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**The Business of children's human rights: *A snapshot of responsibilities and approaches of three major children's retailers***

Postgraduate dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the MSc in Corporate Governance & Business Ethics

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## Abstract

*Children's rights<sup>2</sup> have not played a major role in Corporations' sustainability agendas for many years (Collins, 2012).*

*Similarly, the international community and the academic world have not given much importance to this delicate nexus failing to elaborate on the various "scales of responsibilities business has towards children" (Crane and Kazmi 2010: 583, Collins, 2012).*

*Not surprisingly, this mirrors the current situation of Business and Children: corporations' approach to managing children's rights and welfare is not structured and, many firms "have yet to take seriously child-focused corporate social responsibility" (Crane and Kazmi 2010: 583).*

*A Recent UK research (Ipsos MORI, 2013a) demonstrates that, at 2013, after one year and a half since the publishing of "The Children's Rights and Business Principles" (hereafter CRBP), the only framework for companies to embed children's rights in their daily activities, many firms still fail to assume and understand their responsibilities towards children. Seldom are there strategic approaches to child focused corporate social responsibility (henceforth CSR), but overall children are not a priority in CSR's agendas (Ipsos MORI, 2013a, BCG, 2013).*

*One of the aims of this research is to try to bring together the 'business and human rights' and the 'CSR and children's rights' debates. Its core aim, however, is to explore the children focused CSR approach of three well-known children's multinational retailers following the research suggestions of two academics. More specifically, this paper aims to uncover if these children's retailers assume the responsibilities closely related to their sector (UNICEF, 2012b) in line with the guidance of the CRBP and to understand their approach towards these key stakeholders (Zadek, 2004).*

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper the expression children's rights is used interchangeably with children's human rights

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*To my sisters  
Fiorella & Iolanda.*

## 1

**Introduction**

*“Most of the CEOs in leading companies around the world are not aware that every third person in the world is a child. [...] (BCG, 2013: 14)”*

The expression “everybody's business” has today acquired popularity in “relation to children's safeguarding” and protection (Holland et al, 2011: 406).

However, while the “international community” has largely focused on the “relationship between business and human rights” (Collins, 2012: 1) especially after the work of the UN Special Representative to Secretary General (SRSG), less importance has been given to the delicate relationship between children's rights and business.

In this respect, Collins (2012: 1) confirms that “clarity... lacking about the role of business and child rights” is impeding implementation and worsening “violations”. Similarly, Crane and Kazmi (2010) and a recent research (Umlas, 2012) explain that strategic examples of child focused CSR are rare.

Not surprisingly, there is a big gap in the literature about the link between children and business. Existing work focuses mainly on child labour and ethical marketing, leaving other children's rights unaddressed (Crane and Kazmi, 2010). Analogously, there are no studies focusing on children's impacts and responsibilities by sector, and there is a general lack of child-focused CSR in respect to other issues addressed in the wider *sustainability* arena. As a *Child Programme Manager* confirms, most companies “still don't understand their role for protecting ...children [and] in most cases, they feel it is something ... far away from their operations” (Appendix, 3).

It is “only very recently” and specifically with the publishing of the CRBP, in March 2012, that child's human rights have started to be considered as a key area to address in corporations' sustainability agendas (Wettstein, 2012: 739).

With the raised awareness that most firms “at some point in their value chain come into contact with children” (Horgan, 2005: 76 in Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 568), implementing child focused responsible practice is slowly “becoming recognized as a major business issue” (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 568). Despite this, awareness is not automatically translated into practice and many approaches are unsystematic and sporadic (Crane and Kazmi, 2010, Ipsos-MORI, 2013a).

But do firms at least assume the responsibilities close to their sector in line with what the CRBP recommend? And, what do their approaches look like?



The purpose of my work is to answer these questions looking specifically at the child focused CSR approach of three multinational retailers operating in the toy industry. While this remains the first aim of my research, the paper also attempts to bridge together the discourse on business and human rights and its link with children's rights, two areas that for long remained decoupled (Collins, 2012).

The first part of this work, tries to connect the '*business and human rights*' debate and the discourse regarding '*corporations and children's rights*'.

The reference to the UN 'Protect, Respect, Remedy' framework, and specifically the concept of *responsibility to respect*, is appropriate since the latter can be considered the pillar that links these two areas (Wettstein, 2012). *Corporate responsibility to respect* helps understanding that businesses should be limiting and remedying their negative impacts, as well as proactively promoting the rights of children (Wettstein, 2012).

Furthermore, the nature of children's rights is discussed as well as their link with corporations' activities and the current situation in terms of corporate responsibility (CSR) targeted at children, making reference to current corporate disclosure practice.

In addition, the author presents the new and only existing framework to guide organisations in integrating children's human rights into their CSR strategies: The Children's Rights and Business Principles.

Finally, the work makes brief reference to the Stakeholder theory and presents Zadek's (2004) five stages framework: 'Path to Corporate Responsibility' targeted at children.

The second section concerns the author's methodological choices including case selection, techniques and frameworks used. This part also deals with the presentation of research questions and explanations of *how* the author went to collect and analyse the data. The last part concerns the presentation and analysis of the data.

It provides an insight on *if* and *how* these companies assume those responsibilities, which are deemed as closely related to their sector (UNICEF, 2012b) in line with the guidance of the CRBP. Additionally, it tries to understand how these are managed.

The main conclusion of the research is that while companies recognise these responsibilities, to different extents, *recognition* does not mean *action*. And while the Child Programme Manager explains the "Toy sector should be leading the way" to child focused CSR (Appendix, 3), it seems that those companies are not yet there.

While also highlighting the difference between the various companies' approaches, this paper also aims to highlight general *trends* common to the three companies, trying to add, some *knowledge*, to this new and still little explored area of *business and children's rights*.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Business and Human Rights

There is no doubt, that if “many businesses are signatories of the United Nations Global Compact” (2000) it is because the idea that business “has a moral duty to respect human rights” is widely shared (Arnold, 2010: 384, Westaway 2011).

Business operations can positively affect the “lives of a substantial share of the world’s population”, but equally be extensively detrimental for the enjoyment of their human rights (Koenig-Archibugi, 2004: 234- 235).

Accordingly, a study commissioned by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights indicates that negative impacts of firms on human rights, are “not discrete” and vary from environmental deterioration to involvement in systemic crimes against humanity (Wright 2008: 6).

It is worth noting that it is only from the 1990s, and more specifically in recent years, (Arnold, 2010, Wettstein, 2012), that human rights have become, “beyond labour and employment issues”, a key element of the international debate on CSR (Wettstein, 2012: 739).

Interesting, for our discourse, is Wettstein’s *tripartite classification* of the human rights debate on “CSR literature” (2012: 746), since it allows understanding of *why* human rights issues became prominent in companies' agendas, but also *how* corporations embraced them.

As Wettstein (2012: 746) explains, in the *first period*: the mid-1980s, apart from the “divestment from Apartheid South Africa”, human rights have played a marginal role. The focus from companies was limited to the areas of employment and labour rights, while many other issues were left unaddressed.

The *second era* can be dated to the 1990s: the years of the intensification of the globalization process. Many companies, especially multinational corporations (henceforth MNCs) from the retail, apparel and extractive sectors (United Nations, 2011) were “called out publicly” for various human rights abuses, especially abroad<sup>3</sup>. This resulted in a strong exposure of their brand and reputation internationally

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<sup>3</sup> This was also due to the work of many NGOs and the catalyzer role of “the internet [...] and new technologies” (Kinley and Joseph, 2002: 2).

(Wettstein, 2012: 742).

It is worth remembering the case of sweatshop and child labour in Gap's supply chains<sup>4</sup>, which raised the problem of the extended chains of responsibilities (Wettstein, 2012, Arnold, 2010). While the case of Shell in Nigeria was related to the issues of complicity in systemic human rights violations (Koenig-Archibugi, 2004).

Firms' brand exposure raised the problem of reputational risk and many companies "to meet the moral outrage that has followed disclosure" (Westaway, 2011: 70) started to embrace human rights-friendly policies (Wettstein, 2002: 742).

Not surprisingly, in this period, the traditional notion that human rights protection was a direct responsibility of the *only* States parties was replaced by the idea that firms had similar responsibilities to assume (Westaway, 2011, Lozano and Prandi, 2005).

Timely was also the "proliferation of international initiatives<sup>5</sup>" aimed at "guiding companies in upholding human rights" (Lozano and Prandi, 2005: 187).

However, it is only in the *third period*, from 2005 with the appointment of Harvard Professor John Ruggie as the *UN Special Representative to the Secretary General on Business and Human Rights*, (SRSG), that human rights have effectively started to "play a key role for the definition" and conceptualisation "of Corporate Responsibility" (Wettstein 2012: 739-747).

Consequently companies started making reference in their "triple bottom line reporting" to human rights as universal principles "guiding their actions" (Lozano and Prandi, 2005: 198, Wettstein, 2012).

## 2.2

### The Responsibility to Respect

The work of the SRSG and specifically the Tripartite 'UN Protect, Respect, and Remedy' framework (2008) ratified by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 2011 and the 'UN Guiding Principles' (2011) have "become the state of the art in the debate on business and human rights" (Wettstein, 2102: 741-747).

Interesting for our discourse is the *tripartite framework*, in which Ruggie recognises different human rights' responsibilities of diverse actors in society:

(1) *The State's duty to protect* people's human rights "from third parties' abuses,

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<sup>4</sup> This was mainly linked to the internationalization of activities and the practice of offshore production (Lozano and Prandi, 2005)

<sup>5</sup> Amongst these there were the Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (ILO, 1998) the UN Global Compact (2000).

including from companies<sup>6</sup> “ (Arnold, 2010: 378).

(2) *The Corporate responsibility to respect* (henceforth CRR) support, prevent, avoid infracting human rights and resolve them when they occur, also by exerting influence on third parties causing harm” (Arnold, 2010).

(3) *Greater and effective access to remedy*, including grievance mechanisms, both judicial and non-judicial, from states and corporations to affected stakeholders (UN Global Compact, 2012).

According to the CRR, firms should act with *due diligence* by avoiding impacting and solving negative human rights effects (Ruggie, 2008) by considering factors such as (1) *the variety of contexts* in which businesses operate and the “challenges they pose” (2) *the impacts* their *activities* could have on human rights; and (3) *the possible abuses* they could, directly or indirectly, be responsible for including through relations with third parties (Arnold, 2010: 378).

Firms should move beyond being ‘*named and shamed*’ to ‘*knowing and showing*’ how they assume this responsibility. The narrative of *policy commitments* should go together with adequate systems and practices properly *assessing* their actual and potential impacts on human rights (United Nations, 2010: 2).

CRR exists over and above legal compliance and has its bases in “societal expectations and” is effective for “risk management” (Ruggie 2007 in Arnold, 2010: 377).

Firms, thus, “should not deduce their obligations” from a narrow taxonomy “of human rights for which [they] would have responsibility for “but derive them with respect to the variety of human rights that firms may have an impact on” (United Nations, 2008b: 4). Companies should engage in “pro-active and positive actions” (Wettstein, 2012: 740) through which to “contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for the realisation of human rights” (Sullivan, 2003: 17) of all their stakeholders. This is especially the case when it comes to the most “sensitive constituency they come into contact with”: *the children* (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 569).

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<sup>6</sup> This can be done by improving policies, strengthening control and “harmonising standards”(Arnold, 2010: 378)

## 3

**The Business of children's rights**

Very recently UNICEF (2012b) in their 'Pilot Workbook' has adopted the expression '*Everybody's Business*' with a strong emphasis on the responsibilities of companies towards their most sensitive stakeholders: the children. There is greater acceptance, in line with the concept of *Corporate responsibility to respect*, the recently published 'Children's Rights and Business Principles' (March, 2012) and the General Comment N16<sup>7</sup> (2013), that companies can and should play a key role in *enhancing* the rights of this special constituency (Save the Children et al, 2012a).

In today's globalised context it is evident that the enjoyment of children's rights is "not an automatic consequence of economic growth" (Mabel Wong, 2013). Rather than just avoiding infringing on children's rights, firms should actively embrace actions aimed at bettering their lives.

One of the reasons why businesses should put children's rights at the core of their sustainability strategies is the specific nature of children and their rights (Collins, 2012).

## 3.1

**The nature of children and their rights**

"Children and young people" as "human beings below the age of 18 years" (OHCHR, 2013), account for approximately 'one third of the world's population' (UNICEF, 2013).

As spelt by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) they have specific characteristics and needs, diverse from those of adults and deserve particular attention *in society* and *from society*. Consequently, while their rights "are equally important and interrelated" (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 12), in practice, their enjoyment often relies on the support of others (NZHRC, 2012).

Efforts to support their human rights, thus, need to be comprehensive and come from every sector in society (Collins, 2012, Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013).

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<sup>7</sup> In 2013 the The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) released a General Comment (No. 16, 2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights.

"[...] This is ... applicable to business enterprises that function as private or public social welfare bodies by providing ... direct services for children, (Committee on the Rights of the Child [...] (2012: 2-3-5)

Companies can play a key role since not only do they impact children's rights and welfare, but also the "States Parties' ability" to fully implement "the Convention on the Rights of the Child" (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013: 2).

