1. Risk Analysis of Pentagon Papers Decision (25’)

1.1. As we know, the pivotal point in this incident came in a phone call to Graham, asking her to decide whether to publish articles analyzing the Pentagon Papers. Risk analysis is an important type of situation analysis—a way of looking at the facts through the lens of risk and reward. What were the risks here?

1.2. What were the risks of publishing the Pentagon Papers?

- How do you think its business duties should be weighed against the Post’s duty to defend freedom of the press? How can duties that appeal to different principles (and parties) be sorted out?

1.3. Were there risks in not publishing? What were they?

1.4. Graham and Bradlee both describe the events that led to The New York Times being unable to publish the Pentagon Papers. After the Times refused US Attorney General John Mitchell’s request to stop publishing articles related to the Pentagon Papers, “the US Justice Department went to court and got an injunction against the Times, restraining a newspaper in advance from publishing specific articles, for the first time in the history of the republic.”

- What is “prior restraint” of the press, and why did Graham and Bradlee regard it as so problematic?
- Do you agree with the position they took—that prior restraint of press is always bad? Why or why not? How about in this situation?

2. Assessment of Graham’s Pentagon Papers Decision (30’)

2.1. Bradlee and the others certainly knew who had to make the final call on this set of competing risks. Bradlee’s language is telling: he referred to “the ultimate showdown with Kay Graham;” “a fail-safe telephone call with Kay;” and, finally, “show time.” We are at the actual moment of decision-making. Let’s read [out loud] both how Bradlee (page 316) and then Graham (page 450) describe this moment, and then get your reactions.

2.2. What is your assessment of this process, and of Graham’s leadership?

2.3. What principles did Graham invoke in her decision? What was her rationale?

2.4. Let’s look at what Graham says, herself, about her rationale (page 457). What is Graham saying about citizens in a democracy? In what ways is the publication of information like the Pentagon Paper a contribution to the national interest? How does Graham define the obligation of a “responsible newspaper”?

2.5. Were the rights and duties of a newspaper that Graham claimed unbounded? What rules did the Post use in working with the Pentagon Papers?

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2 Bradlee, op. cit., p. 312.
3 Ibid., 315
4 Ibid., 316
5 Ibid., 316
3. Differences between Watergate and Pentagon Papers (15’)
   3.1. What were the most important differences between Watergate and the Pentagon Papers?
   3.2. How would you compare the level of risk between the two situations?

4. Assessment of Graham’s Leadership During Watergate Investigation (20’)
   4.1. In your view, how well did Graham handle the Watergate investigation?
   4.2. We know that unlike the Pentagon Papers, that lasted only a few weeks, the Watergate investigation took over two years, and was marked by increasingly ferocious opposition. How did Graham (and Bradlee) sustain the Post through it all? What was Bradlee’s role? What did he do? What was Graham’s role?
   4.3. What, exactly, did Graham do?
   4.4. Were there rules here? What means did the Post use to pursue its ends? In what ways were these rules important? Why did they matter?
   4.5. What base was Graham starting from? What was the impact of the Pentagon Papers on Graham’s relationship with Bradlee and the Post organization?
   4.6. How would you weigh the gender factor as an influence on Graham and her actions, and on how she was perceived?
   4.7. Graham said that “Courage applies when one has a choice,” and that she “never felt she had much choice,” since there was no single decision to make. So, she was not courageous in her own view. Do you agree?

5. Is This Moral Leadership? (15’)
   5.1. If Machiavelli could have constructed a setting to explore his concepts in twentieth-century American business life, he would have been hard pressed to find a better example than the story of Katharine Graham. Threatened by powerful enemies with almost infinite resources and a willingness to use them, the Washington Post needed to defend itself from attacks while it pursued an investigation of those in power. How would Machiavelli evaluate Graham? What would he think of her performance as a leader?
   5.2. What has Kay Graham added to your definition of moral leadership? What new elements do you see in her leadership that are different from the leaders we have studied?
   5.3. Has Graham demonstrated moral leadership?

PERSONAL HISTORY CLASS SESSION SUMMARY

http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/b01/en/common/item_detail.jhtml?id=607076

6 Graham, op.cit., p. 505
7 Ibid.