

Rushworth M. Kidder uses his work *How Good People Make Tough Choices* to emphasize that there are only four major paradigms for ethical dilemmas, based on the concepts of measurement and character. While Kidder presents clear arguments for each of these conflicts, he does not expand his work to include ethical dilemmas that may require multiple layers of these four types, or different types altogether. In fact, Kidder states “The point is not whether these four paradigms are all that can ever be found. The point is that, however many there are, they will prove useful in cutting through the wealth of contextual detail that surrounds every real-life dilemma” (150). Kidder dissects several examples of his own throughout the work, but primarily focuses on examples that contain one of his four paradigms. Once determining which conflict is at the root of the dilemma, Kidder suggests using three possible techniques to consider the dilemma, ends based thinking, rule based thinking, or care based thinking (154). By using the techniques Kidder outlined, it is possible to remove details from a conflict in order to focus on the root ethical issues.

I am currently experiencing a severe ethical dilemma about a conflict between two of my closest friends. Emma*, had accused another good friend, Ryan*, of sexual misconduct. Ryan adamantly denied the accusations. Due to my close relationships with both Emma and Ryan, it was very difficult to deal with the situation in a rational manner. Using Kidder’s framework, the first conflict seems to be a dilemma of two loyalties, rather than any of the specific instances Kidder outlined. I had no way to discern the truth in the situation, as I had not been in the room during the incident. Additionally, using the three possible techniques, I could not come to a conclusion about choosing a side in the conflict. I decided it was likely inappropriate to attempt to “choose,” but better to find the best possible overall outcome to the situation.

Kidder’s framework helped me to see that at least one part of the ethical dilemma was not actually something that required a decision on my behalf.

From there, I moved forward into what would be necessary for the best possible outcome for either part. In either case, one party was incorrectly representing the facts. If either party changed their story and admitted that they were lying, there would be a conflict of justice vs. mercy. Whichever individual that was, the action would have been significantly wrong- either sexually violating someone, or significant slander. In both of these cases, it seems as though justice would be a more appropriate solution. In Kidder’s examples he emphasized how mistakes can be mediated using mercy because it might make a mistake less likely to happen again. However, Kidder’s examples did not demonstrate a case in which significant harm was done to another individual. Given this situation, it seems that siding towards justice would be more appropriate. From this I think it’s important that should the truth be found, the individual should receive a just treatment, likely being suspended for a period of time.

Yet, if no truth can be found in the situation, resolving the conflict would have to be addressed differently. Since either outcome would potentially have negative impacts on both the individual and the community, it might not be the most effective framework to analyze. A remaining framework is the concept of the short term vs. the long term outcomes. In the short term dramatic action seems to be needed to resolve the situation due to its gravity. However, in the long term both Emma and Ryan will likely calm down about the situation as they move past it. In this case, it may seem that unless the circumstances of the facts available change, it may be best to have Emma and Ryan talk through the situation, and not have a significant punishment or change as a result of the situation. Kidder’s framework helped demonstrate to me that there might not be an easy solution to this ethical dilemma, and that it may be a different factor that

one expected that finds the best solution. As a result, rather than attempting to find an individual to attribute fault to, I'll take a longer term view of the situation, and attempt to help both my friends with this challenging time.

*Names have been changed