d. Jury Instructions

During a discussion of the jury instructions, defense counsel objected to using "direct or indirect" in the definition of manufacturing. He pointed out that the words "direct or indirect" are bracketed in WPIC 50.12 and therefore optional. Defense counsel argued that the words are vague and misleading and "could cause the jury to view just my client's knowledge or presence to be enough to indicate a connection to this act." 03/07/17 RP 131-33.

The prosecutor contended that the words are part of the WPIC and certainly applied most strongly in a case like this. He argued that Meland was for all intents and purposes the owner of the house and in charge of the house. "She's the landlady, and that makes her support indirect by providing a place and allowing the activity to go on in her house in common areas." 03/07/17 RP 132.

The trial court ruled that it would include the bracketed words because based on the evidence, Meland was living in the house with the consent of the landlord and "she was the one person in charge of this house and she had it under her dominion and control." 03/07/17 RP 133-35. The

court instructed that jury that “[m]anufacture means the direct or indirect production, preparation, propagation or processing of any controlled substance.” CP 78. During deliberations, the jury submitted two questions asking for a definition of “indirect.” The court responded, “Please review the jury instructions previously provided.” CP 84, 85.

e. State’s Closing Argument

Referring to Jury Instruction Number 7, the prosecutor argued:

Now, this is very important. Manufacture means the direct or indirect production, preparation, propagation or processing of any controlled substance. This is important because of the defendant’s status in that house. That was her house. People who were in that house were there with her consent and by permitting the activity in the house, she directly or indirectly produced the marijuana. And remember she said -- I asked her if after she said she didn’t like it, she wanted her boyfriend to stop it, and I said, Couldn’t you have asked him to leave? And she said yes. And I said, Did you ask him to leave? No, because I was in love with him. And she got sort of emotional, and that’s tough.

. . . . Again, her house, and she was the only person who had permission from the owner of the house to be there. Everyone else was there at her consent, by her leave. She had the control. We heard the terms “dominion and control.” She was the one with dominion and control. That was for all intents and purposes her house.

03/07/17 RP 211-12.

E. ARGUMENT WHY REVIEW SHOULD BE ACCEPTED

THIS COURT SHOULD ACCEPT REVIEW BECAUSE THE AMBIGUITY OF THE JURY INSTRUCTION COMPOUNDED BY THE PROSECUTOR’S MISSTATEMENT OF THE LAW MISLED THE JURY AND DENIED MELAND HER CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL. RAP 13.4(b)(3).

Appellate courts review jury instructions de novo. *State v. Johnson*, 180 Wn.2d 295, 301, 325 P.3d 135 (2014)(citing *State v. Levy*, 156 Wn.2d 709, 721, 132 P.3d 1076 (2006)). The standard for clarity in a jury instruction, which is higher than for a statute, requires a “manifestly clear instruction.” *State v. LeFaber*, 128 Wn.2d 896, 900, 913 P.2d 369 (1996), *abrogated on other grounds* by *State v. O’Hara*, 167 Wn.2d 91, 217 P.3d 756 (2009)(quoting *State v. Allery*, 101 Wn.2d 591, 595, 682 P.2d 312 (1984)). The instructions read as a whole must make the relevant legal standard “manifestly apparent to the average juror.” *LeFaber*, 128 Wn.2d at 902 (citing *Allery*, 101 Wn.2d at 595).

Jury instructions are sufficient when they allow the parties to argue their theory of the case, do not mislead the jury, and properly state the applicable law. *State v. Tili*, 139 Wn.2d 107, 126, 985 P.2d 365 (1999). Before addressing whether an instruction sufficed to allow a party to argue its theory of the case, the court must first decide the instruction accurately stated the law without misleading the jury.” *LeFaber*, 128 Wn.2d at 903 (citing *State v. Acosta*, 101 Wn.2d 612, 619-20, 683 P.2d 1069 (1984), *State v. Wanrow*, 88 Wn.2d 221, 235-36, 559 P.2d 548 (1977)).

WPIC 50.12 provides in relevant part:

Manufacture means the [direct or indirect] [production] [preparation] [propagation] [compounding] [conversion] [or] [processing] of any controlled substance.

The Note On Use states, "Use bracketed material as applicable."

