

Children's participation in early childhood: realistic, rhetorical, problematic?

EECERA 29th Conference

Thessaloniki, Greece 20th – 23rd August 2019

Fengling Tang, Senior lecturer in Early Childhood Studies, University of Roehampton, UK

Contact email: f.tang@roehampton.ac.uk

Angela Scollan, Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Studies and Education, Middlesex University, UK

Federico Farini, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, University of Northampton, UK



Introduction

The United Nations Convention of the Right of the Child (1989)

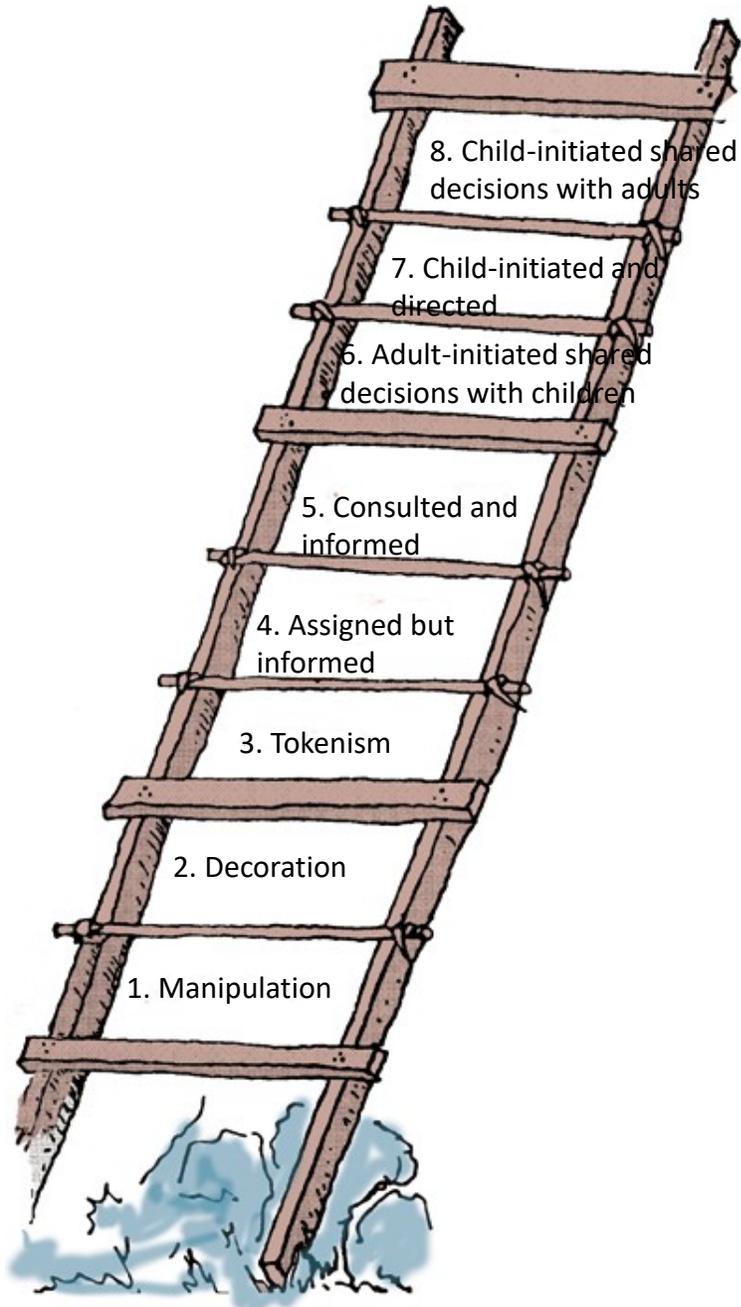
Article 12:

‘States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given the due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.’

Article 13:

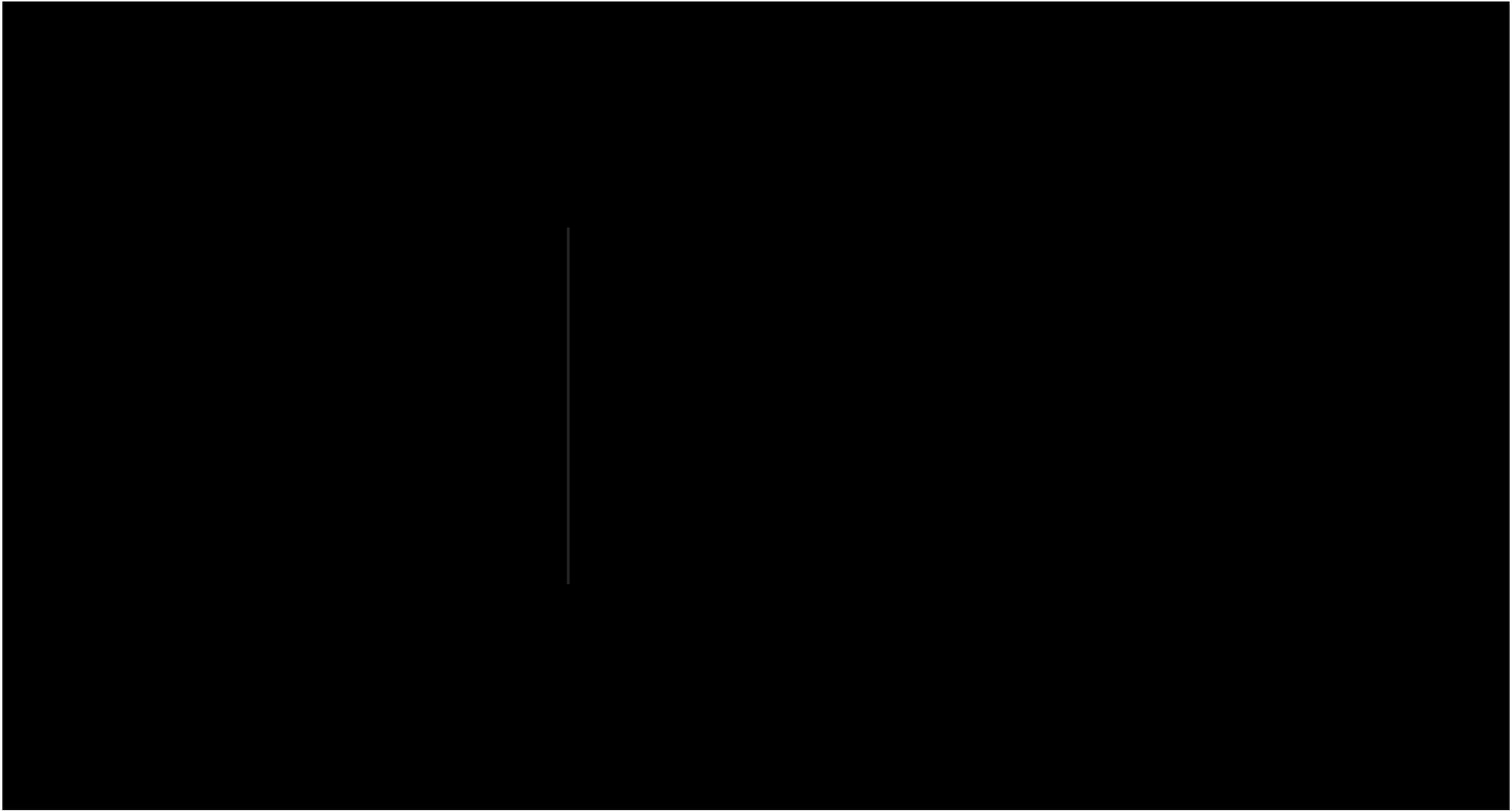
‘The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice.’

- Lansdown (2010) classifies children's participation into three types: consultative participation, collaborative participation, and child-led participation
- A dialogical approach to child participation urges researchers and practitioners to recognize the complex interplay between agency and power and hold the voice and status of children at the forefront (Fitzgerald et al. 2010).
- Children's participation rights internationally are framed within a discourse of entitlement and self-determination emphasising children's agency, capacities and achievements (Nolas 2015).