### 3.2

#### The relation between children and business

"Children's rights and business are not mutually exclusive" (Mabel Wong, 2013). Companies affect children through their *decision-making processes, performances and behaviours* (Crane and Kazmi, 2010, Save the Children et al, 2012a).

While the author, in this section, will offer an overview of this nexus by presenting some examples, this is *not exhaustive* (neither does it do justice to the complicated nature of this relationship), but is *only illustrative*.

This relationship is "complex" and difficult to define "since it covers a wide range of issues". Moreover, businesses are highly diverse in terms of "size, sector and aims" but also "locations". Thus, while all firms have responsibilities towards children, "certain provisions" are particularly pertinent to "their operations and activities" (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013: 5). Alike, while "children" are one of the most fragile of their "constituencies" (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 569) "they are not a single, unified" constituency" or *Stakeholder group* (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2012: 5).

Children are potentially "consumers, young workers, family members of employees, future employees and business leaders" (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 2- 3).

As Business' '*salient stakeholders*' (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 569) their rights are pertinent to their activities both because nearly "every firm, at some point, in their value chain" (Horgan, 2005: 76 in Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 568), comes "into contact with" them and because this link ascribes to *workplace, marketplace, community and environment* (UNICEF, 2012b: 15).

Organisations, positively or negatively affect children's lives through specific products or services, which provide *safeguarding* for children. Similarly, other products (e.g. unsafe products) or services can endanger their lives (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 574).

Advertising and marketing campaigns have the potential to be *positive* when educational (e.g. *Dove Campaign* against unrealistic body image) or *negative* when a

vehicle of inappropriate content (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 577). Firms' operations can impact their rights to *health, education, moral protection* (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013) and many others.

This depends also on the sector in which firms operate (e.g. extractive industries) or on the *danger* of their *location* (e.g. certain *building sites*) among other factors (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 574).

Companies' decisions and approaches in some '*contexts*' can also determine whether many children enjoy their basic human rights. This is the case of businesses operating in (1) *specific sectors* such as the Travel & Hotel industry that are playing a major role in helping to eradicate children's sexual exploitation. However, it is also the case of extractive industries, constantly accused of infracting basic children's rights such as that to clean water (Wright, 2008). Similarly, it is the case of business operating in (2) *developing countries* where the risk of coming across "young people illicitly working in [their] supply chains" increases, or (3) in *conflicting zones* where institutions could be unable to protect children (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 3, Koenig-Archibugi, 2004).

In other cases children's rights such as *employability and education* can be largely dependent on businesses' efforts and involvement in cross-sectorial partnerships, or educational programs (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013, Collins, 2012).

Furthermore, children's rights to *care and development* are impacted through firms' policies and decisions regarding their parents' working hours, employment conditions and "childcare provision" (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 579). Some firms are also indirectly responsible for those children who are abandoned "by their migrant parents workers" or for those who are sick for the environmental deterioration they contributed to (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 3). In light of this, companies should engage in "continuous and comprehensive actions towards children" *respecting and supporting* their human rights (Collins, 2012: 4).

### 3.3

#### The moral duty of business

Accordingly, a Save the Children London Study (2012) demonstrates a strong link between children's human rights' infringement from firms and the achievement of the forth UN Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) of *Reducing child mortality*. However, there is also evidence that:

"[...] Business enterprises ... can play a role in the provision and management of services such as clean water, sanitation, education .... that are critical to the enjoyment of

children's rights (Committee on the Rights of the Child [...] (2013: 5-7).

A few people would agree that being careless about children's rights is morally right. Amartya Sen (1992, in Arnold and Bowie, 2003: 224- 225) would stress that firms and especially MNCs, as actors of sustainable development, should go beyond "increasing people's income and the GNP of their country".

Their role also entails being concerned to '*develop [their] human capabilities*' and ensure they are treated *always as an end in themselves* (Kant, 1797).

This is even more the case when there is evidence that despite the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have contributed to radical changes in their lives, the progress is unequal and many children's rights are still violated (UNICEF UK, 2012).

Accordingly, there are still around "2.2 billion children under 18 years of age in the world". "Over 215 million are involved in various forms of potentially hazardous child labour". More than "1 billion are deprived of ...services necessary to their survival" (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 10). In view of this, to put it with Drucker (1974: 325 – 337), it is time that businesses start limiting '*what they do to children*' and focus on '*what they can do for them*'.

### 3.4

#### Doing well by doing good

Investing in children is first of all *a moral duty of Business*. This is spelt by the well-established *Stakeholder theory*, which offers both "a normative" view for including children's rights, expectations and needs "into the managerial decision making" (Crane and Ruebottom, 2011: 2).

*The instrumental* stream of this theory also spells out the potential competitive advantages and risk management that firms can obtain from "prioritising children's claims and rights" (Miles, 2012: 305). Child focused CSR also makes business sense.

Among the benefits that business can derive from assuming responsibilities towards children, Crane and Kazmi (2010: 568-570) mention (a) *managing their reputational risk* connected with the "enormous sensitivity around child related issues". Scandals on 'children and corporations', as the case of Nike confirms, can have devastating effects on firms' reputations internationally.

They explain that business could also (b) "*generate early brand affiliation*" from children since perceived as particularly attentive to their role in the community. This would have a clear return on *reputation and legitimacy*.

Among others there are those of (c) "*attracting a more motivated and retaining workforce*", for instance through the promotion of "family friendly policies and initiatives" (Save



the Children et al, 2012b: 2), (d) “*enhancing firm license to operate*” and raise their reputation by addressing “*children’s and parents’ needs*” through products and policies (UNICEF, 2012b: 16).

Similarly, education programs aimed at boosting employability skills for young people can also help firms in (e) “*developing the next generations of talent*” and create a more (f) “*stable and sustainable business environment*” deriving from “*working to create the good of children*” (UNICEF, 2012b: 16).

In a nutshell, investing in children, like any other CSR practice, means *doing well by doing good* (Save the Children et al, 2012a).

### 3.5

#### Theoretical Framework and Corporations Approaches

UNICEF (2012b) report that some companies have understood the benefits of embracing more comprehensive approaches to children and are also benefitting from it.

In this respect, Crane and Kazmi, refer to Zadek’s (2004) five stage organisational learning model “*Path to CSR*” as a seamless framework (2004: 126-132) to understand the phase from which businesses, answering to stakeholder’s claims, pass before the full implementation of possible child- focused CSR. These are:

- (1) ***Defensive*** – This approach is typical of firms that deny their involvement in any issue regarding children. These companies not only deny that their products, services or policies “*affect children*” (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 582), but also tend to “*reject allegations*” and do not to assume any responsibilities for their impacts (Zadek, 2004: 126). This could be, for instance, the case of a MNC fast food chain denying any responsibilities regarding the increase in child obesity.
- (2) ***Compliance*** – at this stage usually companies implement a “*corporate policy ... in ways that can be made visible to critics*” (Zadek, 2004:126). Developing a child related statement or policy and “*short-term approaches to face criticisms*” reflect this attitude (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 582). Zadek (2004) gives the example of Nestle’ at the time of its infant milk formula scandal. Rather than implementing programs to help solve the issue of children’s nutrition, Nestle’ targeted their campaign to make clear the hazard linked with mixing infant formulas with contaminated water, a program mainly connected to *its own* reputational exposure (Zadek, 2004).

- (3) *Managerial* – this attitude belongs to companies that understand the need to go *beyond* the simple policy implementation and will, for example, “embed child impact issues in their core management process”. At this stage, firms could establish “an auditing regime or a code of conduct”. Creation of child protection related functions and specific programs focused at children reflect their attitude to begin understanding the need for specific responsibilities towards children (Crane and Kazmi, 2010:582).
- (4) *Strategic* – children’s rights and welfare are fully integrated in the sustainability strategies of companies that embrace this approach. At this level, *best practice is in place* and firms link children’s investment to their operations, functional areas and core competencies (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 583, McElhaney, 2009). An example could be a telecommunications company that recently partnered with a Chinese NGO to “provide assistance to children left behind by their parents migrant workers” in China. The program consisted of issuing *parent-children friendly* telephone cards to encourage “regular communications” between them. The practice, which benefitted children, is also closely linked to their sector and operations (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 21).
- (5) *Civil* – this is the case of companies who have integrated approaches and also “promote broader participation in CSR for children” through various means such as “*multi-stakeholders roundtables*” (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 583). The *motto*, according to Zadek (2004: 127) is: “*we need to make sure everybody does it*”. A good example is a famous MNC operating in the apparel sector who hosts various “industry –wide initiatives” relating to child labour in supply chains (Zadek 2004 in Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 583).

### 3. 6

#### The Children’s Rights and Business Principles

Despite evidence of this strong relationship, and of the role that business can play, while the “international community greatly focused on the relationship between *business and human rights*”, the debate largely lacked a clear focus on children’s rights (Collins, 2012: 1- 2). There is also evidence of a limited child oriented corporate responsibility (Ipsos MORI, 2013a).

Nevertheless, as Crane and Kazmi explain (2010: 567-568), “understanding impact” and assuming responsibilities is key for business both to meet the needs of children and parents and to manage the “high reputational risk connected” with the sensitiveness of their effect on children.

Save the Children, the UN Global Compact and UNICEF (2012a), to encourage organisations in ‘assuming’ their *responsibility to respect* and implement *children rights-friendly strategies*, have recently (March, 2012) published the “Children’s Rights and Business Principles”(CRBP).

The CRBP represents the first and only comprehensive voluntary framework to guide organisations in “creating, delivering and capturing value” more in line with children’s rights (Collins 2012: 3-4).

Structured in *ten* principles (Table 1), the CRBP explains the “different ways in which various businesses can affect” and help children (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 12) with regard to the *workplace, marketplace, and environment and community*. It also defines *how* businesses can assume responsibilities.

In this respect the framework identifies two different types of corporate approach towards children (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 4-5):

- (1) *The Corporate Responsibility ‘to respect’* (CRR): consisting in avoiding infracting and addressing any children’s human rights abuse and assuming, direct and indirect, responsibilities.
- (2) *The Corporate Commitment to Support*: including “voluntary actions” aiming at enhancing children’s rights “through core business activities, [...] philanthropy” and joint programs. **Table 1**

### Children’s Rights and Business Principles

All business enterprises should:

1. Meet their responsibility to respect children’s rights, and commit to support the human rights of children
2. Contribute towards the elimination of child labour, including in all business activities and business relationships
3. Provide decent work for young workers, parents and caregivers
4. Ensure the protection and safety of children in all business activities and facilities
5. Ensure that products and services are safe; and seek to support children’s rights through products and services
6. Use marketing and advertising that respect and support children’s rights
7. Respect and support children’s rights in relation to the environment and land
8. Respect and support children’s rights in security arrangements
9. Help protect children affected by emergencies
10. Reinforce community and government efforts to protect and fulfil children’s rights.

For each principle, the CRBP (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 4 -18) offers examples of corporate *responsibility to respect* and *commitment to support*<sup>8</sup>.

For instance, in the case of the second principle of “*Eliminating Child labour*” (Table 1) companies can assume their CRR by detecting its presence in their value chain, “through age-verification mechanisms” [...] avoiding and alleviating damage “to young workers” and by eradicating child labour.

*Commitment to Support* entails encouraging ... viable “solutions to the causes of child labour” by working with third parties and participating in communities’ activities linked to this cause.

At present already “twenty-seven countries, including the UK, have launched the CRBP” and other complementary guidance tools are being tested around the world for their implementation (Abbassi, 2013).

As Jasmine Whitbread, CEO of Save the Children, explained at *The World Child and Youth Forum* 2013:

“[...] The interest from businesses in the CRBP has been very high [...] the trick is to translate that interest into actual action on the ground [...]” (Stockholm, 2013)

Her view reflects the present situation where, despite the CRBP guidance, children are not a priority in most firms CSR agendas (Confino, 2012).

### 3.7

#### The current situation in ‘Business and children’s rights’

##### 3.7.1

##### The lack of studies

Both academics and child-rights’ organisations acknowledge the gap in CSR literature with respect to the relations between firms and children’s rights (Crane and Kazmi, 2010, Collins, 2012).

“[...] Texts directly analysing the benefits of CSR activities targeted at children are very few” (Save the Children et al, 2012b: 1).

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For a question of space the author will not elaborate on each of them.

In their pioneering work Crane and Kazmi (2010: 583) confirm that academic work relevant to this discourse, apart from a few issues<sup>9</sup>, “revolves mainly around the areas of child labour” (in developing countries) and unethical marketing practices. These two “streams of literature” having been “treated separate from each other” offer a very limited account of the nexus “between children and business” (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 569)<sup>10</sup>. The prevalent focus on these two areas is linked to famous corporate scandals such as the cases of Nestle’ and Gap connected respectively to the issues of “marketing practices of breast-milk substitutes in developing countries” (Koenig-Archibugi, 2004: 244) and of child labour in their factories abroad. These issues raised much reputational risk for firms both in 1970s and 1990s; therefore they have been addressed both in academia and, especially with regard to child labour on the ground (Crane and Kazmi, 2010).

### 3.7.2

#### **Corporations’ approach to child focused corporate responsibility**

After one year and a half of the publishing of the CRBP, the ‘Global CEO Study 2013 – Children’s Rights and Business’ confirms: “CEOs rank children’s rights the least prioritized among six major sustainability areas” (BCG, 2013: 2).