During a discussion of the jury instructions, defense counsel objected to using the term "direct or indirect," pointing out that the term is bracketed and therefore optional. He argued that the term is vague and misleading and consequently the jury could find that Meland manufactured the marijuana based merely on evidence of her knowledge and presence. 03/07/17 RP 131-33. Defense counsel proposed a jury instruction omitting the term, citing WPIC 50.12. CP 66.

The trial court ruled that use of the term "direct or indirect" is appropriate in this case and gave the following jury instructions in relevant part:

To convict the defendant of the crime of manufacture of a controlled substance, each of the following elements of the crime must be proved beyond a reasonable doubt:

- (1) That on or about September 21, 2015, the defendant manufactured a controlled substance; marijuana.
- (2) That the defendant knew that the substance manufactured was marijuana; and
- (3) That this act occurred in the State of Washington.

CP 75 (Instruction No. 4).

A person knows or acts knowingly or with knowledge with respect to a fact when he or she is aware of that fact.

CP 76. (Instruction No. 5).

It is a crime for any person to manufacture a controlled substance that the person knows to be a controlled substance.

CP 77 (Instruction No. 6).

Manufacture means the direct or indirect production, preparation, propagation or processing of any controlled substance.

CP 78 (Instruction No. 7).

The record substantiates that the term "direct or indirect" is ambiguous and fails to meet the standard that jury instructions must be manifestly clear. During deliberations, the jury submitted two inquiries. The jury stated, "Define 'indirect' processing, preparation or production." CP 84. The jury again stated, "We would like the definition of indirect." CP 85. For both inquiries, the court responded, "Please review the jury instructions previously provided." CP 84, 85. The jury was clearly uncertain as to the meaning of "indirect."

The jury's uncertainty is understandable where even the prosecutor and trial court misinterpreted the meaning of "indirect." The prosecutor argued, "She's the landlady, and that makes her support indirect by providing a place and allowing the activity to go on in her house in common areas." 03/07/17 RP 132. In ruling that the term applied, the court determined that Meland "was the one person in charge of this house and she had it under her dominion and control." 03/07/17 RP 134. Both the

prosecutor and the court misconstrued the law in likening Meland to a landlord. Under *State v. Roberts*, 80 Wn. App. 342, 345, 908 P.2d 892 (1996), “[a] landlord, knowing that a tenant possesses control over the contraband but failing to evict the tenant, does not, by that failure, exercise dominion and control over the contraband.” The *Roberts* Court concluded that the landlord’s ability to evict a tenant does not hold him criminally liable for the marijuana grow if the grow belonged solely to the tenant. 80 Wn. App. at 353-54.

The jury’s questions and the prosecutor’s and court’s misapprehension of the meaning of indirect illustrate the ambiguity of the term “direct or indirect” as used in the instruction. The jury instruction is therefore misleading.

Furthermore, the prosecutor misstated the law during closing in arguing that Meland directly or indirectly manufactured the marijuana because she had dominion and control of the house:

Manufacturing means the direct or indirect production, preparation, propagation or processing of any controlled substance. *This is important because of the defendant’s status in that house. That was her house. People who were in that house were there with her consent and by permitting the activity in the house, she directly or indirectly produced the marijuana. . . .* Again, her house, and she was the only person who had permission from the owner of the house to be there. Everyone else was there at her consent, by her leave. She had the control. *We heard the terms “dominion and control.” She was the one with dominion and control. That was for all intents and purposes her house.*

03/07/17 RP 211-12 (emphasis added).

Contrary to the prosecutor's argument, dominion and control over the premises does not establish dominion and control over the contraband as a matter of law. *Roberts*, 80 Wn. App. at 345. Importantly, Meland testified that she knew her boyfriend had a marijuana grow in the back yard, but she was not involved at all with the grow and she told him to get rid of it. 03/07/17 RP 179-80, 184-87. Detective Willard testified that there was no evidence of Meland being involved with growing marijuana other than living at the house. 03/07/17 RP 162-64. There was no evidence that Meland had any role whatsoever in the production, preparation, propagation or processing of the marijuana.