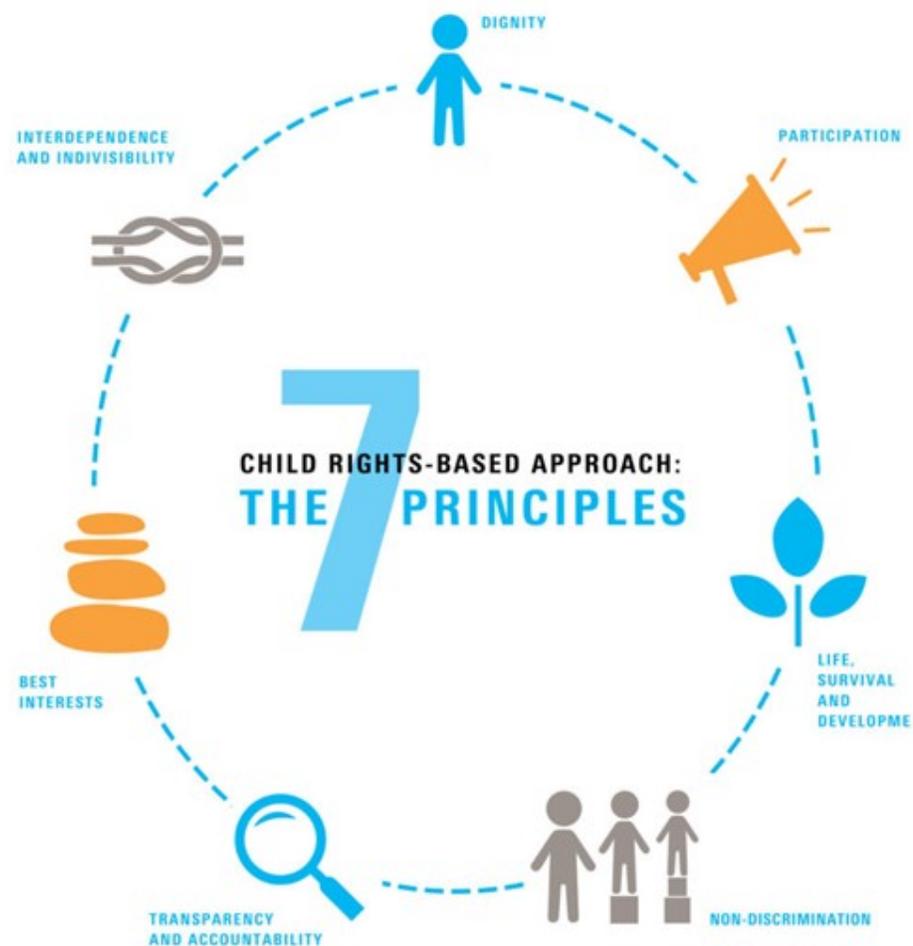


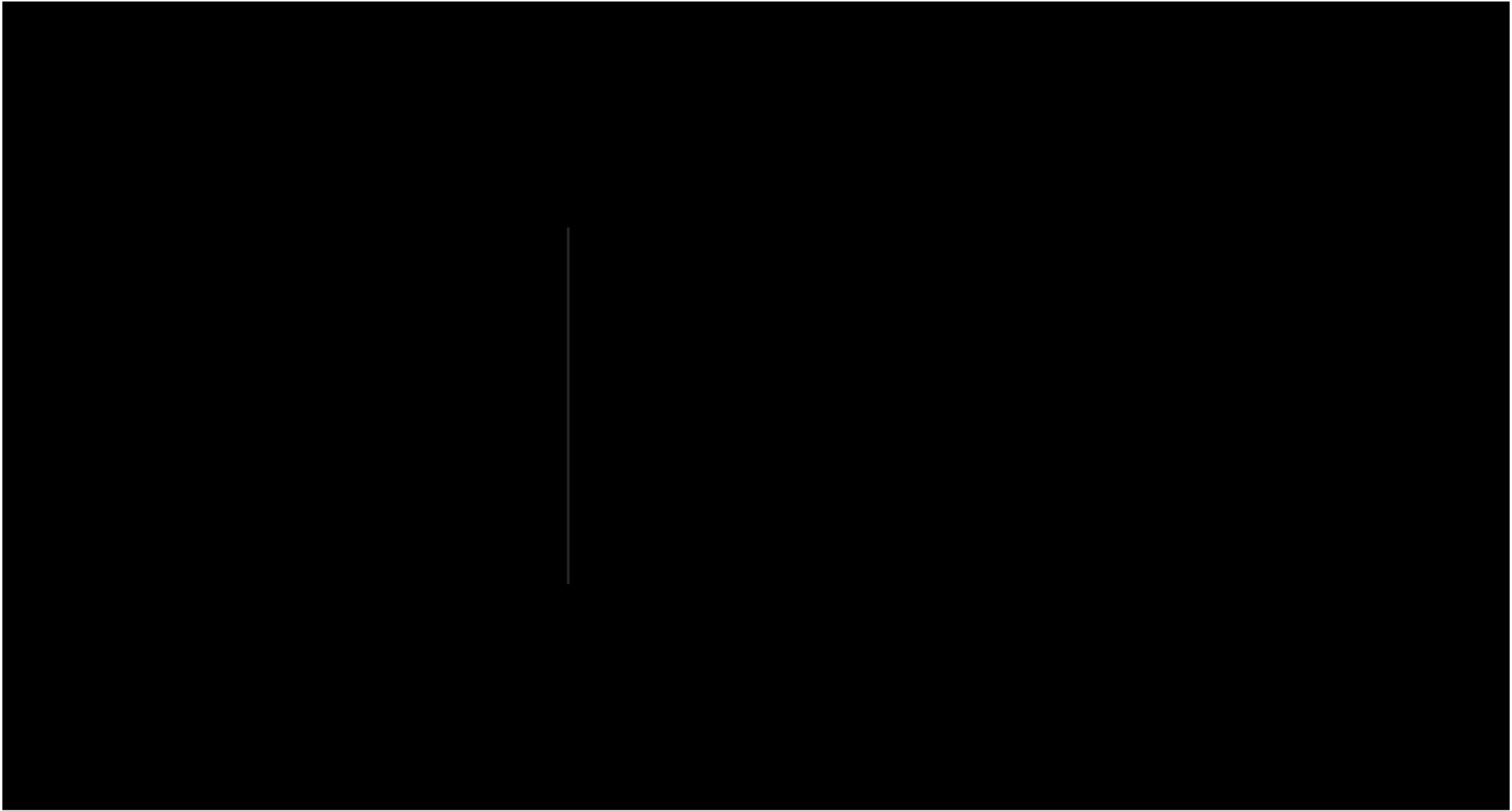
Ladder of participation

Hart (1992)



Child rights-based perspective (UNICEF 2019)







**RIGHTS
RESPECTING
SCHOOLS**

unicef



UNITED KINGDOM

GOLD – RIGHTS RESPECTING

George Spicer Mission Statement - “Growing to Succeed”

Aims:

- For George Spicer to be a safe and happy environment where everyone is valued and respected.
- To nurture the well-being of each child so that they can achieve their best and contribute positively to their learning.
- To offer a creative curriculum that builds on talents and interests and encourages a love of learning.
- To make a positive contribution to the local and global community by sharing ideas and values.

