Analysis of Moral Argumentation in Newspaper Editorial Contents with Kohlberg’s
Moral Development Model

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the Scripps College of Communication of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

Master of Science

Yayu Feng

December 2014

© 2014 Yayu Feng. All Rights Reserved.
This thesis titled
Analysis of Moral Argumentation in Newspaper Editorial Contents with Kohlberg’s
Moral Development Model

by

YAYU FENG

has been approved for
the E. W. Scripps School of Journalism
and the Scripps College of Communication by

Bernhard S. Debatin
Professor of Journalism

Scott Titsworth
Dean, Scripps College of Communication
Abstract

FENG, YAYU, M.S., December 2014, Journalism

Analysis of Moral Argumentation in Newspaper Editorial Contents with Kohlberg's Moral Development Model

Director of Thesis: Bernhard S. Debatin

This study evaluates reasoning stages addressed in newspaper editorial contents based on Lawrence Kohlberg’s moral development model. Ten editorial pieces from two newspapers in Athens, Ohio,—The Post, a student newspaper and The Athens News, a local newspaper— were analyzed with regard to two local incidents involving rape culture. To facilitate the analysis, a chart was developed to connect moral argumentations in the editorials to the model’s abstract description of moral reasoning stages. A Critical Discourse Analysis of the sample revealed that The Post mainly addressed reasoning stages 2, 3, and 4, while The Athens News presented higher level reasoning on stages 3, 4, and 6. The study details the different patterns of moral reasoning stages addressed in the two newspapers and offers a relevant case study of editorials’ performance as moral educators. The analytical system developed in this study also contributes a new approach to investigating moral media messages.
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Bernhard Debatin, my thesis director. Throughout the course of my studies, I am much indebted to him for his encouragement, inspiration and patience. His intellectual input, sense of scholarship, and kindness made the process of writing this thesis enjoyable, educational, and productive. He is an ideal professor and a great mentor, and I am honored to be his student.

I am also grateful for my thesis committee members, Professor Ellen Gerl and Dr. Aimee Edmondson. Their constructive feedback and insightful ideas greatly improved this thesis. I am truly fortunate to have a committee that is always supportive and provides me with critical advice throughout the process.

Finally, I want to thank my friend and fellow master’s student Mengchen Li, who read my analysis chapter and helped me to ensure the interpretations were valid.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Literature Review</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Editorial Page</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Development Model</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) and Defining Issues Test (DIT)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of Moral Development Model and Its Connection to Media Ethics</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape Culture</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Methods</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Analysis of Moral Argumentation</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Reasoning Level in Student Newspaper—The Post</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Reasoning Levels in Local Newspaper—The Athens News</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Discussion</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: Conclusion</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Example of Defining Issue Test Items</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Identifiers for Moral Judgment Stages</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Sentence Categorization of Sample Articles</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Samples</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1: Moral Reasoning Levels in <em>The Post</em></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2: Moral Reasoning Levels in <em>The Athens News</em></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3: Defining Issues Test Format</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4: Identifiers for Moral Judgment Stages</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

It was October 12, 2013, after midnight in Athens, Ohio. The streets were still bustling and people were out and about, celebrating the Ohio University Homecoming weekend. And on a well-lit corner in the center of town, a young man was performing oral sex on a young woman. The eye-catching scene quickly attracted many people on the street to gather around. No one intervened, but some took out their smart phones, photographing and taking videos of this public sex act. Within moments, these images and videos were uploaded to Instagram and Twitter. Explicit photos and videos of the drama went viral overnight through social media. The next day, the young woman involved in the act reported to the police that it was a rape.

While the case was still under investigation, public speculations and accusations quickly spread over the internet. People looked at the photos and videos, and were actively speculating how intoxicated both parties were, and whether consent was present. Some confidently claimed that the woman was enjoying the process and that she was alleging the incident as a rape only because she was embarrassed by the images and videos and online comments; some believed it was clearly a case of sexual assault and went straight to condemn the man.

A week later, a female student from Ohio University was misidentified as the woman in those wide-spread photos and videos. With the power of the World Wide Web, her social media accounts, personal information and pictures were publicized and spread quickly. She reported to the police that for three days, she kept receiving numerous harassing messages via social media, and some of them were sent from as far as Australia. Although the police department, Athens County Prosecutor and Ohio University all made
efforts to clear her name from the sex incident, a public shaming of this misidentified female student still endured online for a time.

On October 28, 2013, the Athens County Prosecutor reported that “the evidence uncovered by an Athens Police investigation shows that the woman – who claims to remember nothing of the incident, but who filed a police complaint the next day alleging sexual assault – did give consent for the man to perform oral sex on her” (Phillips, 2013). Also, the Prosecutor announced the grand jury decision regarding the case: “probable cause did not exist to charge any party from the alleged rape” (Smith & Jamerson, 2013), which means no charge would be filed to either the man or the woman. Six weeks after the incident happened, on December 5, 2013, the Athens Police Chief announced that under the recommendation of the County Prosecutor and the City Law Director, “the city of Athens will not pursue public indecency charges stemming from the public sex act on Court Street that occurred Homecoming Weekend” (Smith, 2013). These two decisions brought an end to the legal process of the incident, but not the public discussion. Although it was clear that no legal charges would be pressed on the two performers of the public sex act, the public did not stop making judgment on either party.

Taking place at a time when the debate about rape culture—a concept that refers to the normalization of rape and sexual violence as the culture of a society—was going on in the college across nation and on the Ohio University campus in particular, this public sex act largely heated up the debate. Behaviors and discussions of students and residents called attention to the elements of rape culture embodied by the incident, such as trivializing rape and sexual violence, and victim shaming.
In addition to the public discourse, this public sex act also caught nationwide and even international media attention. It was first covered by the local media, and days later, the story travelled to many other prominent publications and television outlets, such as the Associated Press, The Daily News in New York and the Daily Mail in London. For the media, especially the local media, this public sex act was more than just a sensational story, but an example of the prevailing rape culture and a lesson about this socio-moral issue that they need to reflect on, and to convey the need for reflection to the whole community. The many moral aspects embedded in this incident, such as the bystanders’ use of social media, the victim blaming and the public shaming of a misidentified female student, posed challenges to the local media regarding how to present this moral issue to the public, how to clarify the relevant moral values, and help the readers to form an understanding of the moral issue, and make relevant moral judgments, not only about this single incident, but about the broader moral issue of rape culture.

When faced with moral problems, people’s moral reasoning helps them to make decisions. People do not necessarily agree on the essence of the problem, and may actually vary in their judgment and advocate different actions (Rest, 1979). Many factors may have an impact on human moral reasoning, and media have been demonstrated to be one of the factors (Krcmar, 2013), especially regarding local issues (Pratt, 1990). Among various types of media contents, newspaper editorials, as a platform where the editors present and clarify values of the society (Peterson, 1976), carry a heavy responsibility in educating the readers about the moral issues—the kind of issues that often elicit deliberative and cognitive based reasoning about right and wrong (Eden, Grizzard, & Lewis, 2007). When talking about moral issues, editorials in fact often serve an
educational purpose, suggesting to the public what is the right and the good. Therefore, exploring what kind of values the press chooses to present and how those values are addressed is important.

This study seeks to evaluate the moral argumentations in newspaper editorials in the context of rape culture with the moral development theory conceived by Lawrence Kohlberg. In 1958, built upon Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget’s moral development theory, Kohlberg began constructing a moral development model based on abundant empirical studies. The six-stage model demonstrated how people’s moral reasoning evolves and articulated the underlying world views and intentions behind people’s moral judgment on different levels (Kohlberg, 1964).

This study approaches the moral reasoning of editorial contents through moral argumentations, which is defined by Van Eemeren et al. (1996) as “a verbal and social activity of reason aiming at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or reader, by putting forward a constellation of propositions intended to justify (or refute) the standpoint before a rational judge.” (Van Eemeren et al., 1996). By this definition, moral argumentations in the editorial contents present standpoints on a moral issue, and provide reasons to justify the positions, and therefore they are a form of manifestation of making moral judgment.

Among other factors, Kohlberg emphasized the role education plays in stimulating a progress from a lower moral judgment stage to a higher one (Kohlberg, 1981). In fact, his study of moral development partly aims at exploring an effective method of moral education. Editorials, serving as moral educators, have the ability and are actually supposed to foster moral growth, because they could exert influence on
people’s moral development, especially on those who do not receive education from formal institutions.

The main objective of this study is to sketch out the moral reasoning levels addressed in The Post, a student newspaper and The Athens News, a local newspaper in Athens, Ohio regarding the topic of rape culture. The findings would then indicate whether these two newspapers are providing conditions that help stimulate progress of readers’ moral development. Besides the public sex act that has been described above, the study also looks at editorial contents about another incident that is closely related to the topic of rape culture—the Take Back The Night (TBTN) march on April 2, 2014. The TBTN event was historically a women-only demonstration aimed at empowering women against sexual violence. This year, for the first time, the organizers of the TBTN event in Ohio University permitted male participation, which elicited public debates about the identification of sexual assault victims. By examining editorial contents on these two local incidents revolving around rape culture, this study evaluates the two newspapers’ performances in educating the students and the residents in town about socio-moral issues. In doing so, the study is also a fresh attempt to apply a model of cognitive psychology, which was previously only used to measure human moral development, to analysis of texts that address moral issues.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Morality

Morality has been discussed to a great extent by scholars from ancient Greeks to modern-day philosophers. Aristotle, the author of some of the early works on morality, raised some questions that are still at the center of discussion today: “Is morality learned or inborn? What comprises morality and moral judgment? Is morality dependent on thought or emotion?” (Eden, Grizzard, & Lewis, 2007, p. 3). Although no consensus has been reached on the answers to these questions, many scholars from different disciplines have attempted to clarify the concept and characteristics of morality in their own way. Common starting points in defining morality are the works by Aristotle, Kant, Mill, or Rawls (Kohlberg, 1981). Gert, for example, defines that:

the term “morality” can be used either descriptively to refer to some codes of conduct put forward by a society or some other group, such as a religion, or accepted by an individual for her own behavior or normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons (Gert, 2011, para 1).

This definition suggests that morality serves as a guide for individual behaviors and the relationship between an individual and the society and people around him. To put it in the context of this study, the interest of investigating moral argumentation in the newspaper editorial contents derives from the concern for how the editorials convey the moral guide.

