

Working Childhoods: Youth, Agency and the Environment in India

By Jane Dyson

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Working Childhoods draws upon research in the Indian Himalayas to provide a theoretically-informed account of children's lives in a remote part of the world. The book shows that children in their pre-teens and teens are lynchpins of the rural economy, spending hours each day herding cattle, collecting leaves, and juggling household tasks with schoolwork. Through documenting in painstaking detail children's stories, songs, friendships, fears and tribulations, the book offers a powerful account of youth agency and young people's rich relationship with the natural world. The 'environment' emerges not only as a crucial economic resource but also as a basis for developing gendered ideas of self. The book should be essential reading for anyone interested in better understanding childhood, youth, the environment, and development within and beyond India - including anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, development studies scholars, and South Asianists.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This vivid ethnography from a Himalayan village in India is the source of empathetic insight into young lives and fragile ecosystems, informing discussions about human agency and environmental change from an unusual perspective."

K. Sivaramakrishnan, Yale University

"Jane Dyson shows how young people in a gradually changing Himalayan village express their agency through their social relationships, and develop a sense of self through their engagements with their environment. A tour de force."

John Harriss, Simon Fraser University

"... the broader contribution of this book is to debates about child and youth agency. Yet, unlike other studies of children's agency, which tend to follow individual children through their environments, this study takes the environment as its fixed point through which children live, move, labour and play."

Annie McCarthy, The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology

About the Author

Dr Jane Dyson is a Research Associate at the University of Oxford.

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