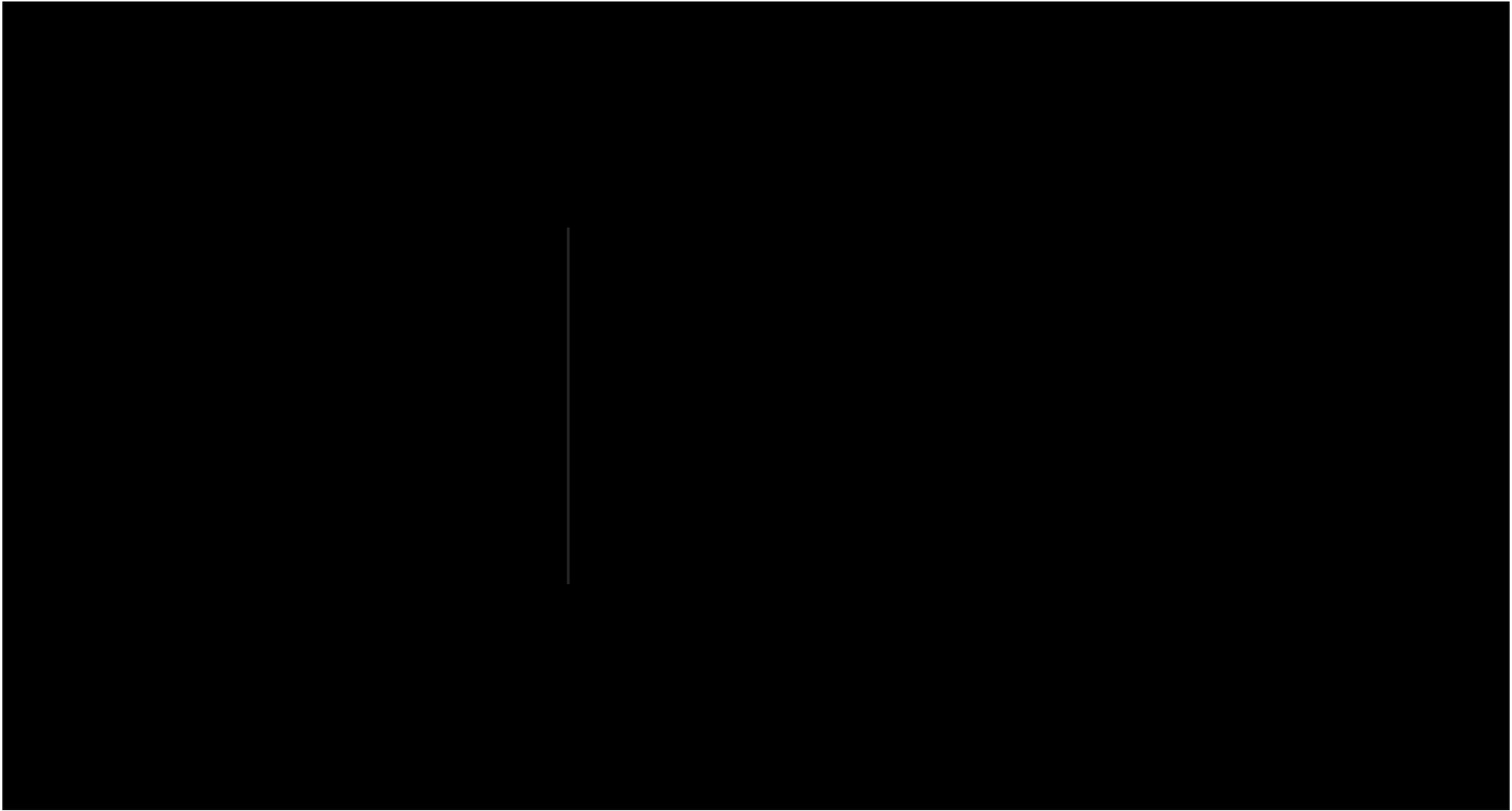
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