Morality and ethics are two philosophical concepts that are closely related to each other but do not carry the same meaning. As the definition by Gert shows, morality refers to the system of principles about the right and wrong, but ethics are defined differently.
Philosopher Rogers defined ethics as “the science which investigates the general principles for determining the true worth of the ultimate ends of human conduct” (Rogers, 1965, p.1). The definition suggests that ethics is more about the process of understanding the moral principles and using them in decision making. Walker’s words may be a good example to show the relationship between ethics and morality: “[ethics is] pursuing an understanding of morality, which provides understandings of ourselves as bearers of responsibilities in the service of values” (Walker, 2000, p.89). He indicated that morality provides the guidance of values and responsibilities, while ethics is the effort to understand those values and responsibilities.

In the media ethics field, which relates most closely to this study, Plaisance (2008) defined morality as “a set of beliefs that we embrace to help us understand what is good and what is bad in the world” (Plaisance, 2008, p.3). He also distinguished between morality and ethics and defined the latter as “our effort to articulate our reasons for putting greater weight on some moral claims than others in certain dilemmas” (Plaisance, 2008, p.3). This definition also demonstrates that ethics is about the “journey”, not the “destination.” (Plaisance, 2008, p.10) The discussion in the field of media ethics in fact often is based on this definition of ethics.

Lawrence Kohlberg and Jean Piaget were among the earliest who attempted to study morality with a cognitive psychology approach. They considered morality as a form of value judging, which is a belief from philosophic tradition inherited from Kant to analytic philosophers of modern times (Kohlberg, 1980). They both adopted a rationalist perspective, aligned with Aristotle and Kant, believing that morality should be fundamentally a rational system rather than an emotional one (Eden, Grizzard, & Lewis,
Based on this belief of human morality, they approached human morality by uncovering the reasoning mechanism.

Researchers in the communication field have attempted to investigate the moral frames within newspaper articles, the morality in media messages, and the effect of media (moral) messages on people’s moral judgment (de Vereese, 2005; Colomb & Damphousse, 2004; Krcmar, 2013, Carpenter & Blom, 2012). Colomb and Damphousse (2004) studied the media coverage of hate crime and argued that media frame of this moral issue largely contributed to a moral panic in the society (Colomb & Damphousse, 2004). Popora and Nikolaev (2008) examined the moral discourse about U.S. decision of attacking Iraq in newspaper editorials and opinion pieces, and explained a phenomenon in this discourse called “moral muting”—a communicative phenomenon that occurs “when a communication blunts the moral considerations involved in a case, sometimes even subverting or disguising the communication’s own moral message” (Popora & Nikolaev, 2008, p.165). Glover et al. (2011) suggested that moral issues in television program content can affect emotion and behavior (Glover et al., 2011). A study by Carpenter and Blom (2012) found that news articles containing a moral focus elicit significantly more responses from readers than those without moral issues in the context of online comment forum (Carpenter & Blom, 2012). Moreover, Krcmar (2013) demonstrated in her study that “media can and do influence moral judgment and moral reasoning” (Krcmar, 2013, p.214). Findings of these studies regarding the influence of media’s moral messages on people’s moral reasoning, behaviors and emotions suggested the important role media is playing in people’s moral development, and the necessity of exploring how the media is performing that role—an effort this study is undertaking.
Also, the interests of these researchers in studying the manifestation of morality in media, including the author of this study, stems from a belief that media carry responsibility for the society and therefore monitoring their representation of morals would be of interest.

**Newspaper Editorial Page**

Among various types of media contents, the newspaper editorial page is a salient example of carrying a responsibility of moral education. Since the twentieth century particularly, with the rise of the social responsibility theory of the press, newspapers started to be seen as carrying obligations and certain essential functions in the society (Peterson, 1976). The spread of social responsibility theory was in fact symbolizing a shift from an earlier libertarian theory dated back to the seventeenth century, which suggested that the press enjoyed an absolute freedom and owed nothing to the public, and that the press was not required to assume moral responsibilities while enjoying a privileged position (Peterson, 1976). Moving away from the pure libertarianism which brought many problems of mass media to light, such as the rise of yellow journalism (Siebert et al., 1956), the Commission of the Freedom of the Press, in its famous report—*A Free and Responsible Press* (Hutchins, 1947), emphasized the social responsibilities of journalism and the idea that the rights which the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gave to the press was “not simply a negative right, a freedom from governmental intervention, but also a positive right, in which press freedom necessarily carries social responsibilities as its corollary” (Debatin, 2015). Since then, the press, once seen as only enjoying a negative right, is increasing expected to carry more responsibilities.
One of the responsibilities the Commission mentioned in its report was that “the press be responsible for the presentation and clarification of the goals and values of the society” (Hutchins, 1947, p.27). The editorial page is the most salient example of this function. By presenting and clarifying values, editorials are, in fact, often aiming at being educators informing and telling the public what is the right and the good. Therefore, it is important to understand whether the kind of values journalists choose to present and the way they convey those values are conducive to individual moral growth and whether they fulfill this responsibility with editorials.

Editorial contents are the only form of media texts where editors can explicitly voice their opinions and stances. Windhauser (1973) defined newspaper editorials as the opinion columns that reflect a newspaper’s views on an issue or an event. Oakes (1968) described the editorial page as a newspaper’s “heart and soul, the one area where the personality and, more important, the philosophy of the newspaper can most properly be expressed” (quoted in Pratt, 1990, p.18). Moreover, the importance of editorials is emphasized by the fact that “in general they influence the reader, particularly on local issues, and provide assistance for making judgments” (Pratt, 1990, p.18). This assistance is often achieved by the argumentations of an article.

Many of the previous studies about the newspaper editorial page have linked editorials to the democratic needs of society. They talked about the role of the editorial page in political debate, its function of fostering political participation and providing a public forum on public affairs (e.g. Ciofalo & Traverso, 1994; Day & Golan, 2005; Rosenfeld, 2000). Other studies have been done about journalists’ perception of the ethics of writing editorials (Pratt, 1990). Popora and Nikolaev (2008) studied the moral
discourse in the debate about the U.S. decision of attacking Iraq in newspaper editorial page. Their main objective was to explain the phenomenon of “moral muting”—the understatement of the moral considerations (Popora & Nikolaev, 2008), and did not aim to provide an evaluation of the quality of the moral argumentations. Another study by Barger (2003) evaluated the moral language in newspaper commentaries in a quantitative study also with Kohlberg’s moral development model (Barger, 2003). His study, using content analysis, mainly focused on providing a general picture of moral language in newspaper commentary content—columns and letters—and did not look at the editorial pieces generated by the editors from the newsroom. It also did not look at specific moral issues nor particular languages and reasoning. Other than these two studies, no other study has been found that investigates the moral aspects represented in the editorial contents.

When confronted with moral issues, editorial contents can be taken as manifestations of moral values. It is a premise of this study that editorial contents may take on the role of moral educators and have an impact on readers’ moral judgment, by presenting to the public the values editors uphold and opinions about how to make moral judgments. This study contributes a qualitative analysis of the moral argumentation in editorial contents to the literature. To evaluate role of editorial content as a moral educator, this study examines the moral argumentations with Lawrence Kohlberg’s moral development model, which is introduced and explained in the next section.

**Moral Development Model**

In the 1930s, Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget conceived a moral development theory by observing children between 3-12 years old playing games. In his works, Piaget
conceptualized morality as consisting of “a set of rules to be learned through social interactions” (Eden, Grizzard, & Lewis, 2007, p.6). Piaget (1965) found that children develop notions of rules through interaction with other children, and conceived a three-stage model that describes moral development of children (Patterson & Wilkins, 2007, p.340). In 1958, Lawrence Kohlberg began to expand the work on human moral development. He did not focus only on kids, but extended his research subjects to teenagers, and later adults. Based on years of longitudinal experiments and empirical observations, Kohlberg (1964) conceived a model that outlines six human moral development stages. He contends that moral reasoning develops over time through a series of three levels, and each level includes two discernible stages (Kohlberg, 1981). The six stages are briefly outlined as follows (Kohlberg, 1981, pp. 17-19):

**Preconventional Level:**

Stage 1. The “Punishment and Obedience Orientation”: Avoidance of punishment as the main reason for moral behavior.

Stage 2. The Instrumental Relativist Orientation: Stick to the rules and laws to serve one’s own needs and recognize other people’s interests in order to make a deal.

**Conventional Level:**

Stage 3. The “‘Good boy-Nice Girl’Orientation”: Trying to live up to expectations of others and aims to receive approval.

Stage 4. The “Society Maintaining Orientation”: Believing the laws are to be upheld and stick to the duty to society, meet obligations.

**Postconventional Level:**

Stage 5. The “Social Contract Orientation”: Obey rules because of a sense of contractual commitment to their obligations

Stage 6. The “Universal Ethical Principle Orientation”: Form a sense of personal commitment and act according to self-chosen universal moral principles.

In Kohlberg’s theory, these stages are cognitive and sequential (which means generally individuals go through the hierarchy stage by stage) and indicate different
philosophies behind moral reasoning and different views of the social-moral world. Kohlberg conducted substantial empirical studies to demonstrate the universality of the sequence of stages in different cultural conditions. When one’s concept of human life moves from stage 1 to stage 2, “the value of life becomes more differentiated, more integrated and more universalized” (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 26). The same advance is true at each stage on the scale. Moral principles of stage 6, in Kohlberg’s words, is “a mode of choosing that is universal, a rule of choosing that we want all people to adopt always in all situations” (Kohlberg, 1981). There can be exceptions to rules and regulations, but not to principles.

But moral judgment alone does not necessarily determine individuals’ moral behaviors. Kohlberg saw moral judgment as only part of the psychology of morality, but he did not identify what else was also part of the psychology (Rest, 1994). Rest (1994), after studying relevant literatures on determinants of moral behavior, formulated a Four Component Model which suggested that aside from moral judgment, the other three components of the psychology of morality are: “moral sensitivity” (one’s ability to interpret a moral situation), “moral motivation” (recognizing and prioritizing moral values to other values), and “moral character” (possession of traits such as courage, perseverance, ego strength, and strength of conviction) (Rest, 1994, p. 23-25).