During the interview the *Child Programme Manager* explains:

“The sense of responsibility for children is high on a more personal level, but ...companies still don’t understand their role for protecting ...children. In most cases, they feel it is something ... far away from their operations” (Appendix, 3)

This does not surprise considering that:

[...] “CSR reports and strategies offer little in the way of their effects on children [...] (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 568)

Furthermore, while investors’ concern seems to be growing (Umlas, 2012)<sup>11</sup>, and the work of many NGOs and civil society organisations are addressing the need for child focused CSR worldwide, progress is slow. Socially responsible investment indexes, such as the FTSE4Good give very little space to children issues (Crane and Kazmi

<sup>9</sup> “Child wellbeing in poor and developing countries, or nutrition issues in the developed world” are amongst the few issues CSR literature focused most (Chhabara 2008 in Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 569).

<sup>10</sup> This scarcity of studies is, thus, significant since additional research on the topic of child labour, unethical marketing and advertising to children, does not automatically inform on how corporations can assume their responsibility to respect children (Crane and Kazmi 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Increasingly pressure is put on “hotel and travel and airline companies to address children’s sexual exploitation” (Umlas, 2012:9)

2010: 567).

Moreover, a recent survey of UNICEF and Ipsos-MORI, (March 2013), which also investigated child-focused CSR of 150 companies in the UK<sup>12</sup>, shows that while firms, especially after the publishing of CRBP, are understanding the importance of developing a responsible approach to children, this consciousness is not always reflected in practice:

“[...] 89% do not currently include children’s rights among their main corporate responsibility issues [...] only 11% [do] ... 29% address [it] alongside several others ... (39%) say ... [it] is not an issue they address to any great extent” (Ipsos-Mori, 2013b).

The academics Crane and Kazmi (2010: 574-580) investigated businesses’ positive and negative impacts on children explaining that companies are starting to recognise children as stakeholders. They identified *seven core responsibilities* that firms could and should assume towards children; otherwise they could face high reputational risk.

These responsibilities which vary from ‘*physical protection, moral protection, to children charity work*’, find now, place within the most recent CRBP, which also guide firms on *how* to put them into practice in a *strategic manner*.

Analogously to the UNICEF-Ipsos-Mori’s (2013b) research, their work shows that while companies “increasingly attempt to manage some of their responsibilities” towards children, most approaches are disjointed, “unsystematic and ill-defined” (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 568).

*Welfare*<sup>13</sup> approaches seem to prevail and strategic programs mostly apply to ‘high-risk’ issues like child labour (Save the Children Sweden, 2007: vii, 28)

The *Child Programme Manager* confirms this view:

[...] The only exception is child labour in terms of risk management [...] [There is] effort from companies to control the supply chain (Appendix 3)

Accordingly, “audits of child labour in the context of developing” and also of “suppliers’ assessment in developed” countries are becoming common practice, however other children’s related issues such as “gender pay” are left unaddressed (Crane and Kazmi, 2010: 582).

Not surprisingly, while most companies affirm to be “fairly active” in terms of child focused CSR, most of them have never heard of the CRBP and most programs are likely to be in the *workplace* and *community* rather than the *marketplace* (Ipsos-Mori, 2013b).

<sup>12</sup> Companies from “different industry sector categories, and different sizes (excluding smaller companies with fewer than 250 employees)” were included in the sample (Ipsos-MORI, 2013b)

<sup>13</sup> A welfare approach is typical of activities that aim at satisfying immediate needs (Save The Children Sweden, 2007:28)

Furthermore, important initiatives<sup>14</sup> meant to protect children *'have failed them'* since *'infringed'* by many responsible companies (Doane and Holder, 2007)

In terms of CSR disclosure:

"[...] Human rights policies *when* they refer to children ...cover only the prevention of child labour... companies report[ing] on human rights ...generally do not disaggregate [data] ... on children [...]" (Umlas<sup>15</sup>, 2012: 15)

If children's rights are mentioned in companies' sustainability reports, many child rights related areas remain poorly addressed (Umlas, 2012).

Over-emphasis is put on *charitable giving* and on "positive initiatives ... rather than negative impacts" and a focus on processes and "policies over performances and results" (Umlas, 2012: 7- 10).

Not surprisingly, 110 out of 150 companies believe that more needs to be done to assist firms in assuming their responsibilities to children (IPSOS-Mori, 2013a).

Concluding, initiatives from the corporate world, despite the increased interest, are not always effective and still fail to fully assume their *responsibility to respect* children's rights.

While *best practices* do exist, rare are the cases in which businesses aim to "tackl[e] the root causes of many problems". UNICEF, at 2012, was not able to identify firms that had embraced a "holistic approach to children's rights" (in Confino, 2012).

Accordingly, at today:

[...] Disclosure from the companies looks very different [from the CRBP] and. [...] There is no ... harmonized interpretation of 'the Principles' (Appendix, 3)

Many companies still seem to be at the stage that Zadek (2004) defines *defensive* and invest in children mainly to protect their reputation, thus, focusing on issues raised by Media and NGOs (Crane and Kazmi, 2010). Others are moving towards *compliance* or *managerial* approaches.

Hopefully, as Crane and Kazmi put it, firms and sectors with "*higher impact on children*"; great "*ability to influence other firms*" and "*high reputational risk at stake*" will start paving the way. However, currently the general discourse on CSR "has yet to fully embrace the full scale and variety of responsibilities that corporations can have to children" (2010: 583).

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<sup>14</sup> They list the Extractive Industries Transparencies Initiative (EITI), the Ethical trading initiative (ETI) and the International Code on Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, that without the enforcement of the law are alone not able to protect children.

## 4

**Methodology**

## 4.1

**Rationale of the research**

Against the presented background, the author decided to seek insight to the question of relations between children and business by addressing issues raised by two academics: Crane and Kazmi (2010).

In concluding their pioneering work (2010) they suggested that firms from the (a) retail and apparel sectors have moved towards a more integrated approach to 'managing' (Zadek, 2004) their relations with children, due to related corporate scandals.

In light of this, they expect that (1) *firms with a "potential higher impact on children"*, (2) *"potential higher risk at stake"*, and (3) *"ability to influence other firms"* will start to embrace more comprehensive CSR approaches towards children (Crane and Kazmi 2010: 583). Resultantly, the more a company meets these responsibilities, the more integrated their approach should be.

The author decided to focus on some of the above assumptions and centered her study on three well-known children's retailers, which will be called *The Playground*, *Kids&Moms* and *Play'nGo* (Table, 2) since they meet some of these criteria. The study wants to understand how these firms assume their 'essential' responsibilities towards children. Furthermore, since the CRBP, have given companies a voluntary framework to follow, these companies are expected, not only to assume these 'essential' responsibilities (linked to size and sector), but also to be in line with the CRBP recommendation.

## 4.2

**Case selection**

The companies were all selected from the *Euromonitor International UK 2013 database* and chosen 'theoretically' (Eisenhardt, 1989) meeting two out of the three criteria mentioned by Crane and Kazmi (2010). Accordingly, they are all (a) Multinational Corporations (MNCs) belonging to the (a) *Retail* sector, and they all specialise, according to official Euromonitor's data, in (1) *"Traditional Toys and Games"* for children aged between 0 – 8 or 0 - 18 and two (*Kids&Moms* and *Play'nGo*) also specialise in products for pregnant mothers and other products for children aged 0-8



(Table 2). Children and their parents are their main stakeholders as expressed in their mission statements.

These three MNC Toy Retailers are, thus, expected to have a (1) *higher potential impact on children*. And due to the sector they belong to (Retail/Apparel) and their size (Multinational Corporations)<sup>16</sup> their image is more exposed to the judgment of public opinion and their (3) *“reputation is more at stake”* with regards to children’s matters as scandals on child labour confirm (Crane and Kazmi 2010: 583).

Moreover, the presence of two out of the three criteria mentioned as well as a child focused mission statement (Table, 2) would at least suggest that they assume some of their responsibilities towards children and especially those spelt out by *principles 2, 3, 5 and 6* (Table, 1) which are deemed as very close to their sector (UNICEF, 2012b).

These, as defined by Save the Children et al, (2012a: 14-24) are related to companies efforts to: *‘tackle child labour’* (Principle 2), *‘provide decent working conditions for young workers, parents and caregivers’* (Principle 3), *‘ensure products and service are safe and support children through them’* (Principle 5) and lastly using *‘marketing and advertising’ in a way that supports them* (Principle 6). However, to understand the general attitude of the companies towards *‘meeting their responsibilities to respect and commit to support children* (Principle 1) it is also important to take into account Principle 1.

The author also presumes firms performances vary since they present differences in size and resources (Table 3).

### 4.3

#### Research Questions

My research aims to answer the following questions:

**Question (1)** Do these companies comply with the CRBP in assuming their *‘essential’* responsibilities?

**Question (2)** What type of approach do these firms take?

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<sup>16</sup> Most retailers and specifically MNCs have been involved in various scandals on child labour and various contestable practices especially from 1990s (Crane and Kazmi, 2010, Wettstein, 2012).

Table 2

## The three children's retailers

<u><i>Play'nGo</i></u>
<p>This leading large toy retailer defines children as “central to who [they] are and what [they] do. Their mission is to provide “parents and families a broad selection of products” to deliver a magical experience to their kids but also “the resources necessary to keep their kids safe” (<i>Play'nGo</i>, Website, 2013). They sell toys, clothes and baby products and have headquarters and stores in the United States and presence in Puerto Rico as well as in “660 international stores and over 165 licensed stores in 35 countries and jurisdictions”. Since they became privately held, in 2005, they ceased publishing their Annual Report (<i>Play'nGo</i>, Website, 2013).</p>
<u><i>Kids&amp;Moms</i></u>
<p>Founded in 1961 this UK based retailer specialises in various toys and products for children and mums-to-be (Website, 2013). <i>Kids&amp;Moms</i> is publicly held and publish their Annual report where they specify their aim is “to be the world’s leading mother and baby specialist”. Their products aim “to meet the needs of mothers-to-be, babies and children up to the age of eight” (Annual Report, 2013: 4). They operate in 55 countries within Europe, Africa, the Middle and Far East and also Southeast Asian countries (Website, 2013), their vision is to ‘become the world’s most caring retailer’ (Appendix, 1).</p>
<u><i>The Playground</i></u>
<p>This UK leading brand has existed for over 250 years and is known as the “Finest toy shop in the World”. “For over 250 years” [they] have been “selling the most magical toys and bringing delight to children’s faces all over the world” (Website, 2013). <i>The Playground</i>, which is a privately held company, “ has opened many stores across the UK and numerous franchise partner stores spread across the Middle East, India, Denmark, Sweden and Russia with other countries such as China targeted for expansion” (Appendix, 4). No Annual Report was made available.</p>

## 4.4

## Qualitative interpretative research and technique

To answer these questions, this qualitative research will focus on three-unit samples (*the three companies*) and will use a combination of techniques. More specifically, secondary data will be collected mainly through the use of *qualitative content analysis*

and supported by primary data, collected through open ended and semi-structured interviews (Table 4 in Appendix, 6).

### (1) Qualitative Deductive Content analysis

This method seems appropriate as it is widely used in social science to analyse various types of communications (Hsieh and Shannon 2005) and particularly to understand sustainability disclosures (Sherman 2009). The author analysed the following means of communications:

- (a) Companies' websites
- (b) *Kids&Moms* Annual Reports and Sustainable Sourcing Code<sup>17</sup>
- (c) Companies' Twitter and Facebook pages

The approach to content analysis has been *deductive* since the author was guided by the pre-constituted 'categories' offered by the investigated principles of the CRBP framework (Moretti et al, 2011).

The strong reliance on *content analysis* is linked to the difficulty experienced in approaching companies. Possibly, due to the inherently sensitive nature of the research topic, companies were very reluctant and less open. The author also experienced problems in gaining access to the analysed firms' employees, managing to obtain only two interviews. This has made it impossible to conduct an in-depth case study gaining access to a variety of participants and various internal documents. However, to enrich the substantial dimension of the research the author used:

### (2) Interviews of which:

**Two semi-structured** with *Kids&Moms* and *The Playground* employees in order to have a bigger picture of companies' child focused practices:

- a) *One email interview* with the CSR Manager of *Kids&Moms* aimed at gaining data in general on their CSR approach and specifically on their child focused CSR. The participant was given preliminary questions; this was followed by *a second set of questions*, some of which aimed at clarifying aspects addressed by the informant

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<sup>17</sup> For *The Playground* and *Play'nGo* no Annual Report were found. The companies are privately held and their report is not publicly available. As *Play'nGo* explains in their website (2013) they stopped publishing it in 2005.

(Saunders, 2009).

- b) *One face-to-face interview, with an Assistant Floor Manager<sup>18</sup> and attendee of CSR Committees of The Playground which offered insight into the company's approach.*

**Two open-ended** interviews with children's rights experts to collect richness of data, specifically:

- a) *One Skype interview with a Child Right Programme Manager<sup>19</sup>, with international experience, which was recorded and offered general insights both to enrich the literature review and the general dimension of the analysis.*
- b) *One email interview with a Child Right and Business Expert<sup>20</sup>, particularly relevant for the analysis and interpretation of companies' alignment with the CRBP, since the interviewee has experience with the implementation of the CRBP.*

According to the protocol of *purposeful sampling* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985,) the interviewees could be considered *special informants*. Resultantly, the interviewed employees are related to CSR functions or have knowledge of it, while those of the non-profit sector have experiences in children's human rights and CSR.