The term "direct or indirect" is ambiguous because the term does not make it manifestly clear that a person does not indirectly manufacture a controlled substance by presence and assent to the manufacturing process. The jury's questions substantiate that the jurors were confused about the meaning of "indirect." CP 84, 85. Consequently, the jury could have found that Meland manufactured the marijuana because she lived at the house and allowed Porter to continue living there and grow the marijuana in the backyard. When jury instructions are ambiguous, the reviewing court

cannot assume that the jury followed the legally valid interpretation. *See State v. McLoyd*, 87 Wn. App. 66, 71, 939 P.2d 1255 (1997).

This Court should accept review because reversal is required where the ambiguity of the jury instruction compounded by the prosecutor's misstatement of the law misled the jury thereby denying Meland her constitutional right to a fair trial.

F. CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated, this Court should accept review and reverse Meland's conviction.

DATED this 26th day of November, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

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DECLARATION OF SERVICE

On this day, the undersigned sent by email a copy of the document to which this declaration is attached to the Spokane County Prosecutor's Office at SCPAAppeals@spokanecounty.org by agreement of the parties.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that the foregoing is true and correct.

DATED this 26th day of November, 2018.

/s/ Valerie Marushige
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APPENDIX

FILED
SEPTEMBER 13, 2018
In the Office of the Clerk of Court
WA State Court of Appeals, Division III

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON
DIVISION THREE

STATE OF WASHINGTON,)	No. 35208-1-III
)	
Respondent,)	
)	
v.)	UNPUBLISHED OPINION
)	
AMIE N. MELAND)	
also known as AMIE N. BRAUNSTEIN,)	
)	
Appellant.)	

PENNELL, A.C.J. — Amie Meland appeals her conviction for manufacturing marijuana. We affirm.

FACTS

Ms. Meland shared a home with her boyfriend, his brother and her children. The home was owned by Ms. Meland's stepmother, who did not live on the premises. No formal lease agreement governed Ms. Meland's tenancy.

In September 2015, police executed a search warrant at Ms. Meland's residence based on a marijuana grow located in the backyard. During the search, officers seized 27 marijuana plants from the yard; marijuana and scissors bearing apparent marijuana residue from the kitchen; and glass pipes and drying marijuana from the basement.

Ms. Meland was charged with manufacturing marijuana. She took her case to trial and testified in her defense. According to Ms. Meland, she participated in smoking store-bought marijuana at her residence, but did not help with the marijuana grow. Ms. Meland explained the marijuana operation was her boyfriend's. She said she asked him to stop for the sake of her kids, but he did not. Ms. Meland recognized she could have asked her boyfriend to move out, but she declined to do so because she loved him. Ms. Meland admitted that it had been her "choice" to let her boyfriend remain at her residence, even though it meant continuation of the marijuana operation. 1 Report of Proceedings (RP) (Mar. 7, 2017) at 187.

The final jury charge included an instruction based on WPIC 50.12¹, defining the meaning of manufacture. The instruction stated, "[m]anufacture means the direct or indirect production, preparation, propagation or processing of any controlled substance." Clerk's Papers (CP) at 78. Ms. Meland's attorney objected to this instruction, arguing the words "direct and indirect" were vague and misleading. 1 RP (Mar. 7, 2017) at 131. Counsel for the State justified the instruction by arguing Ms. Meland's role as the home's de facto landlady meant she was responsible for providing a location for the marijuana

¹ 11 WASHINGTON PRACTICE: WASHINGTON PATTERN JURY INSTRUCTIONS: CRIMINAL 50.12, at 1140 (4th ed. 2016) (WPIC).

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grow. According to the State, this conduct qualified as indirect production of marijuana.

Although the court's instructions included both the direct and indirect language, the court denied the State's request for an accomplice liability instruction. The court explained it did so because the charging information did not allege accomplice liability and because the State could argue the same theory given the direct or indirect portion of WPIC 50.12. 1 RP (Mar. 7, 2017) at 138.

In closing argument, the State emphasized Ms. Meland had direct or indirect involvement in manufacturing marijuana because she had dominion and control of the house. The prosecutor stated:

Now, this is very important. Manufacture means the direct or indirect production, preparation, propagation or processing of any controlled substance. This is important because of the defendant's status in that house. That was her house. People who were in that house were there with her consent and by permitting the activity in the house, she directly or indirectly produced the marijuana. And remember, she said—I asked her if after she said she didn't like it, she wanted her boyfriend to stop it, and I said, [c]ouldn't you have asked him to leave? And she said yes. And I said, [d]id you ask him to leave? No, because I was in love with him. And she got sort of emotional, and that's tough.