Nevertheless, Kohlberg suggested in his work that what his model should predict about the relationship between moral judgment and moral action is that “the maturity of moral thought should predict to maturity of moral action” (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 185). Putting them both in a developmental perspective, Kohlberg contended that specific type of moral action would need a corresponding moral judgment as a prerequisite.
It is of interest to explain why higher stages on the sequence are better, because logically, a higher place on a sequence does not always indicate a better status. If a higher stage does not imply a more favorable situation, then it becomes invalid to argue that newspaper should promote moral growth in terms of the model. In his interpretation of Kohlberg’s model, Rest (1994) has addressed the issue. First, higher stages imply better conceptual tools to make sense of the world and derive guides for decision making. In other words, having a higher stage moral reasoning enables one to understand the world better, to better relate to others, and to possess a more mature way in the process of decision making (Rest, 1994, p.14). Second, many studies have provided evidence that higher moral developmental stages predict to more desirable behaviors (see list of the studies in Rest, 1994, p.16). Third, Kohlberg (1981) also gave some explanation towards the question of whether higher is really better: subjects themselves think higher is better. The measurement of moral developmental stages using the Moral Judgment Interview (which will be introduced in the next section) demonstrated that a subject tested to be on a certain stage often has a high comprehension on the stages lower than his own, some comprehension on the stage one higher, but does not understand reasoning two or more stages higher. For instance, a subject on stage 4 often also fully comprehend stage 1-3 reasoning, understand stage 5, but he is not able to fully understand or use stage 5 and 6 reasoning. However, subjects often prefer the highest stages they can comprehend, even though they may not be able to actively articulate and use those higher stage thoughts (Kohlberg, 1981, p.46; Rest, 1994, p.15). The evidence aptly supported that the hierarchy of moral development stages does imply an increase of desirable status.
**Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) and Defining Issues Test (DIT)**

In order to measure moral judgment level within the model, Kohlberg and his colleagues developed the Moral Judgment Interview. In the interview, the subjects are presented with a series of scenarios involving moral conflicts, and a trained interviewer asks 9 – 12 standardized probe questions to elicit the subject’s: 1) own construction of moral reasoning; 2) moral frame of reference or assumptions about right and wrong; and 3) way of using these beliefs and assumptions to make and justify moral decisions (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, p. 61). The responses will be classified and scored as the product of a “dilemma x issue x norm x element” scoring system (for detailed scoring procedure, see Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, pp. 41–48).

Many of the critics for Kohlberg’s theory and model question one of Kohlberg’s premises for this approach, which is that it assumed morality as conscious and easily verbalized. This study, which applies the model to examining texts, avoids this problem because it looks at what is already verbalized, and not whether it rightly expressed the cognitive process of the person who generates the texts.

Apart from MJI, conceived by Kohlberg, other measuring devices for moral development stages were developed by other scholars based on Kohlberg’s theory. James Rest, a psychology professor at the University of Minnesota, took Kohlberg’s model and dilemma stories and used them to develop a test to measure moral development model among various professions, including journalists. This test is called the Defining Issues Test (DIT). Different from Kohlberg’s measurement, the DIT is a paper-and-pencil test in which participants are presented with 12 questions for each story and are asked to rate and rank the questions in terms of importance of each consideration in making a decision.
about what ought to be done (Rest, 1979). These questions, referred to as items, are
designed to exemplify characteristics of different stages (see appendix A for an example
of the DIT items), with the exception of stage one, because the researchers believe as
adults, their subjects are too advanced for stage 1 items. Result of the DIT test is
presented as a $P$ score, in which $P$ stands for “principled.” The score ranges from 0 to 95,
and is based on “the relative importance that a subject gives to items representing stage 5
and 6, which indicate principled moral thinking” (Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz, &

The main rationale that connects Kohlberg’s model with DIT items is that “each
moral judgment stage has distinctive ways of defining a given socio-moral dilemma and
of evaluating the crucial issue of a problem” (Rest et al., 1974, p. 492). This suggests that
the DIT items show the different aspects of a moral issues people at different stages tend
to recognize and consider as important.

This rationale also provides a premise for this study as it can help to explain why
it is possible to use Kohlberg’s model to assess the moral reasoning level represented in
newspaper editorial content. When talking about a moral issue, editorials often select an
angle or aspect of it, which, from the newspaper’s point of view, is crucial to the problem.
Just as Entman (1993) suggested, frames “define problems”, “diagnose causes”, “make
moral judgments”, and “suggest remedies” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). The way the editorials
frame the topic would also demonstrate how the newsroom defines the moral issue, and
the way the editorials justify argumentations shows the values the newsroom uphold.
These are all indicators of moral judgment stages in Kohlberg’s theory.
From the 1970s to 2006, DIT has been administered to over 400,000 professionals; the number of studies using the DIT totals well over 1,000; and it has been used in more than 40 countries (Rest, 1994). A 2005 study by Wilkins and Coleman administered the DIT on journalists to show how they respond to ethical challenges in their professional environment. Aside from selecting four stories from the DIT test, the study added two other stories that were specifically related to journalism: a story about whether or not to publish a controversial photo, and a story about using hidden cameras in reporting. When applying the DIT to journalism and replacing the stories, Wilkins and Coleman worked on the belief that the DIT is specifically applicable to measuring journalists’ moral development, because 1) the original six stories conceived by Kohlberg and inherited by Rest contain one story that involved journalism; 2) up to two stories can be replaced with the stories they created that addressed similar dilemma (Wilkins & Coleman, 2005, p.21). The research compared the mean $P$ scores of journalists with other professions and showed that the journalists’ $P$ score ranked the fourth among various professions, only lower than philosophers, medical students and practicing physicians (Wilkins & Coleman, 2005, p.39).

Kohlberg (1981) and Rest (1979) found that the two most powerful variables in determining moral reasoning stages were age and education, which both indicated positive correlations with moral development (Kohlberg, 1981; Rest, 1979; Rest, 1994). Moreover, Rest found in the DIT that education demonstrated higher correlation than age (Rest, 1979). Besides, the gender variable also attracted much attention. Kohlberg’s theory and model were criticized as being male-oriented that did not take a female perspective into consideration (Gilligan, 1982), and that created a gender bias in the
scoring standards which would make women score lower than men (Holstein, 1976). However, this criticism has not been supported empirically. Rest’s 1976 DIT research revealed that among the 22 studies assessing gender differences, only two showed a significant difference in P score between males and females, and even in those two studies, “only 6% of the variance is accounted for by the sex variable” (Rest, 1979, p.120). Moreover and contrary to Gilligan’s assumptions, in both of those studies, it was females that scored higher (Rest, 1979). In addition, Walker (1984) did a review of 80 studies that assessed males and females on Kohlberg’s stages, and 86% of the samples did not demonstrate a significant difference in terms of gender, and when educational and occupational levels were controlled, no gender differences could be observed (Turiel, 2006). Similarly, after administering the DIT on journalists, Wilkins and Coleman (2007) found “no statistically significant difference in the scores of male journalists and female journalists” (Wilkins & Coleman, 2005, p.40). Findings of these studies indicated that Kohlberg’s model and Rest’s Defining Issues Test, which was developed based on Kohlberg’s theory, are in fact not gender-biased. Moreover, these findings suggested that unlike age and education differences, gender difference does not predict moral reasoning levels.

**Application of Moral Development Model and Its Connection to Media Ethics**

As by far the most established approach to studying moral development, Kohlberg’s theory and his model are most widely applied in business ethics and moral education research (Elm & Weber, 1994; Fraedrich, Thorne, & Ferrell, 1994; Trevino, 1986). In addition to the longitudinal study of moral development over time, Kohlberg’s
model can also be applied to assess the stage of reasoning at a specific point of time (Elm & Weber, 1994).

The model makes moral development—a cognitive mechanism—visible and hierarchical, which provides the possibility to discuss how to progress into a more ethical person. Media ethics scholars have been using Kohlberg’s moral development theory and the model as one of the important theoretical approaches to discuss journalistic decision making and explore ways for journalists to progress in terms of the modal regarding professional ethics. Ethicist Elliott used the moral development perspective to examine ethical situations new journalists are faced with, and explained how they can progress on the model in their professional career (Peck & Reel, 2013). Patterson and Wilkins explained the model as an essential perspective that showed the importance of developing adequate cognitive structures to make moral decisions in journalists’ careers (Patterson & Wilkins, 2007). The authors of both works noted the possibility of regressing to a lower stage when a young journalist enters into a new working situation. To apply the moral development theory and the model to the discussion of journalism ethics is perhaps the closest connection between this psychological model in the field of journalism and mass media research.

Aside from Barger’s study mentioned earlier, which examined moral language in newspaper commentary, no other studies were found that used the model to examining media texts. Barger (2003) did a preliminary study on moral language in newspaper commentary, including two weeks of columns and letters to the editors, from three major newspapers in Oregon with Kohlberg’s model (Barger, 2003). Barger used content analysis and quantitatively demonstrated that common stages newspaper commentary
generally represent are preconventional and conventional (Barger, 2003). Although this study will also use the same moral development model to examine media texts, it will be different from Barger’s in two ways. First, the analytical method and instrument are different—this study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis to closely examine the content, and develops a new instrument to evaluate the moral argumentations. (The methodology for this study is detailed below.) Second, the sampling is different—this study chooses only editorials and columns that are from two local newspapers and that talk about two specific local incidents revolving around a particular topic—rape culture.

**Rape Culture**

Rape culture is a concept that links rape and sexual violence to the culture of a society (Ritzer & Ryan, 2010, p. 493). A society with rape culture absorbs rape and sexual violence into the fabric of the society and the culture, naturalizing and normalizing these behaviors and the related problems as part of the everyday life. Rape culture is characterized with rape being pervasive and normalized by the social attitudes towards sexuality, gender, and violence (Ezzell, 2009, p.9). In his article about global rape culture, Parenti (2005) explained that typical manifestations of rape culture include the acceptance of rapes as normal occurrence and a male prerogative (Parenti, 2005). Examples of other behaviors associated with rape culture include police apathy in handling rape cases, victim blaming and shaming, reluctance of the authorities and the public to break patriarchal cultural norms, and fears of stigmatization from victims and their families (Parenti, 2005), and such behaviors often result in rape and sexual violence underreported to the police and underrepresented by the media. Many of these
manifestations of rape culture appeared in the discussion of the two local incidents that were chosen as the sample in this study.