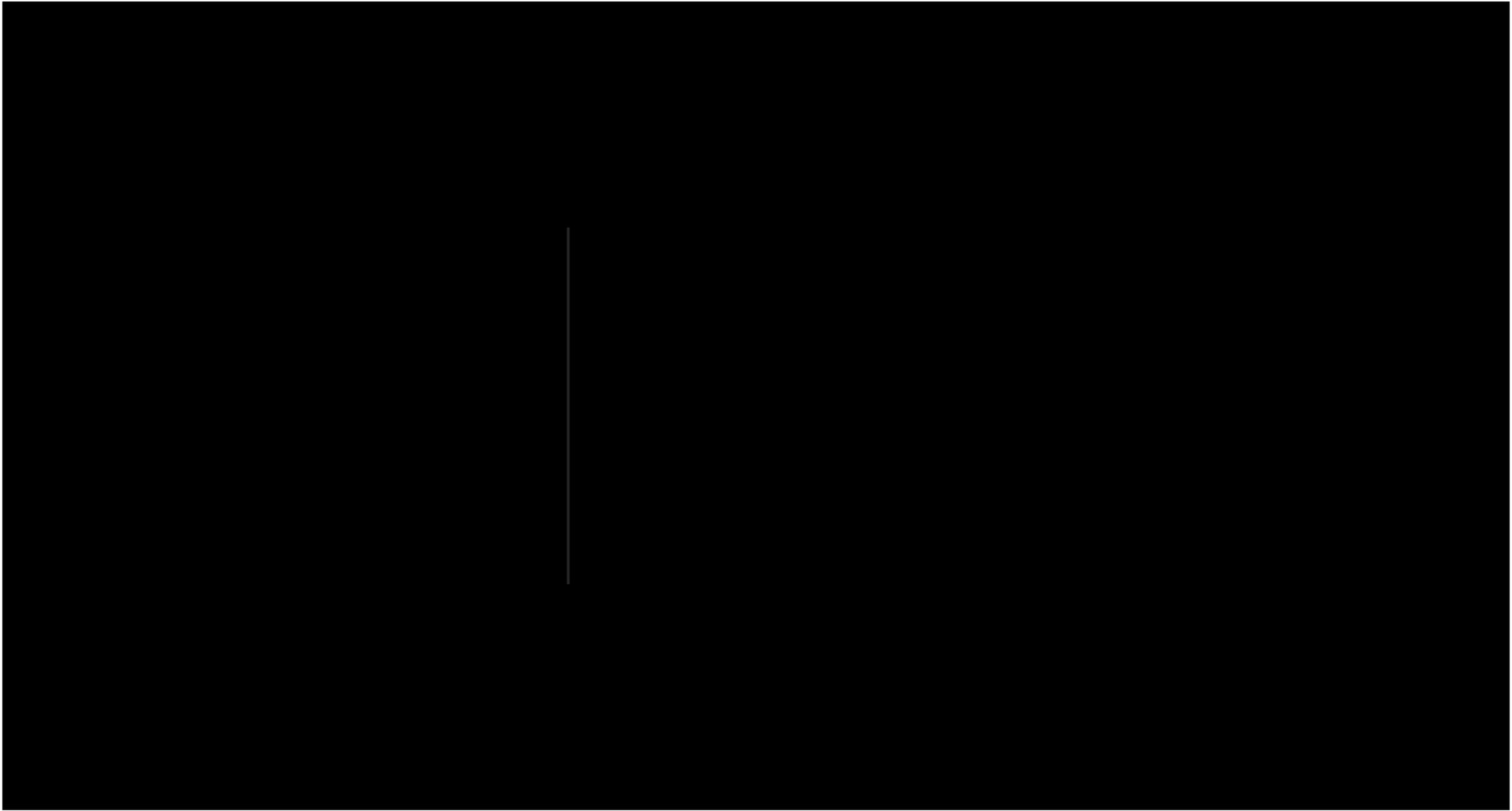
Respect, Responsibility and Perseverance