....
Again, her house, and she was the only person who had permission from the owner of the house to be there. Everyone else was there at her consent, by her leave. She had the control.

We heard the terms "dominion and control." She was the one with dominion and control. That was for all intents and purposes her house.

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2 RP (Mar. 7, 2017) at 211-12. During deliberations, the jury submitted two questions asking the court to define “indirect.” CP at 84-85. Each time, the trial court responded, “[p]lease review the Jury Instructions previously provided.” *Id.* The jury convicted Ms. Meland as charged.

ANALYSIS

Ms. Meland was convicted of manufacturing a controlled substance in violation of RCW 69.50.401. Manufacture is defined as:

the production, preparation, propagation, compounding, conversion, or processing of a controlled substance, either *directly or indirectly*.

Former RCW 69.50.101(s) (2015) (emphasis added).

As noted above, the trial court’s instruction defining manufacture was consistent with this statutory language. Ms. Meland challenges the appropriateness of this instruction.

We review the adequacy of the court’s jury instruction de novo. *State v. Levy*, 156 Wn.2d 709, 721, 132 P.3d 1076 (2006). The law requires a “manifestly clear instruction.” *State v. LeFaber*, 128 Wn.2d 896, 902, 913 P.2d 369 (1996), *abrogated on other grounds by State v. O’Hara*, 167 Wn.2d 91, 217 P.3d 756 (2009). The jury instructions read as a whole must clearly announce to an average person the legal standard the jury must apply. *LeFaber*, 128 Wn.2d at 900. If the jury instructions allow

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jurors to arrive at an erroneous verdict or a conclusion contrary to law, the instructions lack sufficient clarity. *Id.* at 902-03.

Ms. Meland claims the court's instructions were insufficiently clear because they permitted her to be convicted on an erroneous legal theory. Specifically, the instructions allowed the jury to convict Ms. Meland based on her status as the de facto landlady of the residence, as argued by the State. Ms. Meland points to *State v. Roberts*, 80 Wn. App. 342, 345, 908 P.2d 892 (1996), which held that a landlord cannot be held responsible for a tenant's criminal activities based merely on the landlord's failure to exercise eviction powers.

We find *Roberts* inapplicable. Mr. Roberts was charged with possession of marijuana with intent to deliver or manufacture based on a marijuana grow operation that had been discovered in his basement. At trial, Mr. Roberts sought to present evidence that he had sublet his basement to a tenant and that he had no control over the tenant's activities. The trial court excluded this evidence as irrelevant, but Division One of our court reversed. The *Roberts* court explained that "[a] landlord, knowing that a tenant possesses contraband but failing to evict the tenant, does not, by that failure, exercise dominion and control over the contraband." 80 Wn. App. at 345. In addition, the court held that Mr. Roberts could not be convicted as an accomplice based on his failure to

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evict his tenant or intervene in the tenant's marijuana operation. *Id.* at 356. In support of this holding, the court looked to Washington's Residential Landlord-Tenant Act of 1973, chapter 59.18 RCW, which restricts a landlord's ability to access a tenant's leasehold or property and requires legal process prior to eviction. *Id.* at 354, 356.

Ms. Meland's circumstances were materially different from those in *Roberts*. Unlike what was proffered in *Roberts*, Ms. Meland and her boyfriend did not have a traditional landlord-tenant relationship. Instead, they shared a common household. Although Ms. Meland's interests in the property were superior to those of her boyfriend, the Residential Landlord-Tenant Act did not restrict Ms. Meland's right to unfettered access and control over all areas of the home. Because she shared full access to the premises, Ms. Meland could properly be found in constructive possession of the marijuana on the property. *State v. Chakos*, 74 Wn.2d 154, 157-58, 443 P.2d 815 (1968). *Roberts* specifically excluded shared households from the reach of its decision. 80 Wn. App. at 355 n.10.