The topic of rape culture itself contains many socio-moral aspects. The two incidents chosen—one about a public sex act and another about the Take Back The Night march—are directly related to rape culture, and contain many aspects that are controversial, such as victim blaming or shaming, sexual objectification, and trivializing rape and sexual violence. They elicit moral judgment of different kinds, which makes these two local incidents good examples to be used in this study.

Through analyzing the moral argumentation in the sample about the topic of rape culture, the study explored the following two research questions:

RQ1: Which stage(s) of moral reasoning are addressed in newspaper editorial contents concerning the two incidents about rape culture?

RQ2: How does the moral reasoning differ in student newspaper and local newspaper editorial contents concerning the topic issue?
Chapter 3: Methods

To answer the questions, the study analyzes the moral argumentations in editorial contents from two newspapers regarding two local incidents about rape culture. To advance the analysis, an instrument “Identifiers for Moral Judgment Stages” was developed, and Critical Discourse Analysis was adopted as the main method. This chapter introduces detail information about the sample, the instrument, and the method of Critical Discourse Analysis used in newspaper studies.

Sample

This study chooses a sample from two newspapers in Athens, Ohio, : The Post, an independent student newspaper run by Ohio University students, and The Athens News, a local newspaper circulated primarily to students and residents in town. The sample for this study not only includes editorials written by editors from the newspapers, but also columns which are written by columnists outside of the media but chosen by the editors to be published in the newspaper. One reason for including columns is to put together a high-quality sample because editorials alone do not provide a sufficient number of pieces for analysis. Also, as a part and parcel of the editorial page, columns help to build a pluralistic opinion platform, which is what a good editorial page is supposed to be. Editors’ choice of columns is part of their responsibility of “presenting and clarifying values of the society” (Hutchins, 1947), because they choose the ones that they think contain values and points that are worth publishing and valuable for the public to know. Therefore, what moral values are addressed in those columns chosen by editors for the newspapers is also of interest to this study, because they share the function of moral education.
Specifically, the study chooses editorials and columns about two local incidents that revolve around a same topic issue—rape culture: 1) a public sex act that happened on Oct 12, 2013 in Athens, Ohio, on a main street near Ohio University campus; and 2) the April 2, 2014 “Take Back the Night” march which for the first time permitted men’s participation.

The public sex act that took place on Ohio University’s Homecoming Weekend on October 12, 2013 has already been detailed in chapter one. This paragraph introduces the other incident, the annual “Take Back the Night” (TBTN) march on April 2, 2014. The TBTN event has a history of over fifty years and is held in many countries in Europe and in North America. According to the information from the Take Back the Night Foundation, since the 1970s, in the United States, TBTN has “focused on eliminating sexual and domestic violence in all forms. Thousands of colleges, domestic violence shelters, and rape crisis centers have held events all over the country” (“History of TBTN”, n.d.). This year in Ohio University, for the first time, the organizers of the march permitted male participation. Debates regarding whether male participation should be allowed and what it may do to the event were brought to the discussion. The debate of this topic mainly focused on identifying victims of sexual violence, which is a key factor in supporting both sides’ arguments on whether men have the right to march with women in this event.

The sample includes all the relevant editorials and columns from The Post and from The Athens News concerning the two incidents, consisting of five pieces from each newspaper. Generally in the sample, more pieces are about the public sex act than TBTN march, partly because the public sex incident attracted national and international
attentions, and its coverage lasted longer: from October when the incident happened, to December when the investigation results and grand jury decision came out; whereas the TBTN incident only attracted public attention for only one or two days before and after the march on April 2, 2014. Also, the former embodied more aspects that are controversial including bystander behaviors, (alleged) victim blaming, and public shaming of an innocent student, whereas TBTN discussion covers a major theme on sexual assault victim identification.

**Instrument**

The first instrument of this study is a chart that links conversational argumentation language to Kohlberg’s abstract description of the six moral development stages. Based on the detailed description of the orientations and reasons for doing right at each of the six stages, Kohlberg and Colby’s (1987) design of standard issue scoring unit (dilemma x issue x norm x element), and the design of the DIT test, the present study develops a chart that connects six stages of moral judgment with identifiable argumentations in more conversational forms that editorial and column writers usually use in the texts (see appendix B for the chart). The chart listed the perceived meaning of right and the reason for doing right derived from Kohlberg’s description. In addition, Rest’s interpretation of the six stages provided a bridge to Kohlberg’s normative and abstract accounts. Rest (1979) illustrated 2-3 aspects of moral reasoning that are representative of each stage and typical responses from the interview (Rest, 1979). By referring to Rest’s more concrete illustration, the present study came up with a list of typical arguments for each stage, and linked them to Kohlberg’s abstract rationales.
Another instrument used in this study is the list of “modal elements” (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, p.53) by Kohlberg. Modal elements are the key moral words that express main attitudes, such as should, must, deserve, approve. Through modal elements, moral judgments can be expressed as “expressions of duty, of rights, of blame.” Without modal elements, “a statement would not be prescriptive, and thus would not be considered a moral judgment” (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, p.53). Furthermore, the clarification of the distinctions among modal elements (such as noting the difference between having a duty and having a right to do something) is an essential characteristic of the higher stage reasoning, as Kohlberg stated, “at higher stages, judgments using different modal elements are clearly distinguishable from one another” (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, p.53). Also, at lower stages, a moral judgment may only contain modal elements, without further justification.

Kohlberg listed five modal elements: (Kohlberg, 1980, p.117):

1. Obeying/consulting persons or deity: should obey, get consent (should consult, persuade).
2. Blaming (approving). Should be blamed for, disapproved (should be approved).
3. Retributing (exonerating). Should retribute against (should exonerate).
4. Having a right (having no right).
5. Having a duty (having no duty).

Because modal elements are necessary to moral judgments, and at the same time can be an indicator for different reasoning stages, this study organizes the analysis of moral arguments by the modal elements they use, and clarify the rationales that justify the
modal elements. This sorting method also helps to demonstrate how the same modality is justified on different rational base on different stages.

**Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines the language in use and shows the power within the language. CDA studies discursive events—which in this study refers to editorial content—in three dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice (Richardson, 2007). From the perspective of CDA, the study of texts considers the use of all linguistic form such as vocabulary, grammar, semantics, syntax, among other things, and how they are used in the interest of the discursive event. It also takes into consideration the production and consumption of the texts, and the social structure in which the text is generated. The CDA sees language use as a way in which people may act upon society, and journalistic discourse, in particular, is “one active element in bringing about such change through shaping understandings, influencing audience attitudes and beliefs, and transforming the consciousness of those who read and consume it” (Richardson, 2007, p.29). By using CDA, more specifically, the way of using CDA introduced by Richardson who applied it particularly to newspaper analysis, this study aims to find out the mechanism of meaning making used in the editorials, and what the outcome of this process of generating meanings brought to the audience and the society.

To apply CDA in this particular study, five steps were taken: 1) dividing editorial pieces into sentence units; 2) categorizing sentence units into fact, argumentations, and conclusion by identifying their rhetoric features; 3) selecting moral argumentations from the three categorizations by identifying modal elements; 4) interpreting the moral argumentations from textual, discursive, and social levels with the instrument “Identifiers
of moral judgment stages”; 5) determining the moral reasoning stage the moral
argumentations addressed.

First, each editorial piece and column was broken down into sentence units. Then,
these sentence units were categorized as factual information, argumentation, and
conclusion based on their rhetorical features. As Richardson introduces, rhetoric, as
defined by Aristotle, is the “faculty of observing in any given case the available means of
persuasion” (quoted in Richardson, 2007, p.156). Rhetoric is a way to present persuasive
facts “in such a way that they convince an audience and thereby to provoke them into an
immediate or future course of action” (Richardson, 2007, p.156). In other words, just as
modal elements are the symbols of moral statements, rhetoric elements can be used as
identifiers of persuading discourse, which in this study, are the argumentations.
According to Richardson’s introduction of the theory of rhetoric developed by Aristotle,
there are three divisions of rhetoric: “forensic rhetoric”, “epideictic rhetoric”, and
“deliberative rhetoric” (Richardson, 2007, p.157). “Forensic rhetoric covers any form of
argumentative discourse in which an arguer condemns or defends someone’s past actions;”
“epideictic rhetoric” refers to the discourse in which the arguer is “concerned with
providing someone or something worthy of admiration or disapproval,” it is about the
present; and “deliberative rhetoric” is concerned about the future, and refers to the
discourse when the arguer “deliberates on the desirability or otherwise of a decision”
(Richardson, 2007, p.157). These three rhetoric practices focus on different time
perspective and different means of achieving persuasive goals. An argumentation may be
regarded as discussing the rightness or wrongness of past actions (forensic), talking about
character or reputation of someone in present (epideictic), or dealing with the desirability or undesirability of particular activities (deliberative).

I would like to take editorial #1 as an example to illustrate the first three steps of the analysis more clearly. Steps four and five are demonstrated in detail in the analysis chapter.

Detailed categorization can be found in appendix C, “Sentence Categorization of Sample Articles”. In the appendix, sentence units were shown by being put as a paragraph on their own. Here, to demonstrate the original shape and structure of the article, and to facilitate illustration, sentence units are numbered as follows:

Sentence (S) 1: Many of us Bobcats spent the weekend celebrating our Ohio University pride, reveling with alumni and current students alike.

S2: But by Sunday evening, we at The Post had a good-sized dent kicked into our Bobcat pride.

S3: During the Uptown festivities, a woman was allegedly sexually assaulted on the sidewalk. A cheering crowd captured it on video, snapped photos and laughed.

S4: The next day, many of that crowd took to Instagram and Twitter to post their comments and images.

S5: The original video has since been deleted, and the woman has filed a rape complaint with the Athens Police Department.

S6: But the actions of the OU students who posted the videos and photos have now gained national attention, and not the flattering kind.

S7: We aren’t here today to argue about the actions of the man and woman in the video (although we believe consent cannot be given if subjects are intoxicated), but rather to express our extreme disappointment with those who witnessed the event and did nothing to stop it, who in fact cheered on the act.

S8: Frankly, it’s an embarrassment to our university.

S9: It is extremely distressing to us that the witnesses to this event were unable to recognize anything wrong with what was happening.