Moreover, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed the informants to focus on aspects that they thought were important. To ensure *validity*, some questions of these interviews were reproduced or adapted to those used in the UNICEF- Ipsos MORI's survey (2013), which specifically investigated aspects of child focused CSR

**TABLE 3**  
**UK Children's Retailers**

Companies	Sector	Headquarters	Employees	UK Revenue (Million)
Play'nGo	Toys and Games	USA	10,000 +	£524.6
Kids&Moms	Toys and Games	UK	5000 - 10,000	£152.7
The Playground	Toys and Games	UK	501-1000	£41.7

*Source:* Own creation, 2013, Data: Euromonitor International 2013, Companies' LinkedIn pages (2013)

<sup>18</sup> This interviewee will be addressed as *Manager*

<sup>19</sup> This interviewee will be addressed as *Child Programme Manager*

<sup>20</sup> This interviewee will be addressed as *CRBP Expert*

## 4.5

### Ethical consideration

In conducting this research, the author has followed the ordinary guidelines for ethics in qualitative research as well the protocols of Birkbeck College. With regards to the companies, they have all been given *fictitious names*, however quotations taken from their means of disclosure have been used as *raw data* and information from the Euromonitor database and other sources have been left unchanged.

Interviewees' names, in order "not to cause any kind of damage" were not disclosed, nor the names of their employers, only their roles were mentioned (Gray, 2009: 190).

All *informants* were briefed about the project, its aims and both ethical and consent forms have been used to prove anonymity. Interviewees were informed of their right to refuse to answer, ask for the project's progression and withdraw their collaboration (Gray, 2009). Furthermore, in tape-recording the Skype interview, Birkbeck ethical procedure was followed. Lastly, in line with Lincoln and Guba's advice (1985) on deductive content analysis, the author enhanced *credibility* and *transferability* through the use of triangulation and interpretation checking. In terms of *dependability* and *confirmability*, coherence of "outcomes and the study process" was controlled as well as were "interpretations and findings" (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009: 6). Lastly '*findings*' confirmation was also strengthened through the interviews to child rights experts.

## 4.6

### Further Clarifications

The author also wishes to acknowledge the difference between the three MNCs retailers, although they are each other's competitors. First of all, there are differences in their headquarter locations: *Play'nGo*'s main headquarters is located in the USA, while *Kids&Moms*' and *The Playground*'s main offices are in the UK. These differences are to be taken into consideration during the analysis since different regulatory frameworks may impact on *how* companies respond to some of the CRBP.

Moreover, *The Playground* is listed as a Medium Enterprise (Appendix, 2), and this factor must be considered since there is plenty of work confirming the dependability of CSR performances and disclosure on firms' resources and size (Blombäck and Wigren, 2008). While these differences could offer insights to better understand companies' practices targeted at children, these factors were taken into consideration in the analysis and in drawing '*conclusions*'.

Lastly, in presenting the data, the author will try to offer a 'thick interpretation' (Geertz, 1994) of the '*findings*' by combining the analysis with a narrative dimension and graphically displaying information. This, will help the reader to understand the relations between the 'data' and 'results', and how the author arrived to make a contribution to the 'Children rights and Business' debate (Corley and Gioia 2004, Krippendorf, 2012).

## Presentations and analysis of the data

### 5.1

#### Children's Retailers' Responsibilities

(Question 1)<sup>21</sup>

##### 5.1.1

(1) Meet their responsibilities to respect and commit to support the human rights of children

“Principle 1 is the foundation for the remaining nine” (UNICEF-CYFI, 2013: 7). It refers to a company declared commitment towards children and, not surprisingly, UNICEF (2012b) explains that all companies despite their sector and size should uphold it.

Understanding companies' general approaches towards children will, thus, also depend on *how* they conform to this principle.

Specific examples of *responsibility to respect* for *Principle 1* include *policy commitment*<sup>22</sup>, “due diligence measures<sup>23</sup> remediation processes” and consultation practices all targeted at children (Umlas, 2012:15, UNICEF, 2012b).

*Commitment to support* includes declared commitment towards children, and also supporting them “through core business activities”, “strategic social investments” and by being “a champion” for promoting their rights (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 14).

Based both on the content analysis and the interviews' *findings* it would seem that while, the companies' websites emphasise caring for children, none of them seems to practice their *responsibility to respect* children's rights in any integrated manner, with respect to this principle.

If they do, they do not disclose it in the analysed means of communications. No trace of child-right or similar codes or explicit reference to policy commitment was found, nor clear reference was made to the UN Guiding Principles, the UNCRC or the CRBP. Similarly, no overall “impact assessment covering child rights” apart from child labour, were mentioned (Umlas, 2012: 16) or consultation practice that include children.

While the companies mention their commitment *to tackle child labour* on their websites and documents, there is no specific reference to the rights of children. Accordingly, *Kids&Moms*, while identifying children as their main constituency, (Annual Report,

<sup>21</sup> The author wishes to acknowledge that in this part of the analysis the *guidance* contained in the CRBP, those of the UNICEF Workbook (2012c), Umlas' work (2012) and the outcome of the interview with CRBP expert (Appendix, 4) have proven valuable. Additionally in evaluating the companies' adherence to CRBP the author also considered the compared performances of the companies.

<sup>22</sup> With specific reference to the Human rights of children or initiative supporting them.

<sup>23</sup>This include practice like assessment, integration and tracking and reporting” of company overall impacts on children. (Umlas, 2012: 15)

2013) have ‘not yet embedded’ the CRBP or the UN Guiding Principles in their practice (Appendix, 1). The *Manager of The Playground* also confirmed the absence of focus on CRBP and was not aware of any specific children’s policy or practice in place (Appendix 2). On the other hand, *Play’nGo* and *Kids&Moms* spell their affiliation to human rights respectively through their *Responsible Code*<sup>24</sup> and *website*, although explicit reference to children’s rights regards mainly the issue of *child labour*.

It would seem that, in line with UNICEF-Ipsos MORI’s survey (2013) and Umlas’ (2012) work ‘discoveries’, companies do not do much yet to declare specific responsibilities targeted at children, despite supporting their human rights. No examples of *responsibility to respect* were found. This could be, as the CSR Manager of *Kids&Moms* explains, because although investing in children and having:

[...] Policies that relate to the protection of children, ... these are not unified in an overall code of conduct or policy on the human rights of children [...]"(Appendix 1).

The interviewee also specifies that despite not having:

[...] An umbrella policy that covers children’s rights [they] have policy in place with respect to child labour [...] (Appendix 1).

Nonetheless, *Kids&Moms* and *Play’nGo* both have a foundation through which they work collaboratively with children’s related charities. *Kids&Moms*, among others, have a long-term partnership with Save The Children, which is impacting children’s survival (Website, 2013). *Kids&Moms* also participated:

[...] in the UK consultation to develop the ...Children’s Rights and Business Principles [...] (Appendix 1)

Similarly, *Play’nGo* invest in various activities targeted at children and also ‘*champion*’ a long-term campaign through their website to support children affected by cancer (Website, 2013, Twitter, 2013). These programs show an explicit *commitment to support* children. *The Playground* also invests in charitable work (Website, 2013) and while these are mainly short-term activities (Appendix, 4), considering their size, the author values them as examples of partial *commitment to support*. Overall, these ‘*findings*’ are in line with Umlas’ ‘results’ (2012: 7) where, despite the “lack of reporting on policy involvement”, when companies make reference to children’s human rights, this “often covers only the prevention of child labour”. The latter will be analysed in the next

<sup>24</sup> The code full ‘name’ is *Responsible Sourcing Code of Practice & Implementation Policy* (*Kids&Moms*, 2013).



section.

### 5.1.2

(2) Contribute to the elimination of child labour including in all business activities and relationships

This principle is strictly linked to the Retail sector<sup>25</sup> (UNICEF, 2012b: 46). *Child labour* affects over two hundred million children worldwide and has often been linked to operations of firms abroad, especially MNCs, with impact on their reputation and legitimacy (UNICEF, 2012b, Westaway, 2011).

Moreover, it is important to underline that both *Kids&Moms* and *Play'nGo* have previously been involved in *child labour* related accusations (Arnold and Bowie, 2003, Karen McVeigh, 2013).

Additionally, the author, in conversation with a Senior Manager of *The Playground*, was informed that they stopped selling a *voice-changer toy* since its connection to child labour was discovered. Their *Manager* explains:

[...] The company producing the ...*toy* was ...mistreating its work force with unsafe working conditions [*The Playground*] decided to drop this supplier immediately (Appendix, 2).

The companies seem to be aware of the reputational risks connected with this issue and all express in their websites (2013) their 'commitment' to *tackle child labour* as synthesised by a statement from *Play'nGo*:

"[...] Partners adhere to an absolute prohibition on the use of... child labor [...]"(Website, 2013).

Beyond their declarations, it is interesting to see how they "contribute to the actual abolition of child labor" (Umlas, 2012:17).

In terms of *responsibility to respect*, companies should contribute to its eradication by using "*age verification mechanisms*" and *effective practice* to avoid and alleviate "harm to young workers". "Promoting sustainable solutions" to its roots through "community activities" and third party collaboration ascribes to *commitment to support* (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 4, 18).

Looking at these companies' performances it would seem that there is only one 'full' example of *responsibility to respect*.

*The Playground* mention their opposition to child labour, the quality management

<sup>25</sup> In their Pilot workbook (2012b: 46) UNICEF highlights that the issue of child labour is particularly important for the "wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels' sectors".

standard ISO 9001 as supplier requirement and the work of the Hong Kong office with their Asian suppliers (Website, 2013). However, the ISO 9001 only has indirect impact on child labour elimination (Sirtnikov and Bocean, 2012: 62), thus, the only *actual* indicator of *responsibility to respect* would be linked to their *auditing processes*, which were just mentioned. Their *Manager* confirms:

[...] There is no available information on the amount of audits or the successfulness (Appendix, 2).

Therefore, it remains unclear *how* they ensure “*children of school age [are] not permitted to work*” (*The Playground*, Website, 2013). Due to absence of evidence on ‘*knowing and showing*’ processes this cannot be considered *responsibility to respect*. Additionally, the act of ‘dropping a supplier’ (Appendix, 2) would suggest a *reactive* approach to child labour, when alternative and proactive ones exist (Arnold and Bowie, 2003). Likewise, no joint work aimed at *tacking child labour*, seems to be in place (Appendix, 2).

On the other hand, ‘dropping a supplier’, mentioning child labour in their website and in their CSR committee (Appendix, 2) and having ‘some’ systems in place to monitor their supply chain (Website, 2013) would still denote *some* levels of “*attention*”.

Despite their size, ‘*Principle 2*’ is strictly pertinent to their operations; therefore they should think to address and communicate it in a more systematic manner (Appendix, 2). Failing to do so could result in a high reputational risk for this firm, this is even truer considering the various countries in which they operate and their brand’s growth (Appendix, 2).

Conversely, *Play’nGo* (Website, 2013) ask their partners to commit “*to an absolute prohibition on the use of ... child labor*”. They comply with the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act of 2010<sup>26</sup> (CTSCA). The latter aims to encourage *due diligence mechanisms* from companies and their suppliers with regard to child trafficking, slavery and also child labour (Umlas, 2012, Verite’, 2011).

The company seems to be in compliance with the five-stage communications process required by the Act, which includes practice such as monitoring partners’ compliance, audits and internal accountability (Pickles and Zhu, 2013).

These denote that *due diligence* processes, which could help in avoiding “and mitigating harm” to working children, are in place (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 4, 18). Notwithstanding, cases such as General Electric (2013), which went beyond the mere law compliance with clearer links to information on their website, show proactivity. *Play’nGo*’s supplier and partner codes of conduct to which they refer,

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<sup>26</sup> Under this Act of 2010 companies operating in California with an annual total revenues of more than \$100 million have to communicate in their websites their commitment to keep their supply chain free from human trafficking and slavery also with regard to children (Umlas, 2012).

were not made available on their website and the proportion of space given to 'child labour issues' is overshadowed when compared to other matters, such as safety (Website, 2013).

Due to these reasons, and the impossibility to access both other forms of disclosure and informants to gather more insight, the author considers this only a *partial* example of *responsibility to respect*.

**Play'nGo** invest in various *charitable activities* targeted at children, but there was no *reference to any child labour eradication programs or work in developing countries*, suggesting *commitment to support*.

While their limited disclosure could depend on their being a privately held company (**Play'nGo**, Website, 2013), they give, as previously mentioned, a greater space to other issues in their website. A detailed communication on *principle 2* would have created greater transparency. This is especially true considering their child labour related records and their being a large MNC, whose actions highly impact children's rights.

**Kids&Moms**, instead, adhere to the Ethical Trading Initiative, which would already suggest that they take this issue seriously (Appendix, 4).

They share the E.T.I. 'code' which "should reflect the practice in their supply chain" (ETI, 2013), and also consider *child labour* a 'non tolerance issue'.

In their *Sourcing Code* they mention issues such as *living wage*<sup>27</sup>, *protection from hazardous conditions*, *child labour detection*, *removal of children and reinstatement in education*, which 'must' be shared by their supplier (**Kids&Moms**, *Sourcing Code*, 2013: 1-5).

