Marijuana in the "Third World"

APPALACHIA, U.S.A.

Richard R. Clayton

STUDIES ON THE IMPACT OF THE ILLEGAL DRUG TRADE

VOLUME FIVE

MARIJUANA IN THE "THIRD WORLD"

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Appalachia, U.S.A.

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LaMond Tullis, Series Editor

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A Project of the
United Nations Research Institute
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and the
United Nations University (UNU)

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Foreword

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LaMond Tullis

Cannabis—the agricultural precursor for marijuana, hashish, hashish oil, and other substances—is grown in virtually every country. It can adapt to an extraordinary range of temperatures and rainfall, and it prospers in artificial greenhouses. It has a long history of use—some historians claim more than six thousand years—as hemp for cordage, substance for medicinal applications, and artifact for social and religious rituals. Currently, millions of people worldwide have sampled its psychotropic essence, some becoming chronic patrons.

In terms of its effects on morbidity (illness) and mortality (death), marijuana seems to be relatively less dangerous than tobacco products. However, it is psychoactive and has been associated with public-safety concerns (e.g., consumption by train engineers and airline pilots). Its use is generally legally proscribed, although sanctions vary widely from country to country, ranging from harsh punishment to official tolerance.

Richard Clayton has marshaled an impressive array of data about marijuana production and use in the United States, demonstrating that this nation is not just a consuming but also a producing country. He shows that marijuana cultivation and production here are not a simple problem but rather have deep roots in history, culture, economy, and national integration.

Marijuana production in the United States, as the author's focus on Appalachian Kentucky shows, has socioeconomic correlates similar to other underdeveloped regions around the world that specialize in the production of illegal drugs such as marijuana, opium, and cocaine: pockets of relative socioeconomic deprivation, whether deriving from exploitative national economic integration, demographic pressures on the land, boom and bust regional economies, or regional standoffs with national governments. Above all, the author argues, it is a problem embedded in poverty.

Appalachian Kentucky, following European Americans' westward expansion, was characterized by "strong family ties, a localistic rather

than a cosmopolitan orientation, a diverse agricultural base designed to facilitate strong work habits, and a basic faith in the individual's freedom and independence to pursue things that are time-honored and right for the family. There was a pervasive reverence for the land, and the ties to it ran deep into the Appalachian mountaineers' psyche" (p. 52).

That was not much different than the foundation ethos associated with many frontier settlements. But industrial interests' exploitation of the land and its resources, first by rail transportation and then by timber extraction and coal mining, all of which were associated with boom and bust cycles of dizzying magnitudes, left their mark: timberless, eroded land; open mining pits with leaching, caustic byproducts; selective outmigration of the population; and, after a century or more, conflicts between urban and rural settlements and a dispirited population. Now, "more than a century of exploitation (by industries and governments), loss (of their land, potential income, and jobs), and chronic and crushing poverty have produced a pervasive sense of hopelessness about the future, an alienation and cynical attitude about the present, and a willingness to do what is necessary to get by" (p. 61). The marijuana industry has grown and flourished on this social base of regional economic integration.

Appalachia's ethnic and cultural heritage thus results less from its isolation from the larger United States and its economic transformations than from its historical integration. Industrial capitalism at its worst helped to form the current Appalachia. Grassroots capitalism at its worst—an underground economy rife with fear, official corruption, and violence sustained by illegal products such as marijuana—is not a very surprising consequence.

In a final chapter on public-policy implications, Clayton explores the virtues and pitfalls of various options, concluding that the elimination of poverty in Appalachia is the strongest candidate for the elimination of the underground economy in illegal drugs there. The author makes no pretense that this would solve U.S. marijuana problems (production could well find other hospitable sites characterized by similar socioeconomic factors). A substantial reduction of poverty, however, could have a salutary socioeconomic impact on that region and also help to lift it from illegal trade.

In no other volume will readers handily find the array of quantitative data and interpretive information about marijuana production and consumption and their consequences as in *Marijuana in the "Third World": Appalachia, U.S.A.* No other region of the world where illegal drugs are grown has made equivalent data available. Clayton's volume is one of the best to offer a quantitative and interpretive

social-science window on illegal drug production and consumption and their consequences.

