**Chapter 11 Handouts**

**The Case of Viacom**

International children’s television programming is imitating adult network expansion, creating a new web of problems. Local culture is intertwined with global culture. On a global level, children from around the world share similar interests, watch similar cartoon programming, play similar computer games, and share common media preferences, available in their living rooms. Children’s television programming has been thriving in the global marketplace. In fact, it is one of the four most exportable types of television.

One of the most aggressive global marketers is Viacom. Viacom’s CEO, Sumner Redstone, has been outspoken in his desire to make Nickelodeon the global entertainment choice for children of all ages. Nickelodeon has launched networks in a variety of languages in countries that span the globe. Nickelodeon is available in 149 countries/territories and is viewed in over 300 million households worldwide from paid, localized channels. One of “Nick’s” successes is the cartoon series *SpongeBob Squarepants*, a sponge-shaped cartoon character whose adventures and experiences are reflective of U.S. children’s cultural frame of reference.

Since 1999, this cartoon has been sold to more than 135 markets around the world and has grossed $2.5 billion in retail sales. These retail sales include products such as clothing, games, and other children’s merchandise. Nickelodeon will release *SpongeBob Squarepants, The Movie*, to more than 30 countries around the world. Burger King International has partnered with Viacom to enhance the global marketing by providing a movie-themed premium in Burger King Kids Meals.

In September 2004, Viacom signed a deal to broadcast the popular children’s show, *Dora the Explorer*. Dora the Explorer is a 7-year-old Latino girl born in the United States who uses her knowledge of the Spanish language to communicate with her friends, overcome obstacles, and reach her personal goals. The program has been available through satellite channels across Europe and can be seen in France, Holland, Norway, Spain, and Portugal. The deal with the United Kingdom, however, provides much broader access to children who do not have cable or satellite television.

Viacom’s expansion to local television programming and to local communities is raising many issues in the context of blurred national boundaries. What is the result of Viacom’s mass globalization of their children’s shows? What is at stake here?

**Group Questions for “Children’s Television Programming”**

*Group 1:*

With your team, please take the perspective of a PARENT in another part of the globe as you discuss this case. What are some of the important issues that this case study highlights for a parent?

*Group 2:*  
With your team please take the perspective of a YOUNG CHILD in another part of the globe that has no access to Viacom’s children programming as you discuss this case. What are some of the important issues that this case study highlights for a young child?

*Group 3*:  
With your team, please take the perspective of a LOCAL TELEVISION station as you discuss this case. What are some of the important issues that this case study highlights for local television?

*Group 4:*Now with your team, please take the perspective of a VIACOM representative as you discuss this case. What are some of the important issues that this case study highlights for a VIACOM representative?

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