When asked how their work with E.T.I affects children, their *CSR Manager* explained:

[...] The ETI is focused on supply chain labour standards, so the main link ... would be ... the prohibition of child labour [...] (Appendix, 1)

**Kids&Moms** also have:

[...] a policy on child labour<sup>28</sup> but also on the remediation of child labour when it is found which is shared by all its suppliers [...] (Appendix, 1).

The *remediation* process mentioned in their '*sourcing code*' (2013) is an indicator of a *due diligence* approach, like those of suppliers' compliance monitoring, unannounced visits to factories and audit. Their auditing systems are used:

<sup>27</sup> UNICEF (2012b: 49) lists as one of the measure companies could take since "living wage should enable families to survive without recourse to child labour".

<sup>28</sup> This is integrated in their Sustainable Sourcing code (2013).

[...] to monitor the performance of [their] supply chain, which includes ensuring that children are not employed in the manufacture of [their] products [...] (Appendix, 1).

Moreover, the fact their suppliers share their child labour policy, would explain that *Kids&Moms* extend their commitment to principle 2 to their business relationships.

Children's lives are also affected by the work of their *eight ethical sourcing* managers working:

"[...] with suppliers and factories ... in Bangladesh, China and India to [...] make improvements to working conditions in the supply chain" (*Kids&Moms*, Annual Report, 2013: 36).

Their work with E.T.I, therefore, as the CRBP expert explains is a way to:

[...] ensure that child labour occurs less in its supply chain [...] (Appendix, 4).

However, no data is provided supporting their positive effect on *child labour* and *age verification mechanisms* are not explicitly mentioned. Despite this, being part of E.T.I, having a child labour policy, a sustainable sourcing code, various sourcing managers and *due diligence* systems that apply to children (Appendix, 1), would suggest that *Kids&Moms* commit to *Principle 2*.

Their practices, based also on the CRBP expert's comments (Appendix, 4) are an example of *responsibility to respect* since "their impact is maximised by working with third parties". However, *actual* data on their *concrete impact* on children would have given a better picture (Umlas, 2012).

*Kids&Moms* also adhere to various:

[...] Supply chain programmes, including the South India programme, which focuses on the impact of the garment sector on young women from Tamil Nadu [...] (Appendix, 1)

In Tamil Nadu, young people, especially women working under the *Sumangali scheme* have been mistreated through poor and harmful working conditions (E.T.I, 2013).

*Kids&Moms* have publicly expressed their support to an international campaign on this matter committing to monitoring transparency in their supply chain (BHRRC, 2013a). This denotes *commitment to support* and would endorse the idea that *Kids&Moms* recognise their:

[...] Responsibility towards all children, not just those whose parents shop in [their]

stores”(Appendix, 1).

Overall the companies’ disclosures coincides with Umlas’ (2012: 17) ‘*impression*’ that while businesses focus on principle 2, specific disaggregated data on *how* they effectively contribute to tackle the cause of child labour are “hard to find”

### 5.1.3

#### (3) Provide decent working conditions for young workers, parents and caregivers

This principle is relevant to MNCs, which have operations in various countries (UNICEF, 2012b) where many young workers “above the legal working age and under 18 years could be employed” (UNICEF, CSR, 2013). To assume their *responsibility to respect*, business should provide adequate *youth employment* and ensure young workers enjoy their basic human rights<sup>29</sup> taking into account their vulnerability<sup>30</sup> (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 20, UNICEF, CSR, 2013).

Providing “good working conditions for young workers”, promoting training, education and going beyond the laws requirements by “supporting workers in their roles of parents and caregivers”<sup>31</sup> denote *Commitment to support* (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 20 - 21). In this respect, apart from the previously examined reference to human rights and child labour, *young workers* are barely mentioned.

As the example of *Kids&Moms* shows, *responsibilities* for principles 2 and 3 largely overlap:

“[...] Young persons under 18 shall not be employed at night or in hazardous conditions [...]” (Sourcing code, 2013, 1- 5)

For instance, *Kids&Moms*’s ‘sourcing code’ covers rights, among which are those of living wages, collective bargaining and acceptable working hours. It also identifies some ‘*non tolerance issues*’, which are closely linked to the rights of *young workers* (UNICEF, 2012b, Umlas, 2012). Since the above ‘*conditions*’ apply to all workers (Sourcing code, 2013), this could be seen as a way to *provide decent work for young workers*, as also the *CRBP Expert* explains (Appendix, 4). However no specific data on *them* is provided, not even in their Annual Report, to better evaluate *Kids&Moms*’ approach. This, therefore, is an example of *partial responsibility to respect*, also considering that young workers are not mentioned in *Play’nGo* and *The Playground*

<sup>29</sup> Social participation, safe working conditions and protection from abuses are some of these (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 20 – 21)

<sup>30</sup> This includes having anti-harassment policies and endorsing their rights through “management representative” and trade union work (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 20 - 21)

<sup>31</sup> “Flexible working conditions and hour, provisions for pregnant women, parental leave, and facilitating access to good quality childcare ... and supporting the parental process”( Save the Children et al, 2012a: 20)

websites.

*Commitment to support* is, though, in place. Apart from the clearly linked case of **Kids&Moms** supporting young workers in Tamil Nadu, they also support “a Maternity hospital in Tirupur” and educational programs abroad and in the UK (Appendix, 1).

Support to parent’s or young employees seems a common practice.

### ***The Playground:***

[...] Deliver all legal requirements for supporting young workers<sup>32</sup> through sociable working hours and pay...and parents support such as Paternal, Maternal leave and flexible working hours (Appendix, 2)

While stress is put on compliance with the law, they also deliver their *commitment* through flexible arrangements and hours to accommodate students’ workers (Appendix, 4). **Play’nGo**’s parental support includes services that could positively impact on children such as “counseling services” for various matters and recovery problems and assistance to employees adopting a child” (Website, 2013). **Kids&Moms** pay “enhanced benefits for maternity and adoption leave”; provide tax-exempt childcare vouchers that parents can use in “child-minder and [...] nursery” (Website, 2013). Nonetheless, no specific details on who enjoys these benefits are given. Interestingly, companies support parents by providing various types of parental related “services”. **Play’nGo** have a section dedicated to *Maternity Leave* (Commercial Website, 2013) and *safety advice* to parents. Particularly, **Kids&Moms** developed an I-Phone App and have “facilities and specific in store events for pregnant mothers” (Annual Report, 2013: 35). They also give other parenting, pregnancy and breastfeeding related advice through their websites and events hosted in their store<sup>33</sup>. An example is their partnership with the Royal College of Midwives:

“[...] Midwife Catriona explains the importance of sterilizing baby’s bottles and feeding equipment” (**Kids&Moms**, Facebook, 27 August, 2013).

While only some of these can be considered full examples of *commitment to support* and find an exact place within the CRBP, all clearly indicate support towards the parental process. In terms of *commitment to support* **Play’nGo** financially support “employees who have been deployed”, help to provide *military mothers* with products and financial support through working with a charity, and help employees experiencing financial difficulties (**Play’nGo**, Website, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Young worker are people working in the retail shop floors rather than employed in their factories abroad.

<sup>33</sup> These are host in specific period of the year.

All in all, in line with Umlas (2012), it would seem that while examples of *commitment to support* exist, there is a lack of data on young workers, especially on those working in developing countries. Similarly, companies provide parental benefits in the *workplace* (Ipsos-Mori's, 2013c), but do not give detailed information on them (Umlas, 2012).

## 5.1.4

(5) Ensure that products and services are safe and seek supporting children's rights through them

The level of attention that companies' pay to children's safety seems to be much clearer.

In this respect, it is important to underline that, Principle 5, as both Umlas (2012) and the *Child Programme Manager* confirm, "is highly regulated by the State so it is likely that companies are particularly attentive to this responsibility" (Appendix 4). This is especially the case of the US where companies follow laws such as the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act, (hereafter CPSIA) defined as one of the toughest world safety regulations. However, similar standards also exist in the UK (GOV. UK, 2013). In addition this area is also connected to previous corporate scandals.

Resultantly, *The Playground* and *Play'nGo* have *ad hoc* 'safety' sections on their websites, the latter also have a safety mission statement. Emphasis is put on children's safety and on supporting *parents* to keep them safe.

"[...] Ensure the safety of the products ...and to provide ...the *safest* shopping environment. Part[s] of our mission ... is to help parents keep their kids safe" (*Play'nGo*, Website, 2013).

"[...] We are committed to ensuring our toys ... are safe for use [...]" (*The Playground*, Website, 2013)

*Kids&Moms* do not have an *ad hoc* safety section. This could be because while product safety is regulated, companies are not obliged to "report on compliance ...with these regulations" in their CSR reports and websites (Umlas, 2012: 27).

However, their *CSR Manager* recognises *product safety* as a key *responsibility*:

"[...] All retailers who sell products for children have a *responsibility* to ensure the *safety and suitability* of those products [...]" (Appendix, 1).

As explained by Save the Children et al (2012a: 24 - 25), the *responsibility to respect* for *Principle 5* vary from ensuring that (a) "testing and research of products and services is in line with relevant...standards", (b) products "are safe and do not cause any ...harm", (c) inappropriate or harmful products are not accessible to children (d) making sure "actions align with international standards". (e) Eliminating child discrimination<sup>34</sup> and preventing the risk that they could be "harmed through products" and services also denotes the *responsibility to respect*. Rather than just *recognising* their responsibility towards *product safety*, the companies emphasise keeping the workplace safe for children.

<sup>34</sup> This also includes freedom of expression and access to information.



*Play'nGo* highlight that:

"[...] All [their] stores' associates are trained to perform...the *Code Adam* procedure" for locating missing children (Website, 2013)

This practice is also present in *The Playground* as underlined by their *Manager* (Appendix, 2). *Kids&Moms* in presenting their '*play areas*' emphasise the safety of their environment:

"[...] Allow children ...[to] play in a friendly and safe environment" (Annual Report, 2013: 35).

The companies also stress their compliance with the law. *Kids&Moms* and *The Playground's* employees' confirm this aspect (Appendix, 1; Appendix, 4). References are made to CE safety mark and EC Toy Safety Directive (*The Playground*, Website, 2013) and CPSIA (*Play'nGo*, Website, 2013).

"[...] *The Playground*] only accepts products for sale that comply with current European legislation ... and ... conform to company quality standards" (Website, 2013).

*Kids&Moms* list failure to "meet its reputation for quality, safety and integrity" as a '*Risk*' and therefore highly invest in "product quality" (Annual Report, 2013: 32 - 45). They also have:

[...] An overall audit and risk management procedure, which covers the products and other impacts that [they] might have on children (Appendix, 1).

Additionally, in presenting their '*own brand*' safety products, emphasis is put on compliance with the law:

"[...] Our range of safety regulation-compliant infant car seats, ...mean you get optimal safety ... for your little ones" (*Kids&Moms*, Website, 2013)

Firms also take actions to limit "potential health dangers from ... use of products or services" and access to "harmful products" (UNICEF 2012b: 66). Reference are made to products' testing, elimination of unsafe stock from their shelves and also '*product recall*':

"[...] We aim to offer our customers products that are ... rigorously tested" (*Kids&Moms*, Website, 2013)

“[...] Manufacturers are required to test products for a variety of potential safety concerns including lead... and other hazards” (Play’nGo, Website, 2013).

“[...] The toys we sell will have been functionally and laboratory tested, to ensure they comply with the relevant Toy Safety Directives” (*The Playground*, Website, 2013).

While these seem to be in line both with the US and UK safety regulations, *Play’nGo* state to have “gone beyond existing standards” (*Play’nGo*, Website, 2013). In their ‘*safety site*’ they address issues, varying from *safety practice*, *product recalls*, to subscribe to a *safety email alert* (*Play’nGo*, Website, 2013). Additionally, they have a *safety wide policy* in place and in their ‘*product recall*’ section they list products eliminated from their shelves because of *potential danger* (e.g. *bath seats*) and those containing *hazardous chemicals*:

“[...] As of the end of 2008, all products made exclusively for [*Play’nGo*] are produced without the use of nickel-cadmium batteries”

Interestingly, Umlas (2012) cites Mattel as an example of best disclosure on product safety, for practice very similar to those of *Play’nGo*. While this is linked to the tough standards imposed by the CPSIA, complying “with whatever law is more stringent” denotes *responsibility to respect* as explained by the CRBP expert (Appendix, 4).

‘*Product Recall*’ issues are also addressed in the websites of *The Playground* (Website, 2013) and of *Kids&Moms* (2013).

It appears that the companies “understand the potential impact of products and services on children’s rights” and take action by “following national laws and standards” (UNICEF, 2012b: 67), trying also to limit children accessing those products. This would confirm the *responsibility to respect* for this principle. However it is clear *Play’nGo* stands out for performances and process in place.

An interesting *trend*, apart from *The Playground* whose advice on toys with small parts still fall under compliance with the UK law (GOV. UK, 2013), is that companies seem to go beyond the law, by giving *safety advice* to parents.

*Kids&Moms* and *Play’nGo* both have sections on safety advice for parents; the latter includes a *child safety online* section and a *program for parents* to be “safety advocates for their children” (*Play’nGo*, Website, 2013). *Kids&Moms* also give various safety instructions to parents both on *how* to use products and prevent dangers.