Marijuana in the "Third World": Appalachia, U.S.A. is part of a multicountry study of the socioeconomic and political impact of production, trade, and use of illicit narcotic drugs. The project has been sponsored by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the United Nations University (UNU), and Brigham Young University (BYU). The project has been developed in two phases. The first was a review monograph and annotated bibliography entitled *Handbook of Research on the Illicit Drug Traffic: Socioeconomic and Political Consequences* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press), issued in 1991. The second phase is a series of country-specific monographs—Lynne Rienner Publishers' series Studies on the Impact of the Illegal Drug Trade—that both describe and analyze the interplay of economics, politics, society, and illicit drugs and drug-control policies through a careful analysis of causes and consequences of production, trade, consumption, and control.

Since the early 1980s, the national and international traffic in and consumption of cannabis, opiate, and coca derivatives has exploded; it is perhaps beginning to taper off in the United States but is vigorously expanding in Western and Central Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union. Consumption has also rapidly increased in the principal "producer countries" (e.g., Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Myanmar/Burma, and Afghanistan).

The socioeconomic and political costs of consumption and efforts to suppress it have mounted. Unfortunately, policy initiatives to reduce those costs have in the worst cases simply aggravated the problem, and in the best cases have apparently had only marginal impact.

Although the literature on illicit drugs has rapidly expanded in recent years, most of it has focused on problems of consumption and control in major industrialized countries. Less attention has been paid to the impact of production, trade, and consumption of illicit drugs and international control policies in developing countries and regions. This is highly unfortunate because until recently most illicit-drug–control initiatives have concentrated on supply-reduction efforts in those areas. In the wake of a general failure of these strategies to control consumption anywhere (indeed, they may have served to expand it), a strong shift is now expected in international drug-control efforts.

The purpose of the country studies in this series is to expand the level of information and awareness about costs and consequences of the present policies and to consider the implications of proffered

new solutions for developing areas. We desire to contribute to an enhanced quality of policy-review discussions by bringing together historical and contemporary information and careful analyses regarding specific countries.

Richard R. Clayton's book makes a substantial contribution to this effort.

LaMond Tullis

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The Problem of Marijuana Cultivation and Production in the United States

A Historical Perspective

A great deal of what is known about drugs and drug abuse in the United States concerns epidemiology (who is using which drugs with what consequences) and etiology (the predictors and risk factors that account for initiation, continuation, progression within and across classes of drugs, regression, cessation, and relapse). Most of this knowledge about drugs and drug abuse has emerged since the founding of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) in 1974.

From the mid-1970s to the early 1980s NIDA had an active research program focused on marijuana. Marijuana was widely used and was, among recently popular drugs, the only one produced in commercial quantities in the United States. When the 1980s epidemic of cocaine, and later crack, use arrived, however, marijuana appeared to take a back seat to these new and seemingly more dangerous drugs imported from abroad.

The word *dangerous* is, of course, a relative term. Much of the early interest in marijuana occurred because of the focus on it by the National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse (1972) and because the early epidemiologic surveys of young people in the United States were conducted in the mid- to late 1970s, a time when marijuana use among young people in the United States was at its peak. There is evidence that there was a marijuana epidemic that spread rapidly through the general population in the United States beginning in about 1965 (O'Donnell et al. 1976) and continuing through the late 1970s and early 1980s (Johnston 1991).

In terms of its effects on morbidity and mortality, marijuana, and for that matter heroin and cocaine, seem to be less dangerous than tobacco products (nicotine) and alcoholic beverages (Gold 1989). But while marijuana is usually thought of as less harmful or dangerous than heroin, cocaine, alcoholic beverages, and tobacco products, it is a very interesting drug. It meets the most widely cited criteria for drugs of dependence, according to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association (rev. 1987). First, it is psychoactive. There are specific receptor sites in the brain that measure and monitor the amount of marijuana's psychoactive ingredients in the bloodstream. Second, it is a euphoriant: It produces predictable effects that are sought after because they make the user feel better. Third, marijuana is reinforcing in several ways. The principal psychoactive ingredient it contains reaches the brain within seconds after the user inhales. Marijuana is also reinforcing in that its use is associated with setting: When users are in those settings, they are reminded of marijuana use. Fourth, tolerance occurs with marijuana use; the user must increase doses to get the same effect. Fifth, there are prototypical withdrawal effects.

Most people do not consider marijuana addictive or dependence-producing. The prevailing opinion is that the use of marijuana is probably less harmful than smoking cigarettes or drinking alcoholic beverages. When people smoke marijuana, they are less likely to be aggressive or hostile than when they are drinking excessively. In addition, no one appears to die from using marijuana. The same cannot be said of other drugs such as heroin, cocaine, crack, alcohol, and cigarettes.