- Addressing the role of socio-cultural dimensions in childhood experiences and recognition of child agency in constructing their experiences and social worlds
- Child agency is more than an individual's act but embedded in the social context of an agent
- Importance to consider the relationship between child agency/self-determination and adult/professional role in facilitating child participation

(James and Prout 1997; Rogoff 2004; Scollan and McNeill 2019)



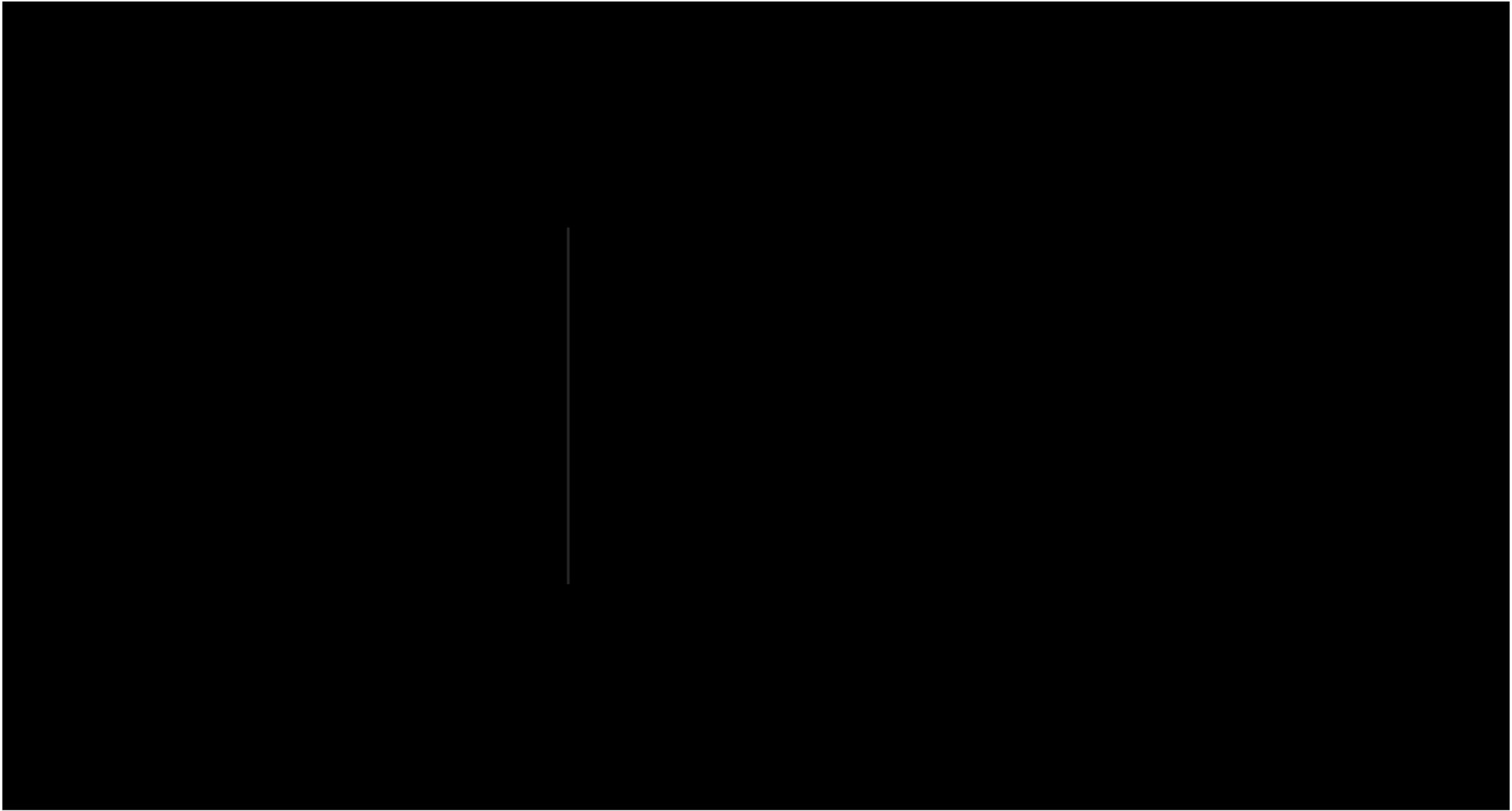


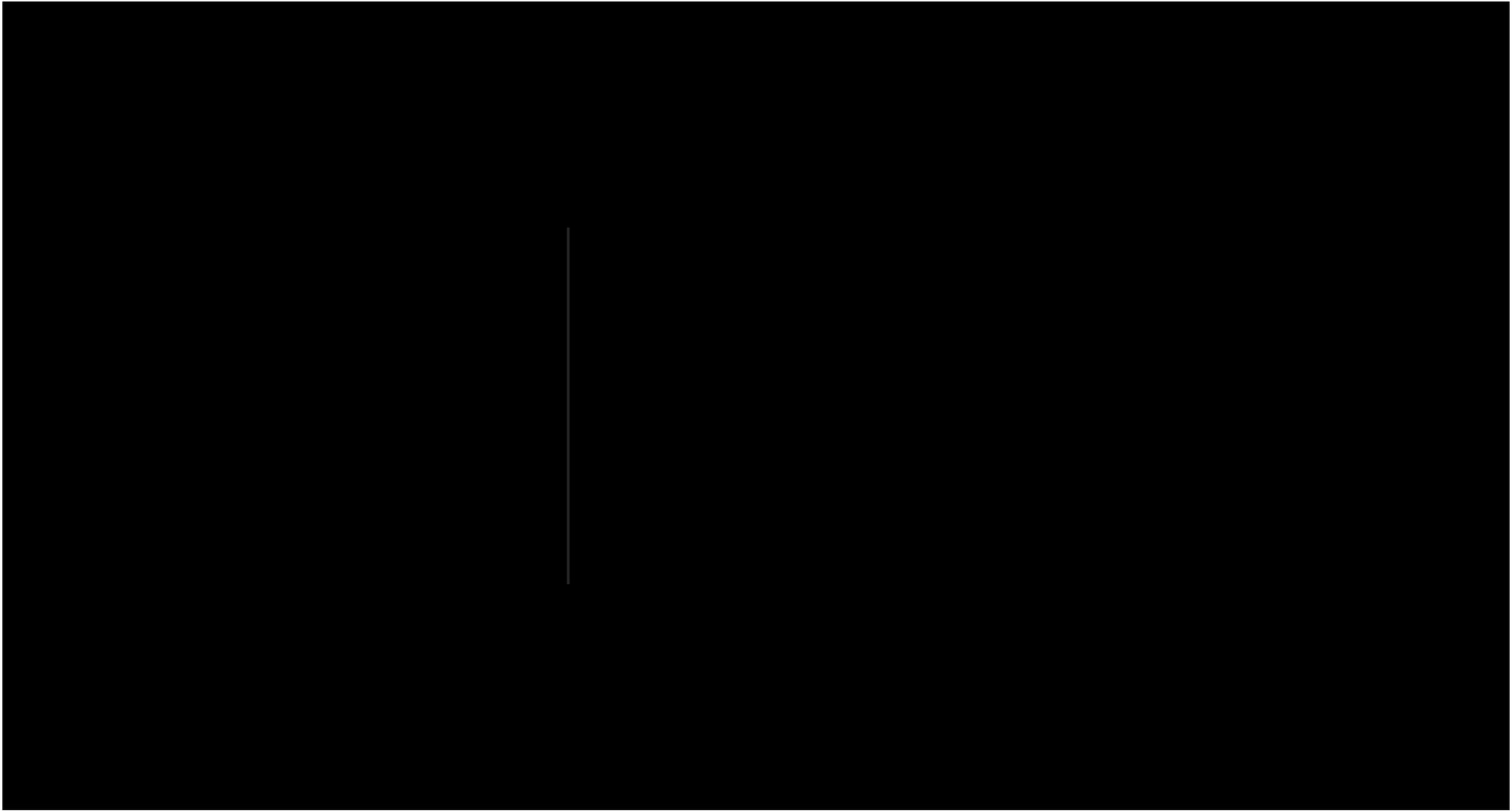
- UK context: participation is happening but involvement of children and young people in public decision making is limited (Cavet and Sloper 2004)
- Nordic context: the importance of everyday interaction and communication between children and adults in influencing the children's participation rights' realization (Bae 2009)
- Canadian context: children's participation initiatives prioritise 'middle class, western individualism and ultimately fosters children's deeper subjugation through self-governance' (Ruby 2014:77)
- Chinese context: children's participation is limited to school contexts focusing on extracurricular activities to help with disciplinary learning in preparation for university entry examination whilst child poverty and societal issues such as the left-behind children in rural areas hold back children's participation (Tang 2019)

