

NO. 72019-8-1

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

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STATE OF WASHINGTON,

Respondent,

v.

STETSON G. TEDDER,

Appellant.

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

The Honorable George N. Bowden, Judge

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BRIEF OF APPELLANT

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A. ASSIGNMENT OF ERROR

The trial court erred by giving a constitutionally defective reasonable doubt instruction.

Issues Pertaining to Assignment of Error

1. Did the reasonable doubt instruction stating a “reasonable doubt is one for which a reason exists” tell jurors that they must have more than just a reasonable doubt to acquit?

2. Did the reasonable doubt instruction undermine the presumption of innocence and impermissibly shift the burden of proof by telling jurors they must be able to articulate a reason to have a reasonable doubt?

3. Does erroneously instructing a jury regarding the meaning of reasonable doubt vitiate the jury-trial right, constituting structural error?

B. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

1. Procedural Facts

The Snohomish County Prosecutor charged appellant Stetson Tedder with second degree child assault and unlawful imprisonment. CP 75-76. The prosecution alleged that between December 25, 2012, and January 12, 2013, Tedder assaulted his then four-year-old step daughter, M.T., by shooting her repeatedly with plastic pellets from an airsoft gun and unlawfully imprisoning her by binding her hands and feet with zip ties

and/or duct tape. CP 77-80. The charges included allegations that the acts were committed against a "family or household member" and manifested "deliberate cruelty" in their commission. CP 75.

A jury trial was held before the Honorable George N. Bowden, March 24-28, 2014. 2RP-5RP.<sup>1</sup> Tedder was found guilty of the charged offenses, and the jury also found they were committed against a "family or household member," but not with "deliberate cruelty." CP 21-24, 26; 6RP 113-16.

The court imposed standard range sentences of 46 months for the assault and 12 months for the unlawful imprisonment. CP 6-16; 7RP 11-13. Tedder appeals. CP 1-2.

## 2. Substantive Facts

According to M.T.'s biological paternal grandmother, Corinne Smith, she had M.T. and her older half brother B.T. at her home for an overnight on January 12, 2013. 3RP 94-95. When Smith gave M.T. a bath the following morning she noticed several dozen red marks on her, as if M.T. had chicken pox. 3RP 96, 101. When Smith asked about them, M.T. replied they were not chicken pox, but were instead from being shot by her stepfather, Tedder. 3RP 97. When Smith showed the marks to her

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<sup>1</sup> There are seven volumes of verbatim report of proceedings referenced as follows: 1RP - 1/10/14 (pretrial); 2RP - 3/24/14; 3RP - 3/25/14; 4RP - 3/26/14; 5RP - 3/27/14; 6RP - 3/28/14; and 7RP - 5/5/14 (sentencing).

sister, Regina Hinton, M.T. told her they were from Tedder shooting her for accidentally waking him up. 3RP 115. When Hinton became upset, M.T. allegedly told Hinton "not to worry, that she doesn't get spanked anymore; that she just got hog tied and shot with the BB gun." 3RP 116. M.T. repeated her claim that Tedder would tie her up and shoot her to several others, including a forensic nurse, two social worker, and a child interview specialist, each of whom testified at trial about that contact. 4RP 4-43, 110-11, 124-25; 5RP 49, 52.

M.T. also testified at trial, where she recalled her brother B.T. getting a gun for Christmas that shot plastic bullets that hurt and left a mark where they struck. 3RP 49-50, 60. M.T. claimed B.T. shot her more than once with the gun while in his room, and recalled both B.T. and Tedder shooting her with the gun in her room on several occasions. 3RP 50, 60-61.

With regard to being tied up, M.T. claimed Tedder bound her hands and feet with zip ties on several occasions, and that it hurt. 3RP 55-59. M.T. denied at trial, however, that she was ever shot while her hands were bound. 3RP 62, 72.

B.T. also testified at trial, and denied ever purposefully shooting M.T. or anyone else with the airsoft gun, and claimed it happened only once to M.T., and that was by accident. 3RP 81-82. B.T. claimed for the

first time at trial, however, that his father shot M.T. with the gun several times. 3RP 82, 85, 88-90. B.T. also recalled his father zip tying M.T.'s hands for reasons he could not recall. 3RP 84.

According to M.T.'s mother, Michelle Tedder,<sup>2</sup> she recalled seeing marks on M.T.'s body while bathing her on January 12, 2013, before she and B.T. went to stay the night with Smith. According to Michelle, M.T. immediately blamed B.T., claiming he shot her with the airsoft gun. 5RP 113. Michelle did not think the marks were serious enough to warrant any treatment, noting it "didn't look like they were in her skin for very long or hit very hard." 5RP 114.