Because this case involved a shared residence, not an arms-length landlord and tenant relationship, Ms. Meland's challenge to the court's jury instructions is inapposite. The trial court's instruction here defining manufacture was an accurate statement of law and allowed the State to argue Ms. Meland indirectly participated in manufacturing

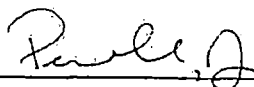
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marijuana by choosing to provide her boyfriend a grow site. This was a viable theory of liability. *See State v. Gallagher*, 112 Wn. App. 601, 613-14, 51 P.3d 100 (2002) (sufficient evidence of accomplice liability based on obvious manufacturing activities of co-tenant when defendant allowed co-tenant to live at his residence rent free). No further review is therefore warranted.²

CONCLUSION

The judgment of conviction is affirmed. Ms. Meland's request to deny appellate costs is granted based on the State's apparent lack of objection.

A majority of the panel has determined this opinion will not be printed in the Washington Appellate Reports, but it will be filed for public record pursuant to RCW 2.06.040.



Pennell, A.C.J.

I CONCUR:



Siddoway, J.

² Because we have affirmed Ms. Meland's conviction, we need not address the State's cross appeal regarding the refusal to provide an accomplice liability instruction.

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FEARING, J. (dissent) — The majority creates a new theory of criminal liability, the shared premises theory, a theory never argued by the State or supported by precedent. In so ruling, the majority also engages in fact finding by ruling that Amie Meland chose to provide her boyfriend a grow site, when the undisputed evidence establishes that Meland objected to her boyfriend's growing of marijuana and took no steps to further the operation. Finally, the majority relies on precedent imposing accomplice liability when Meland's trial court refused to render an accomplice liability jury instruction.

This appeal asks us to measure the ambiguity or clarity of the phrase "direct or indirect" in the context of manufacturing a controlled substance. The jury convicted Amie Meland of manufacturing marijuana, and she challenges a jury instruction that allowed her conviction based on the "direct or indirect" production of the green flower. Because the State, contrary to precedent, contended that Meland engaged in the "indirect" production of marijuana by being the practicing landlady of premises, on which others grew marijuana, I would accept the challenge and reverse Meland's conviction.

FACTS

This prosecution arises from marijuana cultivation at an East Carlisle Street residence in Spokane. Christina Rosman, defendant Amie Meland's former mother-in-

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law, owned the residence and allowed Meland and her two children to live in the home. Meland and Rosman maintained no written lease. Beginning in January 2013, Meland's boyfriend Devon Porter, and Devon's brother, Darrell Porter, also resided in the residence. Owner Rosman met Devon and Darrell Porter and spoke with them on occasion. Meland needed no consent from Rosman for others to reside in the house.

On September 21, 2015, the Spokane Police Department received a complaint of an assault at the East Carlisle residence and of marijuana growing in the backyard of the abode. We do not know what, if any relationship, the assault had to the marijuana growth. Law enforcement researched and discovered that Amie Meland lived at the address and Meland was the subject of a pending arrest warrant for driving with a suspended license.

Amie Meland had no criminal history other than driving without a valid license. She testified at trial that adults smoked marijuana only in downstairs bedrooms where her children were not allowed to enter. Meland knew her boyfriend, Devon Porter, grew marijuana in the backyard, but she did not help with the cultivation and told him to cease growing plants. Porter refused. Meland did not tell him to move because she loved him.

After receiving the tip, law enforcement officers went to the residence to investigate the allegations of assault and the marijuana operation and to execute the arrest warrant. When the officers knocked on the front door, no one answered. As an officer

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walked along a driveway to a door on the side of the house, he saw marijuana in the back yard.

Amie Meland answered a knock at the side door. The rapping officer asked her about an altercation earlier that day, and Meland responded. The officer concluded that he lacked probable cause to arrest for an assault, but he arrested Meland for the outstanding warrant and transported her to jail. After obtaining a search warrant, officers returned to the residence's backyard, cut the marijuana plants, and confiscated the plants. Officers collected twenty-seven marijuana plants from the yard.

Officers also entered the East Carlisle dwelling and seized documents that confirmed Devon Porter, along with Amie Meland, was a "primary resident" of the abode. Officers found, in the kitchen, marijuana and scissors with green smudging or residue on the blades. In the basement bedroom quarters, officers found glass pipes and drying marijuana. Detective John Willard reviewed electric company records, which named Meland as the subscriber, but did not reflect power usage consistent with marijuana growing inside the home.