S10: It is disgusting that during the event, no one interfered.

S11: Police were out in full force this weekend, and it would not have been difficult to tip them off.
S12: And it is horrendous that bystanders then took to social media to shame this woman. S13: If it had been you, or your sister or friend, would you have wanted photos, videos and scornful comments circulating?

S14: These pictures, comments and tweets will be online forever. S15: So please, put your cellphone down, show some compassion and use some common sense.

After breaking down the piece into sentence units, the next step is to determine which category they belong to. It is not difficult to tell that sentences(S) 1-6 are describing what actually happened, and S14 talks about a fact that will happen in the future. They do not possess any of the three rhetoric elements. Although the use of adjectives in S1-6 suggested attitudes, and indeed help to determine how the editors framed the issue, they do not present argumentative elements. Therefore, S1-6 are categorized as factual information that provides the context of the editorial or column. For factual information like this, a more detailed analysis of whether linguistic structures that implicated the frame of and attitudes towards moral issue was conducted.

S7 explicitly expressed argumentative purpose by saying that “we are not here to argue…but to express disappointment…” and is classified as an argument. It contained the forensic rhetoric element because it condemned people for something they did in the past—“witnessed the event and did nothing to stop it, and…in fact cheered on the act.” The same rule applies to S9-12, which all showed the forensic rhetoric feature of condemning past actions, and should be categorized as argumentations.

S8 and S13 are examples of justifications that are separated from the argumentation sentence unit, but are actually part of argumentation prior to them. S8 served as support for S7, and S13 was justifying the argument made in S9-12. It should be noted that although these sentence units were looked at separately at this stage, once
the categorization is done, they are to be interpreted together to maintain the logical relationships in latter steps.

S15 presents a deliberative rhetoric feature, talking about desirable actions in the future, so it is also an argumentation. Additionally, in the context of this study, S15 is a moral decision that the editors present to the readers, and therefore it is also categorized as a conclusion. Moral decisions like this were listed as the results of moral reasoning, but because the model is looking at the process of reaching the decisions, this kind of conclusion was not analyzed in detail in this study. Also, not all articles give a clear conclusion.

After the categorization of sentence units, those in the category of argumentations were further sorted as moral argumentations and non-moral argumentations. The standard for the classification was whether the arguments contained modal elements, which was explained earlier.

Back to the example of editorial #1, the sentence units in the category of argumentation are S7, with S8 as support, S9-12, with S13 as support, and S15. These sentences are all counted as moral argumentation because they contain modal elements of blaming (S7-8, S9-13)/approving (S15). In the analysis chapter, they are to be examined with the instrument that connects typical argumentation with six moral stages in Kohlberg’s model.

To illustrate the distinction between moral argument and non-moral argument, two sentence units from editorial #8 would serve as a good example: “That’s the problem of messaging. And who gets to determine the message is the problem of decision-making” (Editorial#8, 2014). These two sentences belong to the category of argumentation but are
not moral argumentations. They are both practice of epideictic rhetoric, providing
dissatisfaction to the messaging and decision-making process. However, they are not
moral argument because they do not contain any modal elements that show the attitude
towards moral right or wrong. Therefore, these two sentences are not to be used for
analysis in steps four and five.

In the first three steps of analysis—breaking down editorial pieces, identifying
argumentations, and selecting moral argumentations—the method of Critical Discourse
Analysis was used to determine argumentative discourses and the modes presented in the
argumentation. In steps four and five—interpreting moral argumentations, and
determining moral reasoning stages—CDA was adopted in the process of deconstructing
meanings and making reasonable connections and interpretations, which is what the
following analysis chapter presents.
Chapter 4: Analysis of Moral Argumentation

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of the moral argumentation in the sample. After the first three steps of analysis explained in the last section, this chapter presents the process of steps four and five, as well as the outcome of all five steps. Using the self-developed chart (see appendix B), the study identifies the value and justification underlying moral argumentations in the editorial, and links the arguments to a Kohlberg’s stage. One article may present more than one level of moral judgment, therefore this study also sketched out the patterns of moral reasoning levels in the editorial contents.

Critical Discourse Analysis assumes that language is used to “mean something and to do something and that this ‘meaning’ and ‘doing’ are linked to the context of its usage” (Richardson, 2007, p.24). Therefore, the interpretation step of the analysis is conducted based on the rationale of finding out what and how the argumentations communicate when they are used purposefully in the context of editorial contents. In this chapter, sentence units were are no longer presented separately, but were combined for interpretation for the purpose of maintaining cohesion and logic among sentences. For each editorial piece, using the self-developed instrument, the following questions were considered: What modal elements were adopted in the argumentation? How was the moral problem defined? What values, if there were any, were presented in the argument? How were the values justified? To which reasoning stage does this argument belong? The following analysis section is a comprehensive presentation of answers to these questions organized by modal elements. Moral reasoning stages represented in The Post and The Athens News are examined separately, followed by a comparative analysis to find out the differences and similarities.
Moral Reasoning Level in Student Newspaper—*The Post*

*The Post* is an editorially independent newspaper run by Ohio University students, mostly undergraduates. The editorial pieces were written collectively by four executive editors. At the end of each editorial, they always clarify that “*Editorials represent the majority of The Post’s executive editors.*” (see Editorial #1 for example).

On the public sex act that happened on October 12, 2013, *The Post* editors wrote three editorials that were published on October 16 and 29, and December 5, 2013. On the issue of Take Back the Night march (TBTN), *The Post* editors wrote one editorial piece on April 2, 2013, and published one column on April 3, 2013.

*The Post* addressed three modal elements: blaming, having a duty, and having a right. Editorials about the public sex act mainly adopted the modality of blaming, and the ones about the TBTN march demonstrated more about having a right and duty.

**Blaming.** Blaming is the major modal element adopted in *The Post*. Through the three editorials about the public sex act, the editors blamed students’ behavior as bystanders and their use of social media, the public shaming of a falsely identified student, and the public accusation of the couple who was involved in the incident. The editorials defined the incident as one that gained national attention and “not the flattering kind,” and “an embarrassment to our university” (Editorial #1, 2013). Blame in the articles was made on different reasoning bases. Major arguments mainly reason from an interpersonal or community level, and in the case of *The Post*, the sense of community is usually represented by the university.

Editorial #1 has a main idea of blaming the social media conduct of the bystanders, and it expressed serious and explicit blame, using words like “extremely
distressing,” “disgusting,” and “horrendous.” Not all of these blames were well supported, but in a case when there was clear justification, the argument was: “If it had been you, or your sister or friend, would you have wanted photos, videos and scornful comments circulating?” (Editorial #1, 2013). This argument shows a clear Golden Rule perspective, typical of stage 3, which advocates the idea of putting ourselves in others’ shoes. It looks at the interpersonal level, and holds that the reason for doing the right thing is to care about other individuals. Similar reasoning also showed up again in the conclusion of the same article: “So please, put your cellphone down, show some compassion and use some common sense.” This advocated a stage 3 value—caring for others—as it urged readers to “show some compassion.” It even did so by recognizing it as “common sense”.

Blame in editorial #1 was also based on the justification of maintaining community reputation, for instance:

[we are here today]…to express our extreme disappointment with those who witnessed the event and did nothing to stop it, who in fact cheered on the act.

Frankly, it’s an embarrassment to our university (Editorial #1, 2013). This argument supported the blame made to the bystanders with the reason that it undermines the reputation of the university. By upholding the value of seeking good group consequences and avoiding damage to the whole institution, this argument presented a stage 4 level reasoning.

In editorial #3, a piece about the public sex act, an argument was made regarding the public shaming of a female student who was falsely identified as the student involved in the public sex act.
And what about the Ohio University student whose name and personal information were published by The Daily Beast for recording and sharing the sex act?

What about the poor woman falsely named as the student, her pictures plastered over the Internet? Pictures that somewhat resemble the woman who reported a rape if you squint enough? They were publicly shamed.

But the only people that know the identities of the pair are close friends, family and a few university officials. That might not ever change.

Of course, prosecuting the pair with a misdemeanor isn’t going to make up for what happened to the others. But fair—in this case—isn’t necessarily fair (Editorial #3, 2013).

The argument was blaming an unfair situation. It basically claimed that it is unfair that two innocent students were publicly shamed because of being wrongly alleged as the actors in the drama, but the identity of the pair who actually performed in the show did not get publicized. The basis for this blame is a representation of the instrumental ideas about fairness and simple equality. It did not look at the principled level of fairness, such as the equality of human rights or respect for human dignity, but was simply weighing the immediate interests of both sides. This is most saliently shown in the statement “of course, prosecuting the pair with a misdemeanor isn’t going to make up for what happened to the others,” which implied comparison of the interest and damage.

Arguments in this case addressed typical stage 2 reasoning which recognizes the issue from a concrete individualistic level, and seeks instrumental fairness and equal exchange.
Fair, in the context of this type of argument, really isn’t necessarily the kind of fairness as justice in the sense of a universal principle.

The same article goes on to blame the public discourse about accusing the woman involved in the incident of falsely alleging rape. To support the blame, the argument expressed concern that:

Those beliefs can easily foment a generalization that can affect those men and women who truly accuse their attackers but are met with doubt because of false accusations from others. (Editorial #3, 2013)

This reasoning speaks from stage 3, stressing the harm the accusative discussion would cause to others. From an interpersonal perspective, it implies the value of caring for others’ interests and seeking a good group consequence.

Other blame, evidenced by the statement “It is extremely distressing to us that the witnesses to this event were unable to recognize anything wrong with what was happening” that appeared in editorial #1 (Editorial #1, 2013), contain only modal elements without any further reasoning. In arguments like this, a modal element of blame was presented, but no explanation or elaboration as to why this should be blamed was given. Such moral judgments that use modal elements alone are “affirm[ing] the importance of a norm via a particular modality without further justification” (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, p. 54), and they are a representative of lower stage reasoning that upholds normative orders and authoritative rules. In other words, this type of argumentation, with only modal elements, is not further supported by any specific rationales, or as in Kohlberg’s words, by “value elements,” but is merely made for the purpose of blaming or advocating a certain stance. In this case, the judgment makers may
not even realize that the judgment is incomplete, because they have the norms internalized as background assumptions that implicitly completed the judgment and justification for them. In the example given before, by simply claiming that “it is extremely distressing,” the editorial is actually affirming the implicit reason behind the judgment that “in a normal case, witnesses to this event should be able to recognize something wrong with what was happening and do something,” and if not, they should be blamed.