*Commitment to support* includes actions encouraging the enjoyment and “availability of products and services that are essential to children’s survival and development” through products, services and their distribution”. In this respect *Play’nGo* issue a ‘*differently able toy guide*’, which helps parents to find the right toys for their kids (Website, 2013). Since toys contribute to children’s development this is clearly an

example of their *commitment to support* achieved through the *creation and distribution* of a product.

*Play'nGo* (Website, 2013) and *Kids&Moms* (Website, 2013) partner with child safety related charities and support related events and *The Playground* are members of safety related organisations (Website, 2013). Furthermore, they all have *cause related marketing* (CRM) practice in place, which indicate *commitment to support* since they are targeted at supporting children's causes and rights through a product. They are all promoted in their means of communications as synthesised in *The Playground's* website:

"[...] With every ...bear sold we will donate £1,00 to Cash for Kids charity" (2013).

## 5.1.5

## (6) Use marketing and advertising that respects and supports children

Using communications and “marketing practice” in an appropriate manner, taking into “account children’s rights” is part of business responsibilities (UNICEF and CYFI, 2013: 22). The Toy industry should be particularly attentive to this issue (UNICEF 2012b: 70).

This area, in respect to others such as “food” is much less regulated and most marketing practice targeted at kids both “in the US and Europe seems to be overseen largely by industry-led, voluntary initiatives” (Umlas, 2012: 27).

Not surprisingly, companies are not required to publish the details about their marketing policies (Umlas, 2012) as the example of *Kids&Moms* shows:

[...] Marketing strategy and guidelines ... are not part of [their] public policies or information” (Appendix 1)

The author found that almost no information was communicated on this topic, and little was revealed through interviews. This also depends on the limitation of the methodology used, which did not allow accessing stores signage, labeling, internal documents, and other media where advertising takes place. Information collected were, thus, not enough to judge if these companies, in line with the *responsibility to respect* for this CRBP, ensure “communications ... do not negatively affect the children’s rights”, enhance discrimination or permit children to “make informed decisions ” (Save the Children et al, 2012: 26).

For instance, only *The Playground* mentioned their affiliation with the “British Toy and Hobby Association” explaining that they ensure:

“[...] Packaging and labeling are...factual, accurate and comply with all relevant legislation” (Website, 2013)

However, their *Manager* thinks that they do not invest in this area to a greater extent (Appendix, 2). No related information was found in *Play’nGo* and *Kids&Moms* websites. Conversely, *Kids&Moms* CSR Manager identifies ‘marketing ethically’ as a *responsibility* explaining their work to appropriately ‘communicate’ to children:

[...] ...Retailers who sell products for children have a responsibility to ensure the ... suitability of those products ... this include the marketing of those products (Appendix, 1)

[*Kids&Moms*] marketing team, work ... with our legal team to ensure that...materials are appropriate and legal...taking in to account the age of the children ... (Appendix, 1).

*Kids&Moms* CSR Manager explains that focusing on ‘*principle 6*’ is a usual practice for “companies dealing with children's products ...especially at the moment while UK companies are being asked about gender marketing” (Appendix, 1). Both the *CRBP Expert* and the *Programme Manager* also raised the issue of gender marketing matter (Appendices 3 and 4) as a responsibility of the toy sector. In this respect, the three companies seem to have been in the Media for marketing their toys by gender, despite this no related communication was found.

*Play'nGo* UK, however, have recently adhered to a campaign promoted by an ‘NGO’ against discrimination by gender, as publicised by the latter through their social media pages<sup>35</sup>. While this would be an example of using “marketing’ that is inclusive” and “raises awareness of and promotes children’s rights” denoting *commitment to support* (Save the Children et al, 2012a: 26), *Play'nGo* disclosed no information on this ‘agreement’. The author contacted the NGOs and discovered that the agreement was based on a meeting with *Play'nGo* Managing Director, and that:

[...] A number of stores committed to non-gendered signage ... but none of them have ever put out a press release on the subject [...] (NGOs’, Facebook, 8 September, 2013)

Interestingly, *The Playground* also seem to have been the target of a social media campaign which could be linked to the decision of the company to change their in store signage. The company, however, issued a press release explaining that there was no connection between the campaign and the changing of their store directories since it was part of a pre-planned store refit (Appendix, 2).

While this would confirm the *lack of communications*’ on these issues, interestingly the companies in their ‘commercial’ websites (2013) still divide toys by gender<sup>36</sup>. Nevertheless, the already mentioned CRM ‘campaigns’ and *Play'nGo* ‘Differently able toy guide’ would denote *commitment to support*. The latter, however, while an example of inclusive marketing, it is also a way to comply with “The Competition Act” under which firms, in the USA, cannot discriminate customers through products (Kotler, 2009). The role of regulation is, thus, not to underestimate. Lastly the companies use their *social media* pages and websites to involve people in the charitable causes they support. *Play'nGo* for instance support *children fighting cancer* utilising their website as a platform to help children interested in supporting the cause to realise their own fundraising event. These activities, despite clashing with the lack of communications on the issue, as the *CRBP expert* confirms (Appendix, 4) would denote *commitment to support*.

<sup>35</sup> The author noticed the ‘news’ since the NGO twitted on *Play'nGo*’s UK twitter page.

<sup>36</sup> Specifically while *The Playground* seem to have a more inclusive way of categorizing toys, a search bar, dividing the toys by gender is still available.

### 5.1.6

#### Summary

The above snapshot shows *how* the companies, to different extents, recognise and ‘assume’ their essential responsibilities towards children. Due to the difference between them, and to the contextual nature of CSR, their approaches vary (Table, 5). Regardless, there was no complete adherence between what companies do and disclose and what the CRBP ‘recommend’. This depends also on the fact that these firms have not formally adopted the CRBP and only *Kids&Moms* uses them as a general guidance, when possible, for their actions (Appendix, 1). Notwithstanding, all the companies seem to be *committed to support* children (Table, 5) through “voluntary actions”, programs and charity work (Save the Children, 2012a: 4-5). There are indicators (Appendix, 2) to suggest that rather than just size and Media attention, the regulatory frameworks impact their activities. Similarities, some of which also align with Umlas’ findings (2012), were also encountered:

- (a) *Absence of a child related policy*
- (b) *Scarcity of information on young workers*
- (c) *No in-depth elaboration on family related benefits*
- (d) *Promotion of some parents friendly activities, which do not find exact collocation in the CRBP*
- (d) *No communications on ethical marketing practices despite commitment to support in place*
- (e) *Focus on tackling child labour with no data on actual results*
- (f) *Stress on compliance with the law with regard to ‘product and service’ safety*
- (g) *Charitable work mostly linked to children’s causes*
- (h) *Emphasis put on charitable giving activities, which were also promoted through social media*

Taking a cue from Table 5, which summarises companies’ ‘features’, the author will try to delineate the companies’ *approach* to children (*question 2*) with reference to the

quoted Zadek's model (2004).

**TABLE 5**  
Multinationals Children's Retailers & Compliance with the CRBP based on the analysed communications means

+ Compliance \* Partial compliance - Non compliance n/a Insufficient information

Children's Rights & Business Principles	Multinationals Children's Retailers & CRBP Adherence					
	Kids&Moms		Play'nGo		The Playground	
	Responsibility to respect	Commitment to support	Responsibility to respect	Commitment to support	Responsibility to respect	Commitment to support
1) Meeting responsibility and Commitment	—	+	—	+	—	*
2) Contribute to eliminate child labour in operations and relationships	+	+	*	—	—	—
3) Provide decent work for young workers, parents and caregivers	* n/a	+	n/a	+	n/a	+
5) Ensure products & Service are safe and support children through them	+	*	+	+	+	*
6) Use Marketing & Advertising that respects & supports kids	n/a	*	n/a	*	n/a	*

Source: own creation, 2013

## 5.1.7

**Companies' approaches and features***(Question 2)*<sup>37</sup>

As mentioned in the methodology, these three retailers are presumed to have in place an *integrated* approach to child- focused CSR, especially with the increased attention NGOs and other civil society organisation are paying to the debate between '*Business and Children's Rights*'. However, while there are no integrated approaches in place, they all seem to be at different stages of Zadek's 'model (2004).

**Play'nGo**

**Compliance:** "We'll do just as much as we have to" (Zadek, 2004: 126)

*Play'nGo* have some *best practice* such as the presence of an overall *company safety wide policy* and the related procedures in place to ensure children's safety. Moreover, they follow the CTSCA stages and promote 'integration' through their *Toy guide for differently able kids*, (Zadek, 2004, Crane and Kazmi, 2010).

This could mean they recognise specific responsibilities to children and assume them in a systematic manner. The company also has various examples of *commitment to support* regarding the parenting process, CRM campaigns and extensive work with charities.

On the other hand, it seems that the various US laws, previously mentioned, (as well as Media and NGOs' attention) play a *key* role in determining most of their best practice.

Both *Principles 2* and *5*, in the USA, are subject to regulations (CTSCA and CPSIA), with which *Play'nGo* complies. Furthermore, there are corporate scandals both for product safety and child labour.

This idea also would find confirmation with reference to principle 6. The company display disjointed practice (e.g. adhering to a marketing gender campaign and not communicating it, but having *best practice* in place), and this could find justification in the absence of laws regulating this area. Similarly, a clear example of inclusive marketing practice (*The Differently able toy guide*) is also a way to comply with "The

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<sup>37</sup> The combination of the first part of analysis and data gathered through interviews' '*findings*' and the literature review, helped in understanding *the companies general approach to child focused CSR* (with respect to the 5 analysed *principles*) making reference to Zadek's five steps framework (2004).



Competition Act” under which US companies cannot discriminate clients through products (Kotler, 2009). Additionally, no mention to young workers or supply chain’s work in developing countries, clearly interconnected with their operations, is made. The space given to ‘*child labour issues*’ considering their size and operations is also too narrow in comparison to other issues.

Therefore, based on the limited accessibility of information it seems that, as Zadek states (2004: 126), this firm, with regards to children “*ensure that [they] don’t do what [they agreed] not to do*”.

While aware of their responsibilities towards children, *Play’nGo*, especially considering their size and resources, seem to be barely at a *compliance* level. Children’s investment seems to still be “understood as a cost of doing business” and it becomes useful for safeguarding the company’s “reputation and reducing the risk of litigation” (Zadek, 2004: 126). Despite investing a great amount of money in charity work also by hosting fundraising events in store and foundation work, *commitment to support*, while highly encouraged, cannot fill responsibility gaps, which *Play’nGo* still seem to have. This is especially with regard to work in the supply chain where they could have a *direct* or *indirect* impact on children (Appendix, 4).

### *Kids&Moms*

*Evolving towards a Managerial stage: It’s part of doing business* (Zadek, 2004)

*Kids&Moms*’ have not adopted the CRBP, however they use it when possible to guide actions within their business (Appendix, 1). This is reflected in their activities, which although being multifaceted, are not always managed consistently. They assume their *responsibility to respect* in two out of the five CRBP analysed and partially cover also the rights of young workers (Principle 3). These activities seem to be planned and managed in a more systematic manner (e.g. child labour policy, auditing regime on products impact etc.) than the remaining CRBP. Nevertheless, they display *commitment to support* across the five CRBP (Table, 5) and, in contrast to the other two companies; they particularly focus on the ‘family and parenting programs’ and specifically on supply chain work and welfare initiatives impacting children in the developing (and developed) countries where they operate (Appendix, 1).

Interestingly, opposite to *Play’nGo*, *Kids&Moms* emphasise *more* on *supply chain* work and on the ‘family and parenting process’ (Annual Report, 2013) and *less* on *safety* as confirmed by their value chain-focused CSR mission and their family oriented vision

(Appendix, 1, Table 2).

On the one hand, the stress on supply chain work seems to be linked to their previous *sweatshop* records, which could find confirmation on the fact that *managing risk and reputation* is identified among the four main reasons for investing in children (Appendix, 1). On the other hand, the stress placed on the parenting process and activities targeted at mothers as well as having activities across most of the 10 CRBP, would suggest a broader approach (Appendix, 1). In addition, they partner with various organisations and government bodies on programmes indirectly benefitting children (Annual Report, 2013). Most of the voluntary children's projects they invest in are selected "based on the proximity to [their] operations" (Appendix, 1). This would mean that the retailer, while embracing programs strictly connected to *its own* reputational exposure (Zadek, 2004), also considers the '*variety of contexts*' in which it operates and its impact on children. And while it is true that *commitment to support* cannot counterbalance for any harms caused, they also have a *due diligence process* in place covering children. Similarly, they work with Save the Children because of:

[...] The global spread of [the NGO] work, its overlap with their markets and supply chains, their reputation for utilisation of fundraising income and since this helps improving the engagement of staff and customers in such programmes, due to the link between their operations and stakeholders, and those of Save the Children [...] (Appendix, 1).

This clearly demonstrates, as they state, that the reasons they invest on children are diverse, namely because "it's the right thing to do", it is part of their style of doing business, enhances their brand and also, but not exclusively, because it helps to protect their reputation from scandals of wrong doing (Appendix, 1).

