



The Cocaine Kids: The Inside Story of a Teenage Drug Ring

Terry Williams

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Since 1982, sociologist Terry Williams has spent days, weeks, and months “hanging out” with a teenage cocaine ring in cocaine bars, after-hours clubs, on street corners, in crack houses and in their homes. The picture he creates in *The Cocaine Kids* is the story behind the headlines. The lives of these young dealers in the fast lane of the underground economy emerge in depth and color on the pages of this book.

The Cocaine Kids: The Inside Story of a Teenage Drug Ring Details

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Author : Terry Williams

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From Reader Review The Cocaine Kids: The Inside Story of a Teenage Drug Ring for online ebook

Lizzy says

I was supposed to read this for a sociology class, and then dropped the class. I figured I'd read it anyway. Pretty interesting, but not thrilling.

Mark Slee says

A little rough around the edges, and a bit dated, but an interesting read.

Dean says

cqcqcq

Badly Drawn Girl says

This book felt less dated than Terry William's other book on the topic, Crackhouse: Notes from the End of the Line, but it wasn't nearly as compelling. I think my biggest complaint is the length. It would seem to me that given the amount of time he spent with both the "Cocaine Kids" and the residents of the crackhouse from his other book, he would have a lot of stories to share. But the anecdotes that are related to the reader feel condensed and unnecessarily shortened. It's like the Reader's Digest version of crack selling. It's obvious that Terry Williams did an excellent job of befriending these young hustlers, and earning their trust. But the book is so short. He does do an excellent job of refraining from moralizing or demonizing the kids involved in the drug trade. People who have only relied on the media to educate them about cocaine dealers and the drug problem may be surprised at how normal these kids are. They want the same things all young adults want, respect, money, success, and love. I do applaud Terry Williams for introducing us to this underground culture in a non-judgmental manner. I do wish he had laid the story out in a more chronological, in-depth manner instead of offering short essays that often feel unrelated and random.

Margret Flodeen says

3.5

Saoussan says

The cover of the novel the Cocaine Kids has a very meaningful cover which describes what's truly in the book. From my interpretations, I believe that since the title of the book is written in white, and the theme/background is Black, Terry is saying that a mystery behind kids taking drugs is solved. In reality some books give readers a different story then what the novel is about, either because of the theme or because of the title, but Terry Williams novel made an excellent connection between the book cover and the story. He gave readers the ability to predict what the novel is about before even reading it. The novel takes readers into the world of darkness explaining the reasons behind kids using harmful substances.

Terry Williams, a sociologist and an author, risked his life to find answers about the teenage drug ring. He took a role of being a youngster and decided to expose to other people what goes on in the biosphere of drugs. Terry did everything with these eight kids; he spent about a month and years hanging out in bars, on the street corners, in clubs, and in the crack houses. These teenagers' drug dealers had their own occupied space in the Harlem. Mr. Williams had a deep understanding of the reasons behind these eight kids taking drugs and getting involved in the drug trade.

"To live in America you must have money and friends", quoted by Splib, one of the drug dealers. He said that he's tried to work for white rich people but he doesn't gain anything while the rich man becomes richer. Splib doesn't like people taking advantage of him. He tried different jobs but didn't like the over-work they give, so he decided to go high and stay high for the rest of his life and not work anymore. Later on Splib met with Juan, a short Dominican man he knew years back, and Juan wanted to make a crack house, so splib decided to join him so he can make money.

Kitty is also one of the drug dealers, but her case is different. She says that growing up with a Dominican is extremely hard. Her dad would be really violent towards her mother, and he was very cheap. Her father would buy Kitty and her little brother extremely cheap cloths and shoes. She says that instead of using the money that he works for towards family needs, he only spends it on drinking alcohol and spending time with his friends. Once her mother left him Kitty had to take care of her father and little brother, because her father didn't know how to do anything without his wife. By the time Kitty reached the age of 17, she left the house because she didn't want to take care of her father and brother for the rest of her life, and she also wanted to have a boyfriend which her father didn't allow. Later on she dropped out of school and spent most of her time with her boyfriend sniffing coke, and basically doing whatever pleased her because she was dependent from any authorities.

The Cocaine Kids is a very interesting novel because it can help people understand the reasons behind many young people taking drugs, although it is still not an excuse to take drugs, because there are many other ways to overcome things in life. Terry Williams enlightens readers with real factual stories of kids our age, most stories that teenagers read are not based on real stories because they like to experience different world or a world that does not exist, but Terry gave his novel the ability to take us into another atmosphere of real stories. I would recommend this book to all young people and old because the structure of the writing, the organization, the description, and amount of information in the book is phenomenal.

Colleen says

I read this book for a child welfare class a few years ago but it has stuck with me. It is a very interesting look inside a cocaine ring of young kids in NYC-written by a man whose intention was to search out and write about just that. Very interesting.

Mafiel says

THIS IS OLD. DIFFERENT FROM TODAY.

Amy says

Read part of it, but not all. Looks like it should be good, but I'm kind of burnt out on drug ethnographies for a while.

Isaac says

I really enjoyed this book because It talks a lot about teens in the struggle and how they see things in there eyes. I liked the way all these kids dealt with things in there own ways, some in an orderly manner and some just with full on violence. This book itself helped me a lot with vocabulary and helped learn new words.

Gina Haase says

Disclaimer: This was a reread. I originally read this book in the late '90s while working on an anti-drug abuse series for WNET .

Although parts of this book are expectedly dated (it recounts events from 1982-86), it remains an accurate accounting of the underground economy of a teenage cocaine ring. The book describes the lives of a group of young dealers, and, without going into detail, it serves as a much-needed reality check for those predisposed to assumptions of what it's like to live in areas of high unemployment and diminishing resources. The topics of drug misuse, distribution, and family problems are discussed in such a way that it does not place blame on the victims, nor does it put the teens in stereotypical roles. The reporting does have certain shortcomings, but that will be in the view of the reader.

Cody Kabisa says

i havent read it yet

Seán says

Feels like a companion piece to Adrian LeBlanc's *Random Family* though not as magisterial as that. Nevertheless, I enjoyed it thoroughly for I am a shiny pill-shunning, suburbanite douchebag fascinated by anything remotely related to the drug trade.

A. Cox says

Though I didn't find this book compelling in this moment, I can understand why and how it worked well to represent an underrepresented perspective in the literature on teenagers, drugs and violence in the 1980s and 1990s.

Monster says

Interesting for what it was. This book was recommended to me because of my work on affect/kinship and socialities of subaltern living. Williams doesn't situate himself for this work (whiteness, wealth, hetero, able, etc.). Thus he does not address how his positionality changes and shapes the material world he is describing, nor how his lens limits what he is about to "see." The text is full of loosely constructed binary comparisons that are perhaps intended to give a reader like himself some basis for understanding the world he describes. These comparisons are simplistic, largely untrue, and lazy, insofar as they rely on existing popular understandings of the purity of a referent. An example:

"... clubs are also institutions in a counter-community at odds with the rules and values of the larger society, the moral opposite of the church, for example." (p.105)

Statements like this presuppose the stability and purity of the church's morals (whatever "the church" is), and also highlight for me that Williams views his subjects through a limited and exclusionary perceptual lens. He does not see the ways in which his subject's lives are completely aligned with larger society, how their morals are consistent with this church and at least consistent with other how other Christians live, nor how the rules these "kids" (most are over 18 and completely independent) have made for themselves are rationalized similar to how larger society rationalizes its deviations from rules. It's difficult for me to trust this un-interrogated bias in authorship.

Worth the read. Don't take it at face value. This is the limit of ethnography, even when done very well.