Having a duty. Another type of argumentation contains the modal element of having a duty. Most of the arguments with this modality in The Post stress the value of living up to the expectation of certain roles assigned to us, and fulfilling the obligations defined by the roles.

After the grand jury decision came out two weeks after the incident, The Post published an editorial to encourage students to talk about the event. The arguments were a strong suggestion of the duty modality, for example:

We, as OU students, should talk about the alleged rape, the social media that followed and the underlying issues that have rippled outward from this single incident.

We should continue to take steps to educate our campus about victim blaming. We should continue to learn what we, as bystanders, can do.”

Eyes around the nation are now on us to move forward from what has happened (Editorial #2, 2013).

The “should” in the first two arguments all implied a sense of duty, and it was the role of “OU students” that carried the duty. It is because “we” are OU students that “we” have
the duty to talk about the issues related to the incident, and it also implied that the role of “bystanders” embodies duties that need to be fulfilled. Here, the only reason given for fulfilling the duties is that “we are OU students,” which could be translated into “any OU students are obliged to do this, it’s just natural,” which is a typical stage 3 argument. It conveyed the rationale of imperative conscience to meet an obligation defined by our role in the society and others’ expectations. The third statement showed that the expectation came from the “eyes around the nation.” Also, the argument held that because of the national attention, there is a need to maintain the community image, which argues from a perspective of seeking good group reputation, a stage 4 level reasoning base.

Similar arguments also showed up in editorial #4, which was about the Take Back The Night event:

The sexual-violence problem is huge. People of all gender identities will need to come together to solve it, men in particular (Editorial #4, 2014).

This argument also advocates for fulfilling a duty, however, there is no further justification as to why “men in particular”, and where the duties come from. Just like the blame without further justification, these arguments that advocate duty are also just upholding the entrenched social norms and believing everybody within the system has their share of duty, and showing the desire to maintain that normative order without questioning or thinking deeper about what the underlying reasons are; therefore these arguments were not able to clarify the values.

It is clear that these arguments about duty speak from the community level, and in the case of The Post, as a student-run newspaper that circulates mainly on campus, the sense of community is in fact always the university. The moral reasoning base of the
argument still stays inside the system, trying to maintain the stereotypical good behaviors and the normative orders, and seek good consequences for the university.

While most of the arguments from the editorials presented the moral arguments from lower stages of pre-conventional or conventional level, editorial #5, the column about the TBTN event, presented a higher reasoning stage.

The main argumentation of the article was as the title suggested: “TBTN should democratize decision making.” In the article, the author looked into what caused the controversy, and argued that the conflicts derived from the messaging and decision making of the event. While arguing that organizers of TBTN have the duty clarify the message, the author brought up what the message “decades of local tradition” of this event conveyed, and argued that TBTN organizers still have to think about what to convey, because “traditions and even majorities aren’t always worth going along with.”

With this suggestion, the argument reached stage 5 reasoning; it began to think outside of the existing norm and question the underlying values prior to social attachments.

Furthermore, the same article continues to make the argument that:

The process for deciding TBTN’s message can be authoritarian or democratic. … And by ‘say,’ I’m not talking about mere input. I’m talking about people having a share of actual decision-making power through some system of majority rule or consensus process, which would constitute a more democratic approach to determining TBTN’s message. In addition to clearer messaging, a more democratic process that’s open to a wider constituency of TBTN stake-holders would go a long way to decrease the unnecessary kind of conflict and increase the necessary kind (Editorial #5, 2014).
The above supporting reasons integrate the perspective of a formal social mechanism of due process, advocating that people should have their “share of actual decision-making power.” This rationale questions the legitimacy of the decision process about the purpose of TBTN march, and the standpoint is not confined to the community level by thinking about what is good for maintaining the group and community, but extended to consider a variety of values from both moral and legalistic perspectives, also addressing a stage 5 level reasoning.

**Having a right.** The two articles about the TBTN march addressed the modality of having a right. The following argument in editorial #4 is an example claiming a right for men to march with women in the event:

> Men are also survivors of sexual violence (albeit at a much lower rate than women are), as are people who identify with variant genders. Should they be relegated to the sidelines simply because of how they identify? We don’t think so (Editorial #4, 2014).

The argument holds that men, as well as other people who identify with variant genders, have a right to march (“should not be relegated to the sidelines”) with women, because they are also “survivors of sexual violence.” This is another example of the idea of instrumental fairness that is typical of stage 2 reasoning. The underlying logic of the argument is that the idea of women being potential victims and survivors of sexual violence is widely accepted, so that there is no controversy about women organizing or participating TBTN march; men have a right, or deserve to get the same recognition to march without being questioned, just as women do, because they are in the same position as women—being potential survivors of sexual violence. The logic demonstrated seeking
for simple equality that since men and women are both survivors, they deserve the same right to march.

Table 1 outlined the pattern of moral reasoning stages addressed in The Post. With the exception of editorial #5 about TBTN decision making, which demonstrated a stage 5 reasoning, The Post’s moral argumentations represent the preconventional and conventional level, especially stage 2 and stage 3 reasoning. Many editorials address multiple levels of reasoning, editorial #3 even bounced back and forth between stages 2, 3, and 4.
### Table 1

Moral reasoning stages in *The Post*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>Modal element</th>
<th>Justification (Value)</th>
<th>Sample argument</th>
<th>Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1. Students should rethink social media conduct</td>
<td>Student social media use</td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>Caring for others; Golden Rule</td>
<td>&quot;It is horrendous that bystanders then took to social media to shame this woman. If it had been you, or your sister or friend, would you have wanted photos, videos and scornful comments circulating?&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>&quot;It is extremely distressing to us that the witnesses to this event were unable to recognize anything wrong with what was happening. &quot; &quot; It is disgusting that during the event, no one interfered.&quot;</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>Keeping the institution in order</td>
<td>&quot;to express our extreme disappointment with those who witnessed the event and did nothing to stop it, who in fact cheered on the act. Frankly, it’s an embarrassment to our university. &quot;</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2. Decision needs to spark discussion</td>
<td>Overall discussion</td>
<td>Having a duty</td>
<td>Imperative of conscience to meet our defined obligation</td>
<td>“We, as OU students, should talk about the alleged rape, the social media that followed and the underlying issues that have rippled outward from this single incident.” “ We should continue to learn what we, as bystanders, can do.”</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3. Six weeks later, not much has changed after sex act</td>
<td>Public shame</td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>Instrumental ideas of fair</td>
<td>“They were publicly shamed. But the only people that know the identities of the pair are close friends, family and a few university officials. That might not ever change. Of course, prosecuting the pair with a misdemeanor isn’t going to make up for what happened to the others. But fair—in this case—isn’t necessarily fair.”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public accusation</td>
<td>Having a duty</td>
<td>Caring for others; be good in other’s eyes</td>
<td>“Those beliefs can easily foment a generalization that can affect those men and women who truly accuse their attackers but are met with doubt because of false accusations from others.”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall discussion</td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>“We seem to be no better off now than we were then. And that is the greatest public shame of all.”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>Modal element</th>
<th>Justification (Value)</th>
<th>Sample argument</th>
<th>Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#4. Balanced discussion is a sign of progress on a tough subject</td>
<td>Sexual assault victim identification</td>
<td>Having a right</td>
<td>Instrumental idea about fair and simple equal exchange</td>
<td>“Men are also survivors of sexual violence (albeit at a much lower rate than women are), as are people who identify with variant genders. Should they be relegated to the sidelines simply because of how they identify? We don’t think so.”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Having a duty</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>“The sexual-violence problem is huge. People of all gender identities will need to come together to solve it, men in particular.”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5. TBTN should democratize decision-making</td>
<td>The message of TBTN march</td>
<td>Having a duty</td>
<td>Aware of variety of values and opinions prior to social contract; Integrate perspectives of due process.</td>
<td>“But traditions and even majorities aren’t always worth going along with.” “The process for deciding TBTN’s message can be authoritarian or democratic. … In addition to clearer messaging, a more democratic process that’s open to a wider constituency of TBTN stake-holders would go a long way to decrease the unnecessary kind of conflict and increase the necessary kind.”</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moral Reasoning Levels in Local Newspaper—*The Athens News*

*The Athens News* is a local newspaper that publishes twice a month and circulates mainly to the students residents in the city of Athens, Ohio. Editorials are written by the chief editor, Terry Smith. On the public sex act, *The Athens News* published one editorial piece on October 20 and three columns on October 23, October 30, and November 3, 2013. On the TBTN march, one column was published on April 2, 2014.

Modal elements adopted in these articles are blaming, having a duty and not having a right. Unlike *The Post*, the sample pieces from *The Athens News* are all written by different authors and each piece has more clear focus on a certain subject. Therefore, even though the articles are longer than those in *The Post*, each article may only deal with one modal element and address one reasoning level.

**Blaming.** Like *The Post*, blaming is also the most commonly used modal element in *The Athens News*. The articles blamed bystanders’ reaction in the public sex act, the social media behavior, public accusation of the couple involved, and also the couple’s behavior.

Blame from editorial #6, the only editorial piece written by the editor in *The Athens News*, was about public sex act incident, and was mostly reasoning from a community perspective. For example, the article argued that “it's a tremendously unfortunate incident, not just for the two people directly involved, but for Athens and Ohio University.” Although it mentions both the “two people directly involved” and “Athens and Ohio University,” the sentence structure “not just…but” indicated the emphasis of the argument lies on the latter part. The sense of community is more obviously exemplified by the following rational basis for the blaming:
With the story and images exploding on the Web last week (with the painful reminder that the Web is "Worldwide), our community's reputation suffered another serious hit.

… An incident that even put in the best light, could only mean mortal embarrassment and potential ruination to the two in the images, as well as great harm to this community… (Editorial #6, 2013)

The arguments present a clear stage 4 level of reasoning, stressing the impairment of community interests with phrases such as “tremendously unfortunate” “serious hit” and “great harm.” At the same time, it actually implied the importance of community interests, because the argument is framing and measuring the severity of the problem by stating the damage the incident has done to the community. In other words, the incident was defined by the editorial in terms of its impact on the community.

