INTRODUCTION

In the movie Monsters, Inc., there are two worlds presented. The minor world is that of human adults living their lives with little knowledge about the other world, the world in which their children know exits, the place where there are actual monsters in the closet! The monster world is quite similar to the human world with two exceptions: scary looking monsters have populated the land and instead of power generated from fossil fuels, geothermal, solar, etc, their electricity is generated by harnessing the power of children’s screams. The company responsible for generating this power is Monsters, Inc., where bridging this worldly gap is made possible by the millions of children’s closet doors the company has in their possession. When the doors are powered up, the monsters are easily able to walk through them into the child’s bedroom. The trained monster scares the child and the power generated is easily collected. However, not all is well in the monster world as they are currently experiencing an electricity shortage due to the fact that children are becoming increasingly desensitized to the monster’s scare tactics from the productions presented in television, video games, movies, etc.

BUSINESS WORLD PORTRAYAL

All quotations listed from the 2001 film, Monsters, Inc.
The business world at Monsters Inc. is portrayed mainly in a positive light. The antagonist in the film was not extended to include Monsters Inc. as a whole but instead was portrayed as character flaws in the personalities of two monsters. At Monsters Inc., employees are fairly happy. This is depicted during the morning gathering where employees happily greet each other as well as the excited manner the workers speak of the coming day’s work. There are adequate precautions in place to protect the safety of the employees. For example, the Child Detection Agency (CDA) is a SWAT-like team that mobilizes whenever there is a reported sighting of human world objects like toys, clothing, or actual children, bridging the dimensional gap and entering the monster’s world. Human objects or children are considered extremely toxic and dangerous. The CDA is responsible for capturing all unworldly objects and detoxifying all monsters that have come into contact with such objects. In addition, because of the mechanical equipment used to bring children’s doors to the monster world, employees are required to wear hard hats for protection in case of an equipment malfunction. The last example presented to portray the business world as positive is that of the adequate break structure and work schedule. Employees work during normal daytime business hours, are given time off for lunch breaks, and are left at their leisure to enjoy nighttime activities such as engaging in dates, going out to dinner, or relaxing at home.

BUSINESS ETHICAL DILEMMA #1

The first business ethical dilemma portrayed concerns the energy created at Monsters, Inc. Monsters enjoy the wonderful activities available from the creation of power just as much as humans. The monsters enjoy driving to work and using electricity in their houses to power lights and televisions. The comparison continues with the generation of power. In the human
world, coal mining and deforestation has devastating effects on natural species calling those areas home. In the monster world, scaring a child enough to create a scream causes devastating emotional effects in the scared children. Are the lasting effects of scared children worth the power generated?

This issue was resolved with the discovery that laughter generates ten times more power than a scream. This discovery was made when Boo, a human child, slips though the door opened by Sully, the monster. Sully brings Boo home so he doesn’t get into trouble with the employer, as children are thought to be extremely toxic. While Boo is in Sully’s home, she laughs gently and creates an extremely powerful surge of electricity throughout Sully’s large apartment complex. At first, Sully is unaware of the power generating properties of laughter but at the end of the film, Sully brings the company into a new generation of “laughter creating employees” rather than “scare creating employees.” The company’s old motto: “We scare because we care” is abandoned.

I think that this issue was resolved wonderfully. I wish there were a greater adverse group portrayed in the monster world that believed scaring children was cruel. This would have taught the importance of differing beliefs regarding power resources to the audience and the possibility of finding a better source that benefits all parties involved. If I were in this situation, I would have devoted more resources to research and development to search for a more sustainable alternative.

BUSINESS ETHICAL DILEMMA #2

The next business ethical dilemma portrayed was the fear tactics used by the CEO of Monsters, Inc., Mr. Henry J. Wateroose to keep the employees from forming relationships with
children. Mr. Waternoose has created a culture of fear among his employees by creating the Child Detection Agency to remove contamination caused by children. Mr. Waternoose knows that the threat of toxicity does not exist, as depicted in the scene where Waternoose simply picks up the human child when the child first enters his sight. All other monsters run upon first sight of the child but because Waternoose is responsible for creating this culture of fear, he knows the child is not toxic.

The issue was resolved at the end of the film with the disbandment of the CDA, and the scenes of free floating toys from human world to monster world. All monsters easily accepted the truth that children are not toxic, nor have they ever been toxic.

Once again, I felt that there could have been a few more scenes showing the transitional period where monsters adjust to the idea of non-toxic children, as this implementation in real life comes with a tremendous amount of time and resources devoted to changing people’s perspective on an issue. Hard evidence and fact is not enough to convince people when the issue is of an important magnitude. If I were given the task to change people’s perspective on a long standing myth, I would start with meetings devoted to letting people watch at a distance the nonexistent effects of the myth. Letting people see with their own eyes the myth dissolving is at times enough to persuade. Also, providing literature describing facts related to the issue helps people gain a different perspective on the issue.

BUSINESS ETHICAL DILEMMA #3

The third business ethical dilemma is the mentality that the CEO, Mr. Waternoose, has to put the good of the company above all else. This mentality is initially portrayed by three of Mr. Waternoose’s comments: “This company has been in my family for three generations, I would...
do anything to keep it from going under”, “We can’t afford any more bad publicity”, and “For the good of the company.” These three excerpts give us a small glimpse into Mr. Waternoose’s reasoning for the scare tactics, the lying, and the cover-ups.

This issue is resolved in the final scenes when the CEO is recorded and viewed by many of his employees stating, “I’ll kidnap a thousand children before I let this company die. And I’ll silence anyone who gets in my way!” After this statement, Mr. Waternoose is arrested and replaced as head of the company. In the following scenes, the workplace is portrayed as an organization interested in making children happy.

In my opinion, having proof of an action is always the best way to resolve an issue. The recording of the CEO expressing his true beliefs is the easiest way to explain to other non-witnesses of the true intentions of the head of the company. I don’t think I would have been able to mastermind the tapping of the CEO as depicted in the film. I would have strived to obtain physical proof of wrongdoing in some other fashion to prove guilt.

OTHER BUSINESS ETHICAL ISSUES

The other more minor business ethics issues portrayed included the violation of business policies because you were asked by a friend or romantic interest as seen by the numerous employees that violate the policy regarding the toxicity of children when asked by the loveable monster Sully. Another business ethical issue presented was the idea of the detrimental effects of research and development programs led astray by misguided leaders causing harmful effects to research subjects. In the film, the two misguided monsters were the CEO and Randall. Together these employees engaged in research extremely dangerous to children, but felt their actions were justified because of the magnitude of the energy crisis.
SUMMARY

Overall, I learned that cartoons targeting children such as Monsters, Inc., are very entertaining as well as educational. This film not only helps children overcome fears such as monsters in the closet by following Boo’s journey, but also creates interest in the business environment. Children have no idea of the concepts and challenges in the business environment but when presented in films such as Monsters, Inc., this may get a child thinking. In addition, I was amazed at the ease of how the ethical dilemmas presented in this film were resolved. How wonderful it would be if every misguided boss could be caught in the act and whisked away by the authorities. In future films I watch, I hope to look for business ethical issues presented and think about the resolution of those issues and how accurate and possible those resolutions are in the real world.

REFERENCE