

Al Buehler: Case Study & the IRAC Method

Lenny Collado

Rutgers University – Newark

20:831:515:90 ETHICAL CHALLENGES

01.29.2024

The case example that I chose to apply the IRAC method (Sharp, Aguirre, Kickham 2017) to is the Al Buehler (Johnson 2018, p101-103) case study. Here you have a North Carolina Duke University coach active during the late 1950's, during the South's segregationist period willing to go up against the law to remain principled and decent toward his fellow citizens. He invites the all-black North Carolina Central University (NCCU) team for example to train at Duke's facilities, which recall not only stipulations of segregation but also the need for civil rights and equal access to facilities, as "Sometimes laws may be deemed unjust and therefore unethical" (Cooper 2012). Mr. Buehler's invitation would certainly have subjected the invited team and himself to the consequences of breaking those laws. His invitation had fundamental considerations in ethics. He challenged the norms to exercise fair, unbiased treatment of people, the more global consideration being achieving a more equitable society, upholding a stance in maintaining fair and equal opportunities for and treatment of people regardless of race (Mantel and Ludema 2004); he demonstrated that through his actions, through his convictions, through his courage. The problem/issue is two-fold since his actions had impacts on racial and gender relations:

1. Did Mr. Buehler's actions align with principles like racial equality and inclusivity during segregation in the South, and how did he navigate challenging racial discrimination and exclusion?

Some of the ethical implications of Mr. Buehler's actions in promoting racial equality and inclusivity during segregation are addressed through several alternatives, each satisfying different ethical theories. Mr. Buehler's decision to invite NCCU's all-black team to train at Duke University at the time for example demonstrated a commitment to racial integration and collaboration (Barrett and Fry 2005), aligning with the deontological principle (Johnson 2018) of treating people as ends in themselves, which prioritizes the moral duty of equal treatment and respect for all people, regardless of race and/or background. Mr. Buehler's actions serve as an advocacy point, support for underrepresented groups, satisfying virtue-based ethics (from course materials). His dedication to providing opportunities for all athletes, regardless of racial barriers, exemplifies certain virtues – courage, fairness, compassion, dedication to the development and growth of others (Sharp, Aguirre, Kickham 2017). Mr. Buehler's efforts can be seen as a means of challenging structural racism too, as he actively worked to provide equal

training opportunities and resources for athletes from NCCU, despite segregationist norms, which addresses structural racism, as it involves actively pulling apart racist practices and undercurrents of unequal power.

The second question that this case example suggests is:

2. How did Mr. Buehler address the ethical dilemma of promoting gender equity in sports by training female athletes when no female teams at Duke University existed, and what were the moral implications for developing athletics for women? Mr. Buehler's decision to train female athletes in absence of female teams at Duke University was ground-breaking, to say the least. He promoted inclusivity in sports, emblematic of virtue-based ethics, as it exemplifies Mr. Buehler's dedication to fostering development of women's athletics, irrespective of unethical norms. Mr. Buehler's support for implementing Title IX ([Title IX and Sex Discrimination \(ed.gov\)](https://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oeo/oeo-2000-01-01/title-ix-and-sex-discrimination)), aimed at bringing equality to women's sports on college campuses, addressed gender inequity in athletics, and speaks to justice-as-fairness (from course materials), and reflects Mr. Buehler's commitment to advocating for policies that ensure equal opportunities for female athletes. Mr. Buehler's actions challenged gender stereotypes in sports as he advocated for women's athletics, an alternative that satisfies altruism-based ethics (from course materials), as it demonstrates Buehler's selfless concern for the well-being and advancement of female athletes, despite prevalent gender biases in sports at the time.

Considering elements of one's moral imagination (Cooper 2021), Mr. Buehler's ethical dilemmas centered on issues of racial integration and gender equity, requiring him to navigate the difficulties of challenging segregationist norms, i.e., discrimination, while advocating for inclusivity and equal opportunities in sports. The alternative that best addresses the problem is one that emphasizes treating racism in sports as a problem of ethics and morality. This alternative justifies a need to change practices not only because they are illegal, but more because they are unethical. It advocates for addressing racial discrimination in sports from an ethical perspective, highlighting the importance of considering moral implications of actions that hurt Black-Americans or any non-White group in sports and aligns with deontological ethics, as it prioritizes the moral duty of equal treatment and respect for all people, regardless of race, regardless of legal consequence (Cooper 2012). It also resonates with virtue-based ethics

(indicated in course materials), as it exemplifies dedication to fostering development of all athletes, irrespective of racial barriers. The ethical principles that can be integrated include a list of principles-- autonomy, beneficence, justice-- fundamental to ethical decision-making and can be applied to various contexts, including professional and informal practices (Cooper 2012). The lessons learned from this example for a more robust personal ethical stance emphasizes the importance of integrating fundamental ethical principles, understanding factors that influence ethical decision-making, and developing a strong personal ethic that aligns with professional and moral guidelines, that considers ethical principles, specific to the development of professional and personal development as a guide for navigating hard-hitting situations and making sound decisions.

References

- Barrett, FJ and Fry, R. 2008. Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Approach to Building Organizational Capacity. Taos Institute Publications. Second Printing. ISBN-13:978-0-7880-2163-3
- Cooper, TL 2006. The Responsible Administrator: An Approach to Ethics for the Administrative Role, 5th edition, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006 ISBN-13:978-0-7879-7651-4
- Johnson, CE. 2018 Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership: Casting Light or Shadow 6th Edition. LA, Ca.: Sage Publications ISBN: 978-1-5063-2163-9
- Mantel, MJ and Ludema, JD. 2004. Sustaining positive change: Inviting conversational convergence through appreciative leadership and organization design. From Advances in Appreciative Inquiry, Volume 1, Cooperrider, D. and Avital, M. (Eds.), JAI Press, 2004
- Sharp, B, Aguirre, G, Kickham K. (2016). Managing in the Public Sector. Introduction: A primer on Ethics in Public Administration. New York. Routledge