Whereas, there is an over-emphasis on a *welfare* approach to children, a lack of communication both on marketing to them (while practice seems to be in place) as well as on young workers issues, they seem to have started identifying exclusive responsibilities to children. The latter are also identified as specific stakeholders (Annual Report, 2013), which would confirm that (Appendix, 1) they seem to be evolving towards a managerial approach.

### *The Playground*

***Defensive:*** "It's not our job to fix that" (Zadek, 2004:126)

*The Playground* is the smallest of the three companies analysed and their practice seem to be fragmented across all the five principles, with a few example of *commitment to*

support. *Child focused CSR:*

“[...] is not an issue that [this] company “addresses to a greater extent” (Appendix, 2).

Their size and resources, especially in comparison to their competitors could be one of the reasons for limited investment in children as well as their generally *unmethodical* approach towards CSR (Appendix, 2). The latter, is also a factor impacting on their child focused CSR.

Apart from this, their *positive practices* seem to be limited in the way they allow the support children. Despite some practices being in place, namely *flexible arrangements* for young people working in their stores and working parents and programs with children’s charities, these do not seem sufficient. Their charitable programs, apart from the single case of CRM, are limited in scope and include: money collection, irregular donations and “allowing charity fundraising events to be held in their stores”, and also toy donations to charities (Appendix, 2, Website, 2013).

Not surprisingly, practices as well as their communications seems to be more organised with respect to *Principle 5*, which is regulated by the State and appears to confirm that the way they help support children is “limited in scope” and with “minimum involvement and only when required to by law” (Appendix, 2).

Despite tackling child labour, it is seen as a key responsibility of all retailers (Appendix, 2), their approach seems insufficient with little communications on their website and a few indicators to suggest that they have some ‘processes’ in place. However, no “information on the amount of auditing and their successfulness” are given nor do they seem to invest in “activities in any local communities in contact with the supply chain” which may have been related (Appendix, 2). It would seem that their communication is a mere act of *showing*. These factors would denote a reactive approach. To confirm this, there are indicators such as the act of *dropping a supplier* (Appendix, 2) not delivering acceptable working conditions, despite as also the CRBP expert explains is not always the most sustainable solution (Appendix, 4) and their preference not to publicise any charitable activities (Appendix, 2). Their attitude towards children is similar, to put it with Zadek (2004), to companies like Shell in the 1990s, denying any involvement in any type of issue connected with their reputation. Typical of this approach is also the releasing communications and press releases usually issued by their marketing and legal department rejecting any allegations (Zadek, 2004: 126). Interestingly, after being the target of a campaign on unethical gender marketing and having changed in store signage the company issued a press release explaining that there was no connection between the campaign and the

changing of their store directories since it was part of a pre-planned store refurbishment (Appendix, 2). The actions taken in relation to their (limited) investment on children, indicate that this company are mainly concerned with “*Protecting Brand and Reputation from scandals things going wrong*” (Appendix, 2). Followed by legislative pressure, suppliers’ requirements and brand enhancement. Interestingly, the author had previously arranged an interview with the Executive Assistant of the CEO and member of the CSR committee. The interview was postponed three times and then cancelled by email, after having access to the questionnaire. This could confirm a reactive approach and a fear of reputational risk.

## 6.

### Conclusion

This paper, among other aims, attempted to bridge together the ‘*Business and Human Rights*’ and the ‘*Business and Children’s rights*’ debates. Reference to the UN ‘Protect, Respect, Remedy’ framework, and precisely to the concept of *responsibility to respect*, was useful to do so since this is “the linchpin of the two discourses” (Wettstein, 2012: 740). *Responsibility to respect* spells out that corporations should be limiting impacting as well as actively endorsing children’s human rights. Reference was made to the nature of the rights of children and to the relation between children and corporations making it clear how the enjoyment of children’s rights also depends on firms’ behaviour. Moreover, business responsibilities were also outlined through the reference to the CRBP and ethical theories. The concept of *responsibility to respect* was the *continuum* of the whole area touched upon.

In addition, the main aim of this research was to disclose whether the three analysed multinational toy retailers assume their ‘basic’ responsibilities towards children in line with those that are the CRBP’s guidelines. The study also tried to delineate their general attitude towards child focused CSR, based on the available information.

Due to the limited methodology, this research did not allow exploration of their approach towards children in an exhaustive way (Umlas, 2012). The present *picture* therefore contains what the author, instead of findings, calls ‘*features*’. These helped gaining a deeper perspective, on how corporations assume responsibilities towards children rights and welfare.

Rather than focusing merely on the areas of child labour and ethical marketing on which there already is abundant research, the picture revealed different shades of

their relations with children. For each CRBP there is not just one, but many diverse responsibilities and approaches that companies can take. It is this deeper perspective that brought value and significance to the general discourse on 'children and business'.

The main 'discoveries' of my research would confirm part of the findings from the literature review. Despite the three companies having diverse approaches, and to different extents manage or attempt to manage some of their responsibilities towards children, none of them seem to have embedded children's rights and welfare in their strategy or approach.

*Kids&Moms*, however, while not being the largest in size and resources (Table, 2) seems to appreciate the need to adopt exclusive responsibilities towards children and, even if still fragmented in places, presents a better approach to children.

Accordingly *Kids&Moms* affirms, like 29% of the firms surveyed in the Unicef and Ipsos-MORI's research (Ipsos-MORI, 2013c), that children's rights and welfare are matters that "they address alongside several others" in their *sustainability* agenda (Appendix, 2).

Conversely *The Playground*, bringing up the rear, does not address children's rights and welfare "to any great extent" (Ipsos-Mori, 2013b, Appendix, 2). And Play'nGo addresses them as much as it has to.

Despite their difference in style, the first part of the analysis helped outlining some analogies in "practice and communications" of child focused CSR common to the three companies. These, as Sherman (2009:11) suggests, are likely to be found in companies belonging to the same industry "since they face similar challenges and risks".

While specific to these firms, part of these seem to match some of the points made in the literature review, as well as overlap with Umlas's '*findings*' (2012).

To start with, none of the companies seem to have formally adopted the CRBP or make explicit reference to any child related policy that would have suggested a strategic and fully integrated approach to children.

Similarly while data on 'young workers' (apart for the case of *Kids&Moms* whose code and practice indirectly includes young workers) were lacking, and workplace related responsibilities like parents flexible working hours and benefits addressed, companies do not spell out their actual contribution to tackling child labour.

Moreover, while they all market to children, there was no communication on policies or efforts in terms of adherence to any ethical marketing practices, despite commitment to support being in place.

While, this latter '*discovery*' would confirm that most of the companies do not invest

much on *marketplace* activities (Ipsos-Mori, 2013c) as seen in the literature review; their broad focus on product safety would be against this trend. However, in this respect, there are indicators to suggest that the presence of laws in the first area and the absence in the second also impacts firms' performances.

Similarly special emphasis is put on charitable activities, which are not only widely communicated through their websites, but also social media. These '*discoveries*' while informative would also confirm some common *gaps* in assuming their 'basic' responsibilities.

In the second part, we have looked at the general approach of the companies. While both Crane and Kazmi (2010), based on their groundbreaking research, expected these firms to start assuming their child specific responsibilities in a more integrated fashion, after three years of their research, and despite the escalation of the debate, as the CRBP and other events show, none of them has a cohesive approaches.

Nonetheless, it is important to point out that differences exists between the firms' approaches to child focused CSR, as the contextual dimension of CSR would confirm. Companies take different approaches. And while size and resources could be a factor for *The Playground's* performance, whose approach is still reactive and defensive with a minimum level of involvement and minimum responsibilities assumed, this does not seem to be the case with regards to *Play'nGo's* performance. While the largest of the three firms, *Play'nGo* does not seem to assume many responsibilities strictly related to their sector, its *best practice* seems to mainly find justification in the stricter regulatory framework in force in the US which, as we have seen, regulates the areas in which their performances seem to excel. They remain stuck to a *compliance* level where they seem to not to do *what is expressly required*. Lastly, the case of *Kids&Moms*, which seems to assume responsibilities towards children both from a moral and instrumental perspective (Appendix, 1), would suggest some progress. Although their approach to children's rights is only "partly established" (Appendix, 1) the company appears to have a better approach in place, despite being smaller than *Play'nGo* and to balance both the instrumental and the moral dimension for investing in children. While none of the companies seem to excel, the case of *Kids&Moms* could be an indicator, that in the coming years, 'toy companies', could be undertaking more responsible approaches towards children. Clearly more research is required to test this assumption. As well as to better investigate the link between size and performance, since it could be a determinant factor for a small enterprise like *The Playground*, while the case of *Kids&Moms* in comparison to *Play'nGo* disconfirms this. Moreover, further research should focus on the way companies assume all of the ten principles spelt out in the CRBP framework.

Similarly, it would be interesting to see if firms, like *Kids&Moms*, also specialising in products for expectant mothers, have developed a better 'caring' attitude towards children. Other research suggestions could be focused on the link between the media attention given to child scandals and corporations' performance, to see if a possible '*agenda setting effect*' could be a hypothesis for a lack of child focused CSR. Lastly, more research in general is needed in Academia, where the author could only find one paper addressing various responsibilities corporations have to children. This could help escalate the debate on business and children, the latter as we have seen in the literature, as the firms' most delicate constituency need to be put at the core of the CSR agenda.

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## Appendix 1



### Interview with Kids&Moms' CSR Manager

#### *Pre-interview phase*

*In this phase I presented myself, my dissertation's aims and the stage that it is at, all through email. I explained the information needed and a series of emails followed before a formal email interview, organized in three stages took place. Clarifying questions were sent, but only some of them were answered. The interviewee was also thanked for the support offered.*

1. Could you briefly explain what is your role in the company and how this relates to CSR?
2. Could you please give a brief description of the company with reference to its growth, mission and brand expansion?
3. Could you give a brief definition of CSR according to Kids&Moms values/mission statement?
4. What are the key areas of CSR your company invests in?
5. Could you briefly explain who are your company's very key stakeholders and why?
6. Why do you think companies, and specifically children's retailers, should assume responsibilities towards children?
7. Why do Kids&Moms invest in children?
8. How do Kids&Moms choose what children projects/ practice to invest in?
9. Do Kids&Moms have a children's rights/human rights or related policy?
10. What are the main areas of children's rights your company invest on through policy/performances?
11. Do you have any audit system in place to monitor impact on children?

12. Has your company developed/ implemented a child protection code of conduct or related to the human right of children?
13. Your company relates to the work of ETI, how does this link to children?
14. Do Kids&Moms work with governments, partners, suppliers or other third parties to promote programs that enhance, directly or indirectly, children's rights?
15. Anything else you would like to add?
16. Why do 'Kids&Moms' invest in children? Please choose a maximum of 4 (from 1- 4 in order of priority)<sup>38</sup>

It's the right thing to do/ Part of our way of doing business
To invest in the community
It has a good impact on reputation
Children are the future of society
To attract a motivated workforce
Legislation/ government pressure
Protecting Brand and Reputation from scandals things going wrong
Suppliers' requirements
Pressure from customers/NGOs/other stakeholders
Pressure from employees

19. Which of the following reflects the situation of your company and the inclusion of CSR issues. Please choose one (X)<sup>39</sup>

Not something we invest in
We are starting to invest in CSR
We plan to invest in CSR
Partly established
Consolidated within the business

20. Which of the following reflects the situation of your company in terms of your child-focused CSR. Please choose one (X)<sup>40</sup>

Not something we invest in
We are starting to invest in CSR targeted to children
We plan to invest in CSR targeted at children
Partly established
Consolidated within the business

21. If you address CSR targeted at children which of the following reflects your company situation. Please choose one<sup>41</sup>

Children are key to our CSR practice
CSR focused at Children is an issue that we address together with several other issues
We have some activities focused on children

<sup>38</sup> Reproduced from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c), question 17, Pag 8

<sup>39</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c), question 3, pag 3

<sup>40</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c) question 12, Pag 5

<sup>41</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c: 5) question 12, page 9

Not an issue addressed to a greater extent with respect to other
Not an issue addressed to a greater extent
Others

Comments.....

22. In terms of CSR practice could you tell me whether your company has in place (IP) or plans (PT) to have in place or is not an immediate concern (NN) any of these?<sup>42</sup>

Policy/ code/Other documents/ Regarding CSR	
CSR committee	
CSR officer or designated	
CSR -Role related to children	
Publish target "of commitments to enhance company performances"	
CSR corporate reporting online and Hard copy	
"Requirements"/ qualifying Criteria for Suppliers or with respect to their CSR practice	
"Employees training on CSR	
Other, please specify	

23. Are you familiar with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human rights?<sup>43</sup>  
YES NO

Does your company takes them into consideration/ makes reference to them in their CSR activities? If yes please chose an option<sup>44</sup>

Not something we invest in
Not yet in place, but planned
Something we plan to invest in
"Partly established"
Consolidated within the business

Other.....

24. Are you familiar with the Children's Rights and Business Principles?<sup>45</sup>

YES NO

25. Does your company takes them into consideration/ makes reference to them in its CSR activities please choose they are<sup>46</sup>

Not something we invest in
Not yet in place, but planned
Something we plan to invest in
Partly established
Consolidated within the business

<sup>42</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c: 5) 9, page 4

<sup>43</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c:), question 10, page 5

<sup>44</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c:), question 10, page 5

<sup>45</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c:), question 27, page 13

<sup>46</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c:), question 27, page 13

Other.....

