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**What affects child agency and well-being in Kyrgyzstan?**

The concept of agency and how it relates to wellbeing are rarely defined by children themselves. And studies of agency often lack an awareness of children’s connections with materiality and how their role changes within a specific society. This paper explores the nature of child agency and the factors which affect it in a specific economic, social and cultural locality. In doing so, it investigates children’s own understandings of child agency and how it relates to wellbeing. It identifies the commonalities and differences within the wider social-economic environment shared by Kyrgyz children across differences in age and sex between them and in material position between their families. It will draw on the author’s qualitative fieldwork carried out in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in 2010/2011. 40 semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with children aged 12 and 16 at state and private schools and group discussions were held with both parents and children.

The research objective was to study how agency functions under specific life circumstances and forms of social involvement of children and the personal meanings of agency for children given the economic conditions and cultural demands of childhood in contemporary Kyrgyzstan. Based on the fieldwork data, the paper will explore two main issues: first, the importance of the subjective views of children in understanding what the concept of child agency means and how it is exerted in Kyrgyz society; and second, the importance of love and care for children’s lives and the effects of culture, materiality and the socio-economic circumstances in which they live. This study raises issues central to the consideration of appropriate policies to enable children to lead satisfying lives and contributes to the quantity and quality of research engaging with children’s subjective views, in particular about child agency.