At trial, Detective John Willard conceded that no evidence linked Amie Meland to growing marijuana other than her living at the East Carlisle house. Meland admitted in her testimony to smoking marijuana the day before officers searched her home while hosting a football party, but she did not smoke marijuana produced in the backyard. She legally purchased the marijuana at a store. Meland also identified smoking paraphernalia

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found in her bedroom. She neither bought nor used the scissors found in the kitchen and did not know whether Devon or Darrell Porter brought them into the kitchen.

PROCEDURE

The State of Washington charged Amie Meland with manufacture of a controlled substance—marijuana. The State did not prosecute Devon or Darrell Porter with the offense.

During the jury instruction conference, the State requested an instruction based on 11 *Washington Practice: Washington Pattern Jury Instructions: Criminal* 50.12, at 1140 (4th ed. 2016) (WPIC), which defines the word manufacture for purposes of manufacturing a controlled substance. Defense counsel objected to including “direct or indirect” in the definition. Report of Proceedings (RP) at 131. Counsel noted that WPIC 50.12 places brackets around the phrase “direct or indirect” and therefore the phrase was optional. RP at 131. Defense counsel characterized the words “direct or indirect” as vague and misleading and as bearing the potential for a conviction based solely on knowledge of or presence near the marijuana plants. The State argued that Amie Meland functioned as the “landlady” in charge of the house and her role supported use of the word “indirect” because she provided a location to grow marijuana and allowed marijuana activity to occur inside the house.

The trial court included the bracketed words “direct or indirect” in the jury instruction because Meland lived in and controlled the house. In instruction 7, the trial

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court wrote that “[m]anufacture means the direct or indirect production, preparation, propagation or processing of any controlled substance.” Clerk’s Papers (CP) at 78.

The State requested an accomplice liability instruction. It argued Meland provided aid to the Porter brothers by affording a locus for growing the marijuana and a house in which to process the plants. The court denied the State’s request because the charging information did not allege accomplice liability and because the State could argue the same theory given the “direct or indirect” portion of WPIC 50.12.

In closing argument, the State emphasized that Amie Meland had “direct or indirect” involvement in the manufacture of the marijuana grow because she had dominion and control of the house. The prosecution commented:

Now, this is very important. Manufacture means the direct or indirect production, preparation, propagation or processing of any controlled substance. This is important because of the defendant’s status in that house. That was her house. People who were in that house were there with her consent and by permitting the activity in the house, she directly or indirectly produced the marijuana. And remember, she said—I asked her if after she said she didn’t like it, she wanted her boyfriend to stop it, and I said, [c]ouldn’t you have asked him to leave? And she said yes. And I said, [d]id you ask him to leave? No, because I was in love with him. And she got sort of emotional, and that’s tough.

....
... Again, her house, and she was the only person who had permission from the owner of the house to be there. Everyone else was there at her consent, by her leave. She had the control.

We heard the terms “dominion and control.” She was the one with dominion and control. That was for all intents and purposes her house.

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RP at 211-12. During deliberations, the jury submitted two questions asking the court to define “indirect.” Each time, the trial court responded, “[p]lease review the jury instruction previously provided.” CP at 84-85. The jury convicted Meland as charged.

LAW AND ANALYSIS

On appeal, Amie Meland assigns error to the delivery of jury instruction 7 that defines “manufacture” as “the direct or *indirect* production, preparation, propagation or processing of any controlled substance.” CP at 78 (emphasis added). The State cross-appeals and assigns error to the trial court’s refusal to give an accomplice liability instruction. Because the majority affirms the conviction on the basis that the jury instruction created no error, the majority does not address the State’s cross-appeal.

The State convicted Amie Meland with manufacturing a controlled substance in violation of RCW 69.50.401. In turn, former RCW 69.50.101(s) (2015) defines “manufacture” as:

‘Manufacture’ means the production, preparation, propagation, compounding, conversion, or processing of a controlled substance, either *directly or indirectly* or by extraction from substances of natural origin, or independently by means of chemical synthesis, or by a combination of extraction and chemical synthesis, and includes any packaging or repackaging of the substance or labeling or relabeling of its container. The term does not include the preparation, compounding, packaging, repackaging, labeling, or relabeling of a controlled substance.

(Emphasis added.)