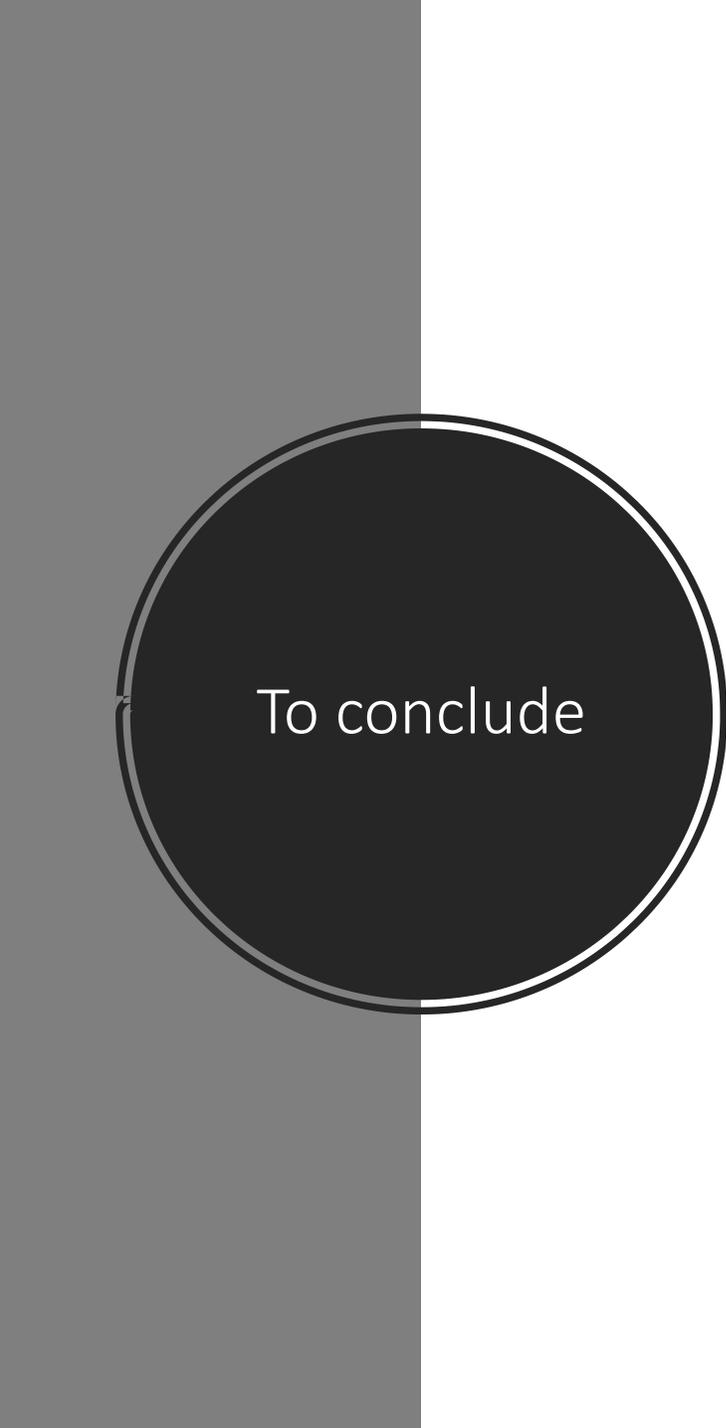
Reception – a unique and important year (Ofsted, 2017)

A good school achieves a careful balance. Balance is the constant challenge when schools plan. Time is limited. Therefore choices need to be made about what to do when, how much depth to pursue, which ideas to link together, what resources to draw on, which way to teach, and how to make sure all pupils are able to benefit as each new concept, construct or fact is taught.
(Ofsted, 2017: 12)









To conclude

Child participation discourse with child agency and self-determination at the centre seems to be underpinned by the Western neo-liberal individualised self-governance

Recognition of the co-constructed nature of children's participation between children's agency and adult facilitation

Complexity involved in the process of children's participation via child rights-based perspective and socio-cultural lens – realistic aspects, rhetorical sides and barriers

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