The reason for blaming in the following argument shows another perspective that presents the value of living up to social expectations of being good adults:

Everyone involved in this unfortunate event made gross errors in judgment—both practically and ethically – that in a reasonably functioning adult could only be explained by alcohol or narcotics impairment.

In a better world - the one where alcohol, drugs and a cultural sink don't override common sense and human kindness - a responsible person would have taken the situation in hand. He or she would have saved these two people from starring roles in their own public humiliation, or even possibly, stopped a sexual assault in its tracks. Plus the better human impulse would have had the not
insignificant side effect of saving our university and town from another reputational kick to the groin (Editorial #6, 2013).

These arguments present typical stage 3 reasoning, especially with the saying that “Everyone involved in this unfortunate event made gross errors in judgment—both practically and ethically – that in a reasonably functioning adult could only be explained by alcohol or narcotics impairment” and that “in a better world a responsible person would have taken the situation in hand…” There is a concept of “good adult” embedded in these rationales, and the right that the arguments advocate is to live up to the expectations of being a “good adult” and to “save our university and town.” The argument implied that if not because of “alcohol and narcotics impairment,” a “reasonable functioning adult would not make the errors in judgment.” However, there is no further explanation as to why the “good adult” is set in the way demonstrated in the argument, or what it means to be a “reasonable functioning adult.” The absence of this explanation is actually filled up by implicit social expectations. The image of “good adult” derives from a social expectation for member of the society to behave responsibly for maintaining the social order and keeping the community safe from harm, and the argument took it for granted without asking why.

Another argument which also blames the bystanders’ behaviors from editorial #6, a column article, goes:

Not only are survivors and their traumatic experiences fully exposed for public scrutiny, but the recording and sharing of such images is also a form of sexual violence, causing more harm to victims (Editorial #6, 2013).
This is also a stage 3 reasoning, but addressed the value of interpersonal caring: what the bystanders did with social media was wrong because it caused more harm to the victims and thus violated the value of having good motives and caring for others.

In editorial #7, the justification for the blame of bystander reaction was addressed from a stage 4 level, holding the value of people’s obligations to the society and keeping the system working:

Everyone has an active role in preventing abuse. To build safer communities, everyone must speak up against incidents or messages that normalize sexual harm, abuse or exploitation. Become an engaged bystander: someone who intervenes before, during or after a situation when they see or hear behaviors that promote sexual violence (Editorial #7, 2013).

The statements “everyone has a role…” “to build safer communities, everyone must speak up…” suggested a typical argumentation on stage 4 reasoning that believes in sticking to the roles in the society and duties that come with it. It considers individuals in terms of their places in the system, and recognizes the duties the society assigns to them in order to maintain the social order, for example, to build a safer community, and to make sure the society does not break down.

Aside from the blame that was justified with rational support, in editorial #6, there was also one argument of blaming that did not get supported:

At the risk of stating the obvious, the dark-suited young man who was committing the sex acts on the young woman, an OU student, erred in a number of ways (Editorial #6, 2013).
Here, the judgment blamed the man involved in the public sex act, but the judgment “the young man…erred in a number of ways” was not further justified and elaborated, but only stated as something “obvious.” The texts that follow the argument did not provide reasons for why he was wrong, but were really just statements of description and speculation of the scene:

Foremost, even if it turns out she was able to give informed consent, something the young woman denied the next day when she accused him of rape, he blatantly took advantage of her, while smirking and boasting to camera-wielding bystanders. He was acting upon her, not the other way around (Editorial #1, 2013).

The reason for claiming that he erred seemed to be “he blatantly took advantage of her… he was acting upon her…” But these are not value-laden justifications. Instead, they are only further blames on what he did according to the speculation of the scene, only using words such as “blatantly”, “smirking and boasting” to emphasize that he was wrong. No valid justification was provided based on value elements to explain why it was wrong to take advantage of the woman and acting upon her.

Two of the column articles, editorial #8 and #9, presented arguments of blames from a higher reasoning level. What the two articles have in common is that they only addressed a single issue—one about public accusation of the women falsely alleged rape, and another about social media conduct—but with lengthy and sophisticated rationales to support the main idea. This is, in the first place, a characteristic of higher level reasoning—the view becomes more sophisticated and clearly clarified based on sufficient justification, which often takes more space to articulate.
Editorial #8 mainly deals with the issue of public accusation of the couple involved in the act. Shortly after the women reported rape to the police, the people who believed that it was a clear-cut case of sexual assault “rushed to condemn” the man being accused, even when the investigation was still going on. Blame of this public condemnation was not addressed in a direct and vigorous way, such as using sensational words and express disappointment, but rather used a rationale that bears the belief in a universal principle to explain why it should be blamed:

The due-process rights of the accused are among the most basic principles of justice, and they are always under attack by bigots of one variety or another - people who give vastly more weight to the suspicions of some than they do to the lives and liberty of others. Obviously, those rushing to condemn the accused in this case have not been bigots armed with torches, ropes or unchecked executive power. Still, any rush to judgment should be cause for concern - and that would be true even if the Grand Jury had decided to indict the accused (Editorial #8, 2013).

The argument demonstrated that the public’s rushed condemnation of the accused, that is the man who performed the act, deprived him the “due-process rights”, and violated the “most basic principles of justice.”

On the other hand, the woman was also publicly condemned. There were people who accused her of falsely alleging the rape, because they thought “she was embarrassed by the viral video and photo posts online” (Editorial #8, 2013). The main argument was that the public should not rush to judge that the woman was “crying-wolf,” and eight paragraphs were devoted to giving evidence to counter-argue the “crying-wolf thesis.” It should be noted that the content of the evidence is not relevant to this study, because they
served to support a non-moral argument—the “crying-wolf thesis” is wrong. What the study cares about is the justification for claiming this rushed judgment of the woman should not be approved. Although not clearly and explicitly stated, that justification was implied in the following statement:

Combined with everything else that's dumb about this sadly predictable rush to judgment, it teaches us two things - first, just how much of their own intelligence many people are willing to sacrifice in the defense of privilege (and in this case, we're talking about the privilege of men in our society to most often rape with impunity) and two, that when feminists talk about "rape culture," they're probably on to something (Editorial #8, 2013).

The implicit reasoning basis was from the perspective of questioning the values underlying this phenomenon of rushed judgment, which has been accepted by many people. This statement actually argued that one of the causes of the rushed judgment of the woman was that people were always willing to defend the privilege. This inclination is so automatic that it happens even if in this case, when accusing the woman of falsely alleging rape would mean that they actually defend the privilege of men to rape without penalty, which reinforces the rape culture. The justifications given for the blame of the accusation of both the man and the woman present stage 6 reasoning level that speaks from universal principles and cast doubt on the widely accepted values.

In editorial #9, the main subject was blaming the social media conduct, which was termed “digital voyeurism.” The article presents a moral deliberation on the use of social media in today’s society, and argued that the digital voyeurism is an “irresponsible” and “outcome-oriented” behavior that should be disapproved, and explained the reasons for
this argument. In articulating the factors that facilitate the behavior, arguments mainly reason from explicating how the factors fail to meet certain universal human values. For example:

First, everybody is in permanent witness mode. Whatever happens can and will be documented with a smart-phone camera, often with an eye toward its sensational and voyeuristic value. We need to recognize that privacy invasions do not stem solely from an ever-increasing network of governmental and corporate surveillance. They also result from the trend of private individuals to constantly and compulsively take pictures and make them public, no matter how inappropriate the content. Worse, often these posts are instruments of willful shaming and Schadenfreude (Editorial #9, 2013).

By stating that the use of digital devices and social media invaded privacy and often times resulted in “willful shaming and Schadenfreude,” what the argument considered was mainly whether the behavior of digital voyeurism violated a basic principle of respect for human dignity, and in this case, the answer is positive, which serves as a reason for the disapproval.

The article also presented argument that saw a need for new overarching rules that are based on universal principles:

We thus need a new digital ethics of self-restraint, based on the Kantian question of whether you truly would want any posted information to become known not only to your friends but to the whole world. If we took the time to ask this question and to empathize with those ridiculed and exposed in such posts, we would be much more hesitant to hit “upload” (Editorial #9, 2013).
This argument was addressing a need of a new digital ethics that is based on Kant’s principle of categorical imperative to illustrate and confront the problem of digital voyeurism.

What makes these arguments in editorial #9 representatives of stage 6 reasoning is that these justifications are not only well articulated, but also speak neither from an individual level, nor the societal level, but discussed the issue from the perspective of the value of human life. It was addressed with the understanding that rules can be amended or changed if there are rational principled reasons to do so, and in this case, given the damages to some essential values digital voyeurism has done, there is a need to change the existing rules.

**Not having a right.** Editorial #10, the only column about the TBTN event in *The Athens News*, mainly adopted the modal element of “not having a right” to make the moral argumentation. The article presented a clear argument that men should not (do not have a right) to march with women, as demonstrated by the title “Men don’t need to reclaim the night; they already own it” and a major argument that “I was heartbroken when I learned the march this year would not be solely for women…TBTN is for women” (Editorial #10, 2014). The justifications basically considered the perspective of simple instrumental fairness. Its reasoning basis was the comparison of the perceived situation of men and women in sexual violence:

Yes, men are victims of sexual assault too, but not nearly at the rate women are, and when they are victimized, it is almost always by another man…

Clearly, women are at a much-higher risk than men.
Heterosexual men are not afraid to walk down the street at night. Most women are (Editorial #10, 2014).

These justifications presented a rational basis that looked at the elements of fairness of equality in a pragmatic way. Men should not march because they are not in the same status as women are in terms of sexual assault; they do not deserve the right to march because they are not faced with the same threat as women are. It would be unfair to include men in the event of taking back the night “that was stolen from [women].” This rational basis of the argument, which talked about fairness and reciprocity from an instrumental perspective, demonstrated a clear stage 2 level reasoning.