Michelle recalled telling Tedder about the marks and M.T.'s claim B.T. caused them by shooting her with the airsoft gun. Michelle also recalled Tedder having a "safety talk" thereafter with B.T., and punishing him by taking away his privileges to use the gun and his Xbox gaming system. 5RP 113.

Michelle denied ever seeing Tedder shoot B.T.'s airsoft gun. 5RP 123. Michelle acknowledge there were zip ties in their home, but denied they were ever used to bind the hands and feet of her children. 5RP 124-25.

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<sup>2</sup> To avoid confusing Michelle Tedder for Stetson Tedder, she will be referred to by her first name. No disrespect is intended.

Tedder also testified at trial. 5RP 152-88; 6RP 3-34. Tedder denied ever shooting M.T. or any other child with an airsoft gun and denied ever zip tying the hands of M.T. or any other child. 5RP 184-85; 6RP 13. Tedder did admit duct taping M.T.'s hands together once to stop her from throwing hard objects around in her room, but never zip tying her in any fashion. 6RP 7-8, 10.

In closing argument, Tedder's counsel claimed the prosecution had failed to meet its burden to prove every element of either charged offense beyond a reasonable doubt. 6RP 84-98, 103-06.

C. ARGUMENT

THE MANDATORY JURY INSTRUCTION, "A REASONABLE DOUBT IS ONE FOR WHICH A REASON EXISTS," IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL

Tedder's jury was instructed, "A reasonable doubt is one for which a reason exists and may arise from the evidence or lack of evidence." CP 31; 6RP 57; 11 WASHINGTON PRACTICE: WASHINGTON PATTERN JURY INSTRUCTIONS: CRIMINAL 4.01, at 85 (3d ed. 2008) (WPIC). The Washington Supreme Court requires trial courts to provide this instruction in every criminal case, at least "until a better instruction is approved." State v. Bennett, 161 Wn.2d 303, 318, 165 P.3d 1241 (2007). A better instruction is needed because in its current form it is constitutionally defective because it

requires the jury to articulate a reason to establish a reasonable doubt. In light of this serious instructional error, this Court must reverse.

WPIC 4.01 is invalid for two reasons. First, it tells jurors they must be able to articulate a reason for having a reasonable doubt. This engrafts an additional requirement on reasonable doubt. Jurors must have more than just a reasonable doubt; they must also have an articulable doubt. This makes it more difficult for jurors to acquit and easier for the prosecution to obtain convictions. Second, telling jurors a reason must exist for reasonable doubt undermines the presumption of innocence and is effectively identical to the fill-in-the-blank arguments that Washington courts have invalidated in prosecutorial misconduct cases. If fill-in-the-blank arguments impermissibly shift the burden of proof, so does an instruction requiring exactly the same thing. Instructing jurors with WPIC 4.01 is constitutional error.

a. WPIC 4.01's language improperly adds an articulation requirement

Having a "reasonable doubt" is not, as a matter of plain English, the same as having a reason to doubt. But WPIC 4.01 requires both for a jury to return a not guilty verdict. A basic examination of the meaning of the words "reasonable" and "a reason" reveals this grave flaw in WPIC 4.01.

"Reasonable" is defined as "being in agreement with right thinking or right judgment : not conflicting with reason : not absurd : not ridiculous ...

being or remaining within the bounds of reason . . . having the faculty of reason : RATIONAL . . . possessing good sound judgment . . ." WEBSTER'S THIRD NEW INT'L DICTIONARY 1892 (1993). For a doubt to be reasonable under these definitions it must be rational, logically derived, and have no conflict with reason. Accord Jackson v. Virginia, 443 U.S. 307, 317, 99 S. Ct. 2781, 61 L. Ed. 2d 560 (1979) ("A 'reasonable doubt,' at a minimum, is one based upon 'reason.'"); Johnson v. Louisiana, 406 U.S. 356, 360, 92 S. Ct. 1620, 32 L. Ed. 2d 152 (1972) (collecting cases defining reasonable doubt as one "'based on reason which arises from the evidence or lack of evidence'" (quoting United States v. Johnson, 343 F.2d 5, 6 n.1 (2d Cir. 1965))).

The placement of the article "a" before "reason" in WPIC 4.01 inappropriately alters and augments the definition of reasonable doubt. "[A] reason" in the context of WPIC 4.01, means "an expression or statement offered as an explanation of a belief or assertion or as a justification." WEBSTER'S, supra, at 1891. In contrast to definitions employing the term "reason" in a manner that refers to a doubt based on reason or logic, WPIC 4.01's use of the words "a reason" indicates that reasonable doubt must be capable of explanation or justification. In other words, WPIC 4.01 requires more than just a reasonable doubt; it requires an explainable, articulable, reasonable doubt.