Because of its historical coincidence with the passage of the baby boom generation (those born between 1946 and 1962) through adolescence and the emergence of the marijuana epidemic in the general population of the United States, many people associate marijuana use with adolescent "acting out," which most people seem to outgrow when they accept adult roles. It is thus seen primarily as a behavior anchored in the developmental life cycle somewhere between early adolescence and early adulthood.

The scientific and popular literature in the United States has been dominated by a concern about use and abuse of various drugs and the consequences of such use and abuse. The collective self-image of the United States is as a consuming country. This is a country with a seemingly insatiable appetite and demand for illicit drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and marijuana.

Heroin and cocaine are clearly produced in other countries. Until the early 1970s, almost all of the marijuana consumed in the United States was also produced in other countries such as Mexico,

Jamaica, and Colombia. In the early 1970s, however, the vast amount of U.S. dollars flooding across the U.S.-Mexican border to buy marijuana were creating a very unstable environment for the Mexican peso. In an effort to restabilize the Mexican currency, a joint decision was made to shut off the flow of dollars to Mexico for marijuana. President Nixon implemented what is now known as the first Operation Intercept (Inciardi 1992). All vehicles and persons crossing the U.S.-Mexican border were subjected to the maximum intervention (inspection) for drug-interdiction purposes. Operation Intercept was active for a period of about three months. The visible effect of this policy was immediate. The lines of vehicles attempting to cross the border backed up for miles. The policy also had two major, not-so-visible effects: The Mexican currency stabilized and a domestic marijuana cultivation and production business emerged in the United States

In the years since the collapse of Operation Intercept, the nature and extent of drug use and abuse in the United States have changed dramatically. So has the extent of marijuana cultivation and production. With so much attention focused on the more visible drugs—heroin, cocaine, and crack—marijuana has been quietly ignored.

Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this book is to explore the nature and extent of the cultivation and production of marijuana in the United States and to explore some of the associated socioeconomic and political consequences. This will involve examination of data at the state (Kentucky), regional (Appalachia), and national (all states) levels. Kentucky has 120 counties, 49 of which are located in central Appalachia. We will examine data across all counties within Kentucky and then within the 49 Appalachian counties. We will then explore several policy implications of the widespread cultivation and production of marijuana in the United States and the socioeconomic and political consequences associated with this agricultural commodity.

We will critically examine statistics on the number and types of marijuana plants eradicated and destroyed in the United States, as well as data on marijuana consumption, to see if these figures can be used to generate credible estimates of how much marijuana is produced in the United States. We will then use these data to show that the estimate by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) of 4,600 metric tons of domestic marijuana produced in 1988 is seriously inflated. The most important outcome of these analyses is to show that the United States is not just a consuming country but also

a drug-producing country. In Chapter 3, we will show that 95 percent of the marijuana reported destroyed in the United States has little or no commercial value. Furthermore, 80 percent or more of the cultivated marijuana grown in the United States is found in just six states. Kentucky is a leading state for marijuana production.

Marijuana cultivation and production do not occur in a social, historical, and cultural vacuum. In Chapter 4, we will examine the development and exploitation of the Appalachian region of the United States. This is a land traditionally rich in natural resources, inhabited by poor people, and a region that has experienced boom and bust cycles in the timber and logging industry as well as in the coal industry. It is a region often thought of as isolated within the country, a region that in many ways resembles a developing country.

In Chapter 5, we focus attention on marijuana cultivation and production in Kentucky and in the 49 counties within Kentucky classified as Appalachian. We will make correlational and other analyses of these counties in an attempt to understand why marijuana production is such a growth industry in this poorest part of a poor region. The answer is actually quite clear: Marijuana cultivation and production in Appalachian Kentucky seem to be embedded in a culture of poverty.

In Chapter 6, we will attempt to come even closer to the roots of the problem of marijuana growing in Appalachian Kentucky as reported by the people who live in the region, some of whom are involved in the marijuana business, all of whom are affected by it in some way. We will identify and discuss some of the clear consequences of marijuana cultivation and production. One thing, above all, stands out: Marijuana cultivation and production is not a simple problem. It is a complex issue with deep roots in the history and culture of the poor and proud people who live in this rich but scarred land.

In Chapter 7, we will attempt to put the cultivation and production of marijuana in the United States in a public-policy context. Simple solutions never suffice when the problem is complex. The policy options are not limited to prohibition versus regulation (legalization). Instead, the proper public-policy approach to marijuana production may be a broader, more comprehensive, and longer-term attempt to eliminate chronic poverty in all its dimensions.