26. Lastly could you please tell me which of the following issues your company is investing / plans to invest in the immediate future / plans to invest but not immediately / does not concern my business (please note that not necessarily all of them are linked to your company sector)<sup>47</sup>

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Invests</i>	<i>Plans to invest soon</i>	<i>Plans to invest but not in the immediate future</i>	<i>Does not apply</i>
Providing "parent employees / care givers" With benefit and good conditions such "As parental leave, childcare Facilities, flexible working Arrangements"				
Limiting its environmental impact				
Supporting young people to develop skills and increase their employability potential				
Investing in children's educational activities and programs in various institutions (e.g. school)				
Investing in educational activities benefitting the community in general				
Helping community in need (ex. Aid relief, affected by natural disasters)				
"Developing Product and service not dangerous/safe for children "				
Working to tackle or solve child labour in value chain				
Investing in Ethical marketing/ advertising appropriate for children				
"Working to ensure that Unsuitable products or services are not sold to children"				
Developing products or services with a social benefit to Children				

### *Clarifying questions*

27. Could you please clarify why the mission statement you stated in the questionnaire is different from what it is stated in the company Annual Report, 2013?

<sup>47</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c:), question 9, page 4



28. In your previous answers you made reference to ethical marketing practice in place. I could not see any information regarding this on the website. Could you please elaborate on this and possibly provide me with a link, material or information with regard to this aspect?

***Closing the interview***

- ✓ *Thanked the informant*
- ✓ *Reiterate their anonymity*
- ✓ *Offered a copy of dissertation after conclusion*

## Appendix 2



### Interview with The Playground Manager

#### *Pre-interview phase*

*In this phase I presented my dissertation's aims, the stage and myself that it is at, I explained the information needed and then the interview took place.*

*The interviewee was also thanked for the support offered.*

1. Can you briefly explain what your role is in the company and how this relates to CSR?
2. Could you please give a brief description of the company with reference to its growth, mission and brand expansion?
3. Does The Playground invest in CSR or started to do so? How much are your CSR practice developed?
4. Could you give a brief definition of CSR according to The Playground values/mission statement?
5. What are the key areas of CSR your company invests in?
6. Could you briefly explain who are your company's key stakeholders and why?
7. Children are one of the main constituencies related to your company business. Could you give a definition of children?
8. Why do you think companies, and specifically children's retailers, should assume responsibilities towards children?
9. Why do 'The Playground' invest in children?<sup>48</sup> Please chose a maximum of 4 (from 1- 4 in order of priority)<sup>49</sup>

It's the right thing to do/ Part of our way of doing business
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To invest in the community
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<sup>48</sup> Reproduced from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c), question 17, page 8

<sup>49</sup> Reproduced from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c), question 17, Page 8

It has a good impact on reputation
Children are the future of society
To attract a motivated workforce
Legislation/ government pressure
Protecting Brand and Reputation from scandals things going wrong
Suppliers' requirements
Pressure from customers/NGOs/other stakeholders
Pressure from employees

10. How do The Playground choose what children projects/ practice to invest in?
11. Do *The Playground* have a formal children's rights/human rights or related policy?
12. How do you think your company helps protecting and supporting children?
13. What are the reasons why a children's retailer should be attentive to children? And why *The Playground* does so?
14. Do you have any audit system in place to monitor impact on children?
15. Has your company developed/ implemented a child protection code of conduct or commit to the human right of children?
16. Do *The Playground* partner with suppliers or other third parties to promote programs that enhance, directly or indirectly, children's rights?
17. Anything else you would like to add?
18. Which of the next reflects the situation of your company and the inclusion of CSR issues<sup>50</sup>. Please choose one (X)

Not something we invest in
We are starting to invest in CSR
We plan to invest in CSR
Partly established
Consolidated within the business

20. Which of the following reflects the situation of your company in terms of your child-focused CSR<sup>51</sup>. Please choose one (X)

Not something we invest in
We are starting to invest in CSR target to children
We plan to invest in CSR targeted at children
Partly established
Consolidated within the business

21. If you address CSR targeted at children which of the following reflects your company situation. Please choose one<sup>52</sup>. Please choose one (X)

Children are key to our CSR practice
--------------------------------------

<sup>50</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c: 5) Adapted from question 9, page 4

<sup>51</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c) question 12, Pag 5

<sup>52</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c:) question 12, page 9

CSR focused at Children is an issue that we address together with several other issues
We have some activities focused on children
Not an issue addressed to a greater extent with respect to other
Not an issue addressed to a greater extent

Comments.....

22. In terms of CSR practice could you tell me whether your company has in place (IP) or plans (PT) to have in place or is not an immediate concern (NN) any of these?<sup>53</sup>

Policy/ code/ Other documents Regarding CSR	
CSR committee	
CSR officer or designated	
CSR -Role related to children	
Publish target "of commitments to enhance company performances"	
"CSR corporate reporting online and Hard copy"	
"Requirements"/qualifying Criteria for Suppliers or with respect to their CSR practice	
"Employees training on CSR	
Other, please specify	

23. Are you familiar with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human rights?<sup>54</sup>  
YES NO

24. Does your company take them into consideration/ makes reference to them in their CSR<sup>55</sup> activities? If yes, please choose an option.

Not something we invest in
Not yet in place, but planned
Something we plan to invest in
"Partly established"
Consolidated within the business

Other.....

25. Finally before today were you familiar with the Children's Rights and Business Principles?<sup>56</sup>  
YES NO

26. If yes "Does your company takes them into consideration/ makes reference to them in their CSR activities? If yes please chose an option<sup>57</sup>

Not something we invest in
Not yet in place, but planned
Something we plan to invest in
"Partly established"
Consolidated within the business

<sup>53</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c:) question 9, page 4

<sup>54</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c:) question 10, page 5

<sup>55</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c:) question 10, page 5

<sup>56</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c:) question 27, page 13

<sup>57</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c:) question 27, page 13

Other.....

27. Lastly could you please tell me which of the following issues your company is investing / plans to invest in the immediate future / plans to invest but not immediately / does not concern my business (please note that not necessarily all of them are linked to your company sector)<sup>58</sup> (X)

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Invests</i>	<i>Plans to invest soon</i>	<i>Plans to invest but not in the immediate future</i>	<i>Does not apply</i>
Providing "parent employees / care givers" With benefit and good conditions such "As parental leave, childcare Facilities, flexible working Arrangements"				
Limiting its environmental impact				
Supporting young people to develop skills and increase their employability potential				
Investing in children's educational activities and programs in various institutions (e.g. school)				
Investing in educational activities benefitting the community in general				
Helping community in need (ex. Aid relief, affected by natural disasters)				
"Developing Product and service not dangerous / safe for children "				
Working to tackle or solve child labour in value chain				
Investing in Ethical marketing / advertising appropriate for children				
"Working to ensure that Unsuitable products or services are not sold to children"				
Developing products or services with a social benefit to Children				

### *Clarifying questions*

<sup>58</sup> Adapted from Ipsos-MORI, (March, 2013c:), question 9, page 4

28. Could you briefly elaborate on why the company stopped selling the voice changer toy?
29. Are you aware of any particular practice in terms of ethical marketing or advertising to children?
30. What does the company do in terms of ensuring product and working environment protects children?
31. Does the Playground have in place any program/initiative that support young workers as well as parents and caregivers?
32. The Playground was target of campaign gender marketing. Could you please elaborate on the details?
33. Did the company change the signage? Has this campaign impacted on the company policy?

***Closing the interview***

- ✓ *Thanked the informant*
- ✓ *Reiterated their anonymity*
- ✓ *Offered a copy of dissertation after conclusion*

## Appendix 3



### Interview with the Child Programme Manager

#### *Pre-interview phase*

*In this phase, I presented myself, my dissertation's aims; I explained the information needed all through email. Then a formal Skype interview was arranged. In the pre-interview we discussed in general about the lack of work on this topic until formal interview started. The interviewee was also thanked for the support offered.*

1. Could you explain what the situation with regard to companies' general approach towards children's rights at now?
2. Would you think are we getting to the point yet when there is correspondence between CRBP and companies reporting?
3. So what has been the impact of the CRBP on the companies' process and performances?
4. Do you think that the area companies still invest the most in remains child labour?
5. CRBP 5 seems to be a major focus for companies, in my findings. Any comment?
6. Do you think that gaps in communication reflect gaps in performances with respect to children's rights? Or is it because companies simply do not communicate, since this area has been put in the CSR agenda very recently?

#### *Closing the interview*

- ✓ *Thanked the informant*
- ✓ *Reiterated their anonymity*
- ✓ *Offered a copy of dissertation after conclusion*

## Appendix 4



### Interview with the CRBP expert

#### *Pre-interview phase*

*In this phase I presented myself, my dissertation's aims, the stage that it is at, I explained the information needed and a series of email follow before a formal email interview took place. The interviewee was also thanked for the support offered.*

1. Could you give some information on your role, your company and the work you have done with regard to the CRBP?
  
2. What do you think are the responsibilities that toys and related sectors cannot avoid to assume with reference to the CRBP?
  
3. Have you done or are you aware about any specific work done with respect to testing the CRBP in toy companies?
  
4. Can compliance with the law still be considered *responsibility to respect* if through following that law companies support tackling child labour and have in place *due diligence* measures such as monitoring and auditing?
  
5. Many companies are members of the Ethical trading initiative, have child labour policies in place and supply chain auditing and monitoring. Can this be considered an indicator of the work the company does to tackle child labour?
  
6. What are examples of *corporate responsibility to respect* children in terms of principle 5?
  
7. Can the use of social media in promoting charitable causes be considered as an example of *responsibility to respect* or commitment to support with respect of ethical marketing?
  
9. What other responsibilities with respect to the *Children's Rights and Business Principles* are particularly related to Toy and Children's retailers?

#### *Closing the interview*



- ✓ *Thanked the informant*
- ✓ *Reiterated anonymity*
- ✓ *Offered a copy of dissertation after conclusion*

## Appendix 5



## Dissertation Ethic form

School of Business, Economics and Informatics

Department of Management

Postgraduate Dissertation Ethical Form

<b>Name(s) of applicant</b>	Mariateresa Dorian Scardino
<b>Supervisor(s)</b>	Sue Konzelmann
<b>Project Title</b>	The Business of Children's Rights: a snapshot of responsibilities and approaches of major children's retailers

**Attachments:**

Indicate the attachments enclosed with this form (please tick boxes):

Information sheet:  Consent Form:  Questionnaire:  Other:

**Description and rationale or proposed project**

*The research project aims to understand how famous children's retailers assume their responsibilities towards children.*

To answer these questions, my study will be using two different techniques

- Content analysis of their available corporate disclosure, particularly information available on their corporate website, annual/ CSR report when present, Facebook and Twitter page and other relevant material found on their website.
- Semi-structured interview with employees, in CSR related functions, belonging to the companies' analysed/ and with NGO's and non- profit experts with experience in the field of 'Business and children's rights'.

Whether the interviews were performed face to face, through email or Skype, participants were informed and briefed about the research, its aims and ethical protocols in line with Birkbeck University of London's guidelines for Ethic in research were followed.

Ethical issues:

With regard to the interviews, the author does not disclose, in any case the name of interviewees nor those of their employers, but only their roles within the organisation and their link to Corporate responsibility related function will be reported.

Interviewees were briefed and informed about the research and about their rights to refuse to answer to certain questions, or withdraw their support from the project and ask for clarifications at any time.

In one cases tape-recording was used, with the authorisation of the informant.

The transcription of tape-recorded interview was also sent to the interviewee before its use for the research project.

**I confirm that the proposed project conforms with College and professional ethical guidelines, as indicated: (please circle)**

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Access to participants:                          | YES |
| 2. Informed consent:                                | YES |
| 3. Anonymity and Confidentiality:                   | YES |
| 4. Potential Harm to Participants:                  | YES |
| 5. Potential Harm to Researcher(s)                  | YES |
| 6. Potential Harm to the College:                   | YES |
| 7. Participants' right to decline to take part:     | YES |
| 8. Uses of the information (including publication): | YES |
| 9. Conflicts of Interest:                           | YES |

**Classification of project (please circle):**

ROUTINE

*Signed by:*

The applicant: Mariateresa Dorian Scardino..... Date: .....

Supervisor: (if applicable)..... Date: .....

Department Research Ethics Officer: ..... Date: .....

## Appendix 6

### Table of contents

**Table 3**

#### Summary of methodology

Type of technique Used	"Unit of analysis"	Aims
Content analysis	Companies means of corporate disclosure mainly websites and social media as well as Kids&Moms Ethical codes and Sustainability/ Annual Report 2013	Delineate the way companies align with the CRBP
	Mean of companies disclosure likely to inform on firms ESG Performances	
Two Semi-structured Interviews with Play'nGo and Kids&Moms's Employees	CSR related Functions/and knowledge	To elaborate on aspects emerged from content analysis to better understand CRBP alignment, and clarify on other aspects. To gather additional information to interpret data and try to understand more about the orientation/ management style towards children's rights (Zadek, 2004)
Two Open ended interviews With Children's rights and business experts	Working knowledge Of CRBP	
	Purposefully chosen due to their role as <i>special informants</i>	

Source: Own creation, 2013