Washington's reasonable doubt instruction is unconstitutional because its language requires more than just a reasonable doubt to acquit. Cf. In re Winship, 397 U.S. 358, 364, 90 S. Ct. 1068, 25 L. Ed. 2d 368 (1970) ("[W]e explicitly hold that the Due Process Clause protects the accused against conviction except upon proof beyond a reasonable doubt . . . ."). Indeed, under the current instruction, jurors could have a reasonable doubt but also have difficulty articulating or explaining why their doubt is reasonable. A case might present such voluminous and contradictory evidence that jurors having legitimate reasonable doubt would struggle putting it into words or pointing to a specific, discrete reason for it. Yet, despite reasonable doubt, acquittal would not be an option.

Scholarship on the reasonable doubt standard elucidates similar concerns with requiring jurors to articulate their doubt:

An inherent difficulty with an articulability requirement of doubt is that it lends itself to reduction without end. If the juror is expected to explain the basis for a doubt, that explanation gives rise to its own need for justification. If a juror's doubt is merely, 'I didn't think the state's witness was credible,' the juror might be expected to then say why the witness was not credible. The requirement for reasons can all too easily become a requirement for reasons for reasons, ad infinitum.

One can also see a potential for creating a barrier to acquit for less-educated or skillful jurors. A juror who lacks the rhetorical skill to communicate reasons for a doubt is then, as a matter of law, barred from acting on that doubt. This bar is more than a basis for other jurors to reject the first

juror's doubt. It is a basis for them to attempt to convince that juror that the doubt is not a legal basis to vote for acquittal.

A troubling conclusion that arises from the difficulties of the requirement of articulability is that it hinders the juror who has a doubt based on the belief that the totality of the evidence is insufficient. Such a doubt lacks the specificity implied in an obligation to 'give a reason,' an obligation that appears focused on the details of the arguments. Yet this is precisely the circumstance in which the rhetoric of the law, particularly the presumption of innocence and the state burden of proof, require acquittal.

Steve Sheppard, The Metamorphoses of Reasonable Doubt: How Changes in the Burden of Proof Have Weakened the Presumption of Innocence, 78 NOTRE DAME L. REV. 1165, 1213-14 (2003) (footnotes omitted). In these various scenarios, despite having reasonable doubt, jurors could not vote to acquit in light of WPIC 4.01's direction to articulate a reasonable doubt. By requiring more than a reasonable doubt to acquit a criminal defendant, WPIC 4.01 violates the federal and state due process clauses. Winship, 297 U.S. at 364; U.S. CONST. amends. V, XIV; CONST. art. I, § 3.

- b. WPIC 4.01's articulation requirement impermissibly undermines the presumption of innocence

"The presumption of innocence is the bedrock upon which the criminal justice system stands." Bennett, 161 Wn.2d at 315. It "can be diluted and even washed away if reasonable doubt is defined so as to be illusive or too difficult to achieve." Id. at 316. To avoid this, Washington courts have strenuously protected the presumption of innocence by rejecting

an articulation requirement in different contexts. This court should similarly safeguard the presumption of innocence in this case.

In the context of prosecutorial misconduct, courts have proscribed arguments that jurors must articulate a reason for having reasonable doubt. Fill-in-the-blank arguments are flatly barred "because they misstate the reasonable doubt standard and impermissibly undermine the presumption of innocence." State v. Emery, 174 Wn.2d 741, 759, 278 P.3d 653 (2012). The Court of Appeals has repeatedly rejected such arguments as prosecutorial misconduct. See, e.g., State v. Walker, 164 Wn. App. 724, 731, 265 P.3d 191 (2011) (holding improper prosecutor's PowerPoint slide that read, "If you were to find the defendant not guilty, you *have* to say: 'I had a reasonable doubt[.]' What was the reason for your doubt? 'My reason was \_\_\_\_.'"); State v. Johnson, 158 Wn. App. 677, 682, 684, 243 P.3d 936 (2010) (holding improper argument when prosecutor told jurors that they have to say, "I doubt the defendant is guilty and my reason is I believed his testimony that . . . he didn't know that the cocaine was in there, and he didn't know what cocaine was" and that "[t]o be able to find reason to doubt, you have to fill in the blank, that's your job" (quoting reports of proceedings)); State v. Venegas, 155 Wn. App. 507, 523-24 & n.16, 228 P.3d 813 (2010) (holding flagrant and ill intentioned the prosecutor's statement "In order to find the defendant not guilty, you have to say to yourselves: "I doubt the

defendant is guilty, and my reason is"—blank" (quoting report of proceedings)); State v. Anderson, 153 Wn. App. 417, 431, 220 P.3d 1273 (2009) (finding improper prosecutor's statement that "'in order to find the defendant not guilty, you have to say 'I don't' believe the defendant is guilty because,' and then you have to fill in the blank'" (quoting report of proceedings)).