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On appeal, Amie Meland complains of ambiguity in the words “direct or indirect” found in jury instruction 7. The State urged the trial court to include the phrase because Meland as the functioning “landlady” controlled use of the residence. The State argued the propriety of the word “indirect” because Meland held dominion and control over the house, provided a location to grow the marijuana, and could have evicted her boyfriend.

I recognize that RCW 69.50.101(s) includes the words “directly or indirectly.” Nevertheless, I agree with Amie Meland. Because of the evidence in this case and the argument of liability presented by the State to the jury, jury instruction 7 was misleading. In other contexts, instruction 7 may be proper.

This court reviews challenges to jury instructions de novo within the context of the jury instructions as a whole. *State v. Levy*, 156 Wn.2d 709, 721, 132 P.3d 1076 (2006); *State v. Sublett*, 156 Wn. App. 160, 183, 231 P.3d 231 (2010), *aff'd on other grounds*, 176 Wn.2d 58, 292 P.3d 715 (2012); *State v. Bennett*, 161 Wn.2d 303, 307, 165 P.3d 1241 (2007). The law requires a “manifestly clear instruction.” *State v. LeFaber*, 128 Wn.2d 896, 902, 913 P.2d 369 (1996), *abrogated on other grounds by State v. O'Hara*, 167 Wn.2d 91, 217 P.3d 756 (2009). The jury instructions read as a whole must clearly announce to an average person the legal standard the jury must apply. *State v. LeFaber*, 128 Wn.2d at 900. If the jury instructions allow jurors to arrive at an erroneous verdict or a conclusion contrary to law, the instructions lack sufficient clarity. *State v. LeFaber*, 128 Wn.2d at 902-03.

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Jury instructions suffice when they allow the parties to argue their theory of the case, do not mislead the jury, and accurately state the law. *State v. Tili*, 139 Wn.2d 107, 126, 985 P.2d 365 (1999). The reviewing court cannot assume that a jury given ambiguous instructions followed the law. *State v. McLoyd*, 87 Wn. App. 66, 71, 939 P.2d 1255 (1997), *aff'd sub nom. State v. Studd*, 137 Wn.2d 533, 973 P.2d 1049 (1999).

I side with Amie Meland primarily because the State's theory of imposing criminal liability on Meland for her role as landlady clashes with principles of law. A landlord's ability to evict a tenant does not automatically hold the landlord criminally liable for a marijuana growing operation if the grow belongs solely to the tenant. *State v. Roberts*, 80 Wn. App. 342, 353-54, 908 P.2d 892 (1996). A landlord, knowing that a tenant possesses control over the contraband but failing to evict the tenant, does not, by that failure, exercise dominion and control over the contraband. *State v. Roberts*, 80 Wn. App. at 345.

The State distinguishes *State v. Roberts* because the reversal in *Roberts* resulted from the denial of the defendant's right to argue that the marijuana cultivation belonged to a subtenant. The State emphasizes that challenged jury instruction 7 still permitted Amie Meland to argue her theory that Devon and Darrel Porter exclusively manufactured the marijuana.

I reject the State's position because the challenged jury instruction permitted and resulted in the State arguing to the jury that Amie Meland, by virtue of being the landlady

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and without any other connection to the marijuana, indirectly engaged in manufacturing. The *Roberts* court deemed such an argument erroneous. Meland's freedom to argue her theory of the case did not prevent the jury from rejecting her theory and convicting her of manufacturing contrary to the law. The jury could convict her despite Detective John Willard's testimony that no evidence connected Meland to the growing management other than her tenancy in the home. The jury's two questions to the court confirm the ambiguous nature of the jury instruction that could lead to a false conviction.

The State of Washington highlights that this court approved the contested jury instruction in *State v. Stearns*, 59 Wn. App. 445, 799 P.2d 270 (1990), *aff'd*, 119 Wn.2d 247, 830 P.2d 355 (1992). Nevertheless, the *Stearns* court faced a distinct issue. The jury instruction upheld in *Stearns* declared: "[m]anufacture means the production, preparation, compounding, processing, directly or indirectly, as well as the packaging or repackaging of any controlled substances." *State v. Stearns*, 59 Wn. App. at 446 (internal quotation marks omitted). The defendant challenged the "packaging or repackaging" language of the instruction. The two-page opinion did not address the "direct or indirect" language used in this appeal.

The State also emphasizes *State v. Ng*, 110 Wn.2d 32, 750 P.2d 632 (1988), wherein the jury also asked a question about whether the defense of duress applied to the lesser included charges. The court responded by referring the jury to the instructions. The State cites the *Ng* decision for the proposition that a jury's question inheres in the

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verdict such that Amie Meland cannot demonstrate any abuse of discretion in the trial court's decision to refer the jurors to the instructions as given. The State's argument misses the point. Meland does not challenge the trial court's decision to refer the jury to the instructions following their questions.

Finally, the State contends that any error in the jury instructions was harmless. If a record supports a finding that the jury verdict would be the same absent the error, harmless error may be found. *State v. Berube*, 150 Wn.2d 498, 506, 79 P.3d 1144 (2003). An omission or misstatement in a jury instruction is subject to harmless error analysis if it does not relieve the State of its burden of proving every essential element of the crime charged. *State v. Brown*, 147 Wn.2d 330, 339, 58 P.3d 889 (2002). The State maintains that the offending jury instruction did not relieve it of its burden of proving every essential element of the crime charged. Nevertheless, the ambiguity in the instruction, when juxtaposed with the State's argument to the jurors, lessened the burden of proving manufacturing, the first element contained in the to-convict instruction.

The State alternatively posits that untainted evidence led to a finding of guilt. Specifically, the State points to Amie Meland's admission of using marijuana and buying drug paraphernalia found in her bedroom. This contention also misses the mark. Meland only smoked marijuana lawfully purchased from a store. Meland's consumption of a legal product bears no relevance to whether Meland criminally manufactured a controlled substance.

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The State forwards Amie Meland's dominion and control over the premises and her allowance of her boyfriend to use the backyard to grow the marijuana as further untainted evidence that supports the jury verdict. The State further contends that manufacturing occurred inside the home as evidenced by the drying marijuana found in the kitchen along with the residue ridden scissors. Nevertheless, as declared by Detective John Willard, no evidence connected Meland to the growing or manufacturing process regardless of whether one considers evidence inside or outside the home.

Use of the phrase "direct or indirect," within the context of the circumstances of this prosecution created an ambiguity that misled the jury as to the legal standard of criminal liability. Since the ambiguity related to an important element of the crime, the error was not harmless.

The majority relies on *State v. Gallagher*, 112 Wn. App. 601, 613, 51 P.3d 100 (2002). The majority writes that the decision stands for the proposition that sufficient evidence exists to convict one of accomplice liability of drug manufacturing based on the obvious manufacturing activities of a co-tenant when the accused allowed the co-tenant to live at his residence rent free. The majority implies that the only evidence of accomplice liability was the permission of allowing the manufacturer to live on the rented premises. Not so. Law enforcement found Dennis Gallagher's fingerprints on a can of denatured alcohol in his co-tenant's bedroom and located a hydrochloric acid gas generator in Gallagher's bathroom. Both items are critical to the manufacturing of

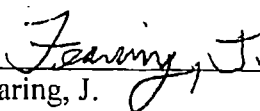
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methamphetamine. The court reasoned that all the evidence supported the jury's conclusion that Gallagher participated in the process of manufacturing methamphetamine, either personally or by knowingly giving aid or assistance to the co-tenant.

The State presented no evidence of Amie Meland's participation in or encouragement of her boyfriend's marijuana production. The State admitted that no evidence supported Meland's assistance in the manufacturing. To the contrary, Meland objected to the manufacturing. She took no steps to remove her boyfriend from the premises because she loved him. Love for the criminal actor is not a basis for accomplice liability.

More importantly, the majority fails to recognize that the State never pled accomplice liability and the trial court refused to deliver an accomplice liability instruction. Assuming the majority wishes to impose accomplice liability on Meland, the majority must first address the State's cross-appeal of the trial court's denial of an accomplice liability jury instruction and then remand for a new trial during which the trial court instructs on this theory of liability. Appellate courts do not affirm criminal convictions on theories never pled by the State and never submitted to the jury.


Fearing, J.

November 26, 2018 - 10:46 AM

Transmittal Information

Filed with Court: Court of Appeals Division III
Appellate Court Case Number: 35208-1
Appellate Court Case Title: State of Washington v. Amie Nicole Braunstein aka Amie N. Meland
Superior Court Case Number: 15-1-03619-1

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