Although it does not explicitly require jurors to fill in a blank, WPIC 4.01 implies that jurors need to do just that. Trial courts instruct jurors that a reason must exist for their reasonable doubt—this is, in substance, the same mental exercise as telling jurors they need to fill in a blank with an explanation or justification in order to acquit. If telling jurors they must articulate a reason for reasonable doubt is prosecutorial misconduct because it undermines the presumption of innocence, it makes no sense to allow the exact same undermining to occur through a jury instruction.

Outside the prosecutorial misconduct realm, Division Two recently acknowledged that an articulation requirement in a trial court's preliminary instruction on reasonable doubt would have been error had the issue been preserved. State v. Kalebaugh, 179 Wn. App. 414, 421-23, 318 P.3d 288, review granted, 180 Wn.2d 1013, 327 P.3d 54 (2014). The court determined Kalebaugh could not demonstrate actual prejudice given that the trial court instructed the jury with WPIC 4.01 at the end of trial. Id. at 422-23. The

court therefore concluded the error was not manifest under RAP 2.5(a). Id. at 424.

In sidestepping the issue before it on procedural grounds, the Kalebaugh court pointed to WPIC 4.01's language with approval. 179 Wn. App. at 422-23. In considering a challenge to fill-in-the-blank arguments, the Emery court similarly approved of defining "reasonable doubt" as a "doubt for which a reason exists." 174 Wn.2d at 760. But neither Emery nor Kalebaugh gave any explanation or analysis regarding why an articulation requirement is unconstitutional in one context but not unconstitutional in all contexts.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, neither court was considering a direct challenge to the WPIC 4.01 language, so their approval of WPIC 4.01's language does not control. See In re Electric Lightwave, Inc., 123 Wn.2d 530, 541, 869 P.2d 1045 (1994) ("[Courts] do not rely on cases that fail to specifically raise or decide an issue.").

Just like a preliminary instruction to jurors that they must give a reason to have a reasonable doubt and just like a fill-in-the-blank argument,

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<sup>3</sup> The Kalebaugh court stated it "simply [could not] draw clean parallels between cases involving a prosecutor's fill-in-the-blank argument during closing, and a trial court's improper preliminary instruction before the presentation of evidence." But drawing such "parallels" is a very simple task, as both errors undermine the presumption of innocence by misstating the reasonable doubt standard. As the dissenting judge correctly surmised, "if the requirement of articulability constituted error in the mouth of a deputy prosecutor, it would surely also do so in the mouth of the judge." Kalebaugh, 179 Wn. App. at 427 (Bjorgen, J., dissenting).

WPIC 4.01 "improperly implies that the jury must be able to articulate its reasonable doubt . . . ." Emery, 174 Wn.2d at 760. By requiring more than just a reasonable doubt to acquit, WPIC 4.01 impermissibly undercuts the presumption of innocence. WPIC 4.01 is unconstitutional.

c. WPIC 4.01's articulation requirement requires reversal

An instruction that eases the State's burden of proof and undermines the presumption of innocence violates the Sixth Amendment's jury-trial guarantee. Sullivan v. Louisiana, 508 U.S. 275, 279-80, 113 S. Ct. 2078, 124 L. Ed. 2d 182 (1993). Indeed, where, as here, the "instructional error consists of a misdescription of the burden of proof, [it] vitiates *all* the jury's findings." Id. at 281. Failing to properly instruct jurors regarding reasonable doubt "unquestionably qualifies as 'structural error.'" Id. at 281-82.

As discussed, WPIC 4.01's language requires more than just a reasonable doubt to acquit criminal defendants; it requires a reasonable, articulable doubt. Its articulation requirement undermines the presumption of innocence. WPIC 4.01 misinstructs jurors on the meaning of reasonable doubt. Instructing jurors with WPIC 4.01 is structural error and requires reversal. Because Tedder's jury was so misinstructed, reversal is warranted.

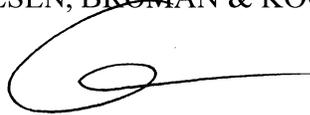
D. CONCLUSION

This court should reverse and remand for a new trial based on the trial court's constitutionally deficient instruction on reasonable doubt.

DATED this 4th day of March 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

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Respondent,	)	
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STETSON TEDDER,	)	
	)	
Appellant.	)	

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**DECLARATION OF SERVICE**

I, PATRICK MAYOVSKY, DECLARE UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON THAT THE FOLLOWING IS TRUE AND CORRECT:

THAT ON THE 4<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF MARCH 2015, I CAUSED A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF THE **BRIEF OF APPELLANT** TO BE SERVED ON THE PARTY / PARTIES DESIGNATED BELOW BY DEPOSITING SAID DOCUMENT IN THE UNITED STATES MAIL AND/OR EMAIL.

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**SIGNED** IN SEATTLE WASHINGTON, THIS 4<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF MARCH 2015.

X *Patrick Mayovsky*

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