Table 2 outlines the general pattern of moral reasoning levels in *The Athens News*. Overall, *The Athens News* mainly presents conventional and postconventional level reasoning. In the next section, a comparative analysis will demonstrate the differences and similarities in the patterns of moral reasoning levels in both newspapers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>Modal element</th>
<th>Justification (Value)</th>
<th>Sample argument</th>
<th>Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#6. One sober adult could have prevented sex tragedy</td>
<td>The public sex act per se</td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>Group consequence</td>
<td>“… it's a tremendously unfortunate incident, not just for two people directly involved, but for Athens and Ohio University.”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>“the dark-suited young man who was committing the sex acts on the young woman, an OU student, erred in a number of ways.”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bystanders’ Reaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>Living up to social expectation</td>
<td>“In a better world - the one where alcohol, drugs and a cultural sink don't override common sense and human kindness - a responsible person would have taken the situation in hand. He or she would have saved these two people from starring roles in their own public humiliation, or even possibly, stopped a sexual assault in its tracks. Plus the better human impulse would have had the not insignificant side effect of saving our university and town from another reputational kick to the groin.”</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7. Change the conversation on social media, end rape culture</td>
<td>Bystanders’ reaction</td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>Caring about others; Avoid harm to others</td>
<td>“Not only are survivors and their traumatic experiences fully exposed for public scrutiny, but the recording and sharing of such images is also a form of sexual violence, causing more harm to victims.”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>Keep the institution going: Imperative of conscience to meet one’s defined obligations</td>
<td>“Everyone has an active role in preventing abuse. To build safer communities, everyone must speak up against incidents or messages that normalize sexual harm, abuse or exploitation. Become an engaged bystander: someone who intervenes before, during or after a situation when they see or hear behaviors that promote sexual violence.”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Main Theme</td>
<td>Modal element</td>
<td>Justification (Value)</td>
<td>Sample argument</td>
<td>Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8. Crying wolf about crying wolf</td>
<td>Public accusation of the couple</td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>Believing in the validity of universal moral principles; appealing to logical comprehensiveness</td>
<td>“The due-process rights of the accused are among the most basic principles of justice, and they are always under attack by bigots of one variety or another - people who give vastly more weight to the suspicions of some than they do to the lives and liberty of others.”</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9. Voyeurism, digital style, a sign of the times</td>
<td>Social media use</td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>Perspective of ethical principles and upholding human value</td>
<td>“We need to recognize that privacy invasions … also result from the trend of private individuals to constantly and compulsively take pictures and make them public, no matter how inappropriate the content. Worse, often these posts are instruments of willful shaming and Schadenfreude.” “We thus need a new digital ethics of self-restraint, based on the Kantian question….”</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10. Men don’t need to reclaim the night; they already own it</td>
<td>Men’s participation</td>
<td>Not having a right</td>
<td>Instrumental ideas of fair</td>
<td>“Yes, men are victims of sexual assault too, but not nearly at the rate women are, and when they are victimized, it is almost always by another man.” “Clearly, women are at a much-higher risk than men.”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison

Comparing the patterns of moral reasoning levels in the two newspapers outlined in Tables 1 and 2, one can see that roughly, editorial contents in *The Athens News* demonstrated higher levels in moral argumentations than *The Post* on the topic issues. *The Athens News* mainly addressed conventional and postconventional reasoning levels, whereas *The Post* mainly demonstrated preconventional and conventional reasoning levels. This difference in the patterns is only a quick conclusion at a glance. This section provides more detailed aspects of the differences between moral argumentations in the two newspapers.

Moral arguments in *The Athens News* are often better articulated and supported. An obvious example is that in *Athens News*, only one argumentation from the editorial piece was unsupported. Two columns even contain complex and lengthy justifications; while many moral argumentations in *The Post* editorials were only presenting modalities and standpoints, but not any rational support (such as the first argumentation of editorial #1 shown in Table 1). Not having value-laden justifications to support a modal element in a moral argument is a demonstration of being unable to realize the need for or producing further justification, and so the moral elements themselves would serve as terminal values with or without consciousness. It is often emblematic of the preconventional level and the conventional level reasoning, where upholding normative or authoritative orders are the primary concern for morality.

Editorial contents in *The Post* are generally short pieces around 400 words, and the shortest has less than 300 words. It is more typical to see short articles addressing multiple levels of reasoning in *The Post*. The space limit makes it not surprising that
argumentations were often made in a rush and were not well supported. *The Athens News* editorial articles, on the other hand, are generally longer pieces with more than 500 words, with the longest one having over 1,000 words. Except for editorial #1, articles in *The Athens News* had one clear main argumentation, and often the justifications were longer because they explain the reasons in more sophisticated ways, especially the two articles that demonstrated stage 6 level moral arguments. These two articles present complex reasoning that speaks from the view of universal principles, which often takes more space to articulate.

It should be noted that the length might be constrained by the space in the newspapers. The editorials of *The Post* are collaborative work written by four executive editors, and the four of them write the article on Google Docs, which has the function of preserving revision history. This author reviewed some of the revision history in writing the editorial pieces, and found that longer paragraphs are always shortened by deleting explanations or information, or rephrasing with more concise language. This is a clear sign of writing to meet a length limitation. *The Post* often has one fixed editorial page into which the editorial, letters to the editor, columns and editorial cartoons are squeezed; therefore it is common that editorial pieces often take a short form. *The Athens News* has relatively more space for editorial and columns. They are not confined to one page, and some longer pieces can even take a whole page on their own, and thus longer articles are more common. However, to look from another perspective, these space limits also reflect different newsroom policies and attitudes towards editorial page in the two newspapers, and that difference shapes the same discursive practice—editorial contents—in a different way. Devoting only one page for all sorts of editorial contents, and therefore curtailing
the length of each piece accordingly shows that *The Post* newsroom may not give as much weight to editorial content as *The Athens News* does, or does not have enough budget to add more pages for the newspaper. Or in a worse scenario, they may not see the need to present more sophisticated reasons in the editorials, which would greatly undermine the potential educational function editorial page could have had. By giving more space for opinion pieces, *The Athens News* seems to be more aware of the newspaper editorial’s role of providing a forum for presenting and clarifying values, and of being educators informing and telling the public what is the right and the good.

In Critical Discourse Analysis, as Richardson argued, the texts of newspaper should also be “viewed in the context of a dialectical process of production and consumption” (Richardson, 2007, p.112). So when considering the discursive practice, the different argumentation quality, and also the resulting difference in reasoning level patterns, is also related to the production and consumption of the texts in the two newspapers.

As mentioned before, *The Post* has a major audience of students, and is run mostly by undergraduate students. The production of editorial contents is a collective effort by four executive editors, which may easily lead to multiple reasoning stages in a very limited space because the four of them might write from different levels and incorporate them together. Also, the editors are all undergraduate students, which, as the result of DIT administered across professions has shown, have a lower score in this moral reasoning test than professional journalists (Wilkins & Coleman, 2005, p.39). On the contrary, *The Athens News* publishes editorials and columns written by professional
journalists, professors, experienced individuals working in local organizations relevant to
the topic issue or even experts in the field.

Kohlberg (1981) and Rest (1994) have both demonstrated that age and education
are the two most powerful factors that positively correlate with moral reasoning levels. In
addition, as mentioned earlier in chapter 2, Kohlberg’s moral development model mainly
addresses moral judgment, which is only one of the four components of morality. Aside
from moral judgment, moral sensitivity, moral motivation and moral character all play a
role in one’s morality (Rest, 1994, p.23-25). On the topic of rape culture, the columnists
who wrote articles for *The Athens News* are not only more likely to have a higher moral
judgment level, but also have a higher moral sensitivity due to their constant and active
exposure to the issue; a stronger moral motivation derives from their educational and
professional background; and a more mature moral character because of their age and
experience compared to the undergraduate editors writing for *The Post*. All of these
factors may contribute to the difference in the quality of the moral argumentations in the
two newspapers. Although the relationship between the moral reasoning level between
texts and their generators are not clear, there is a good chance that those who produced
editorial pieces for *The Post* were less capable of articulating as sophisticated an
argument as those who wrote for *The Athens News*, simply because of their limited ability
of recognizing complex world views. This can be further supported by the fact that the
only column in *The Post*, which contributed the only post-conventional level reasoning,
was not written by a student, but an experienced freelance writer who has helped
organize various local social justice campaigns, including efforts to combat sexual assault
at Ohio University.
Apart from these differences, the moral argumentations in the two newspapers share some common features. Both basically reinforce the existing system and normative order. This similar characteristic can be shown by the fact that they both presented mainly conventional reasoning levels, which typically speak from maintaining social orders, rules and laws, although they address different perception of the “society”—for *The Post*, that system is just the university, and for *The Athens News*, it means the whole city or the community, including the university.

Also, although not a research emphasis, the study also found that columns generally present higher level reasoning than the editorial pieces in both newspapers. In *The Post*, the only stage 5 level reasoning was demonstrated by the column, and in *The Athens News*, columns presented the only postconventional level reasoning. This difference may be a result of different purposes of writing. Editorial pieces written by editors tend to possess a stronger sense of educational responsibility and may try to speak to the readers from an educational stance. Especially in the case of the public sex act, most of the editorials from both newspapers set the tone as to educate the readers what was wrong by blaming all sorts of behaviors by different groups, and advocate readers to think about it carefully and understand what needs to become better. To meet the need for education, the editorials may choose simpler ways to make the argument, trying to make the readers sympathize, perhaps as a strategy to make the editorials the lowest common denominator. The choice of columns actually may be a way to make up for the quality of argumentation and complexity of reasoning.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Up to this point, this study has analyzed the moral argumentation in both newspapers, and sketched out the patterns of the reasoning stages represented in the argumentations. The student newspaper generally presents lower reasoning stages than the local newspaper regarding the chosen sample issue of rape culture. Moral argumentations in the student newspaper address mainly stage 2, 3 and 4, with one on stage 5 level reasoning. While the local newspaper addresses mainly stage 3, 4, and 6, with one on stage 2.

According to the result of Kohlberg’s and Rest’s empirical studies, most adults have generally developed moral judgment capacity on the conventional level, but not many people reach the postconventional level (Kohlberg, 1981; Rest, 1974). It should be remembered that having the capacity to reason on the conventional level does not mean that one would always stick to the level. People can make different judgments in different cases. The stage model implies a “structural whole”, the total way of thinking (Kohlberg, 1980, p. 120). As mentioned before in chapter 2, Kohlberg’s moral development stages demonstrate a hierarchical sequence and that higher stages are more desirable and imply more moral adequacy. In terms of presenting higher stages to stimulate a moral growth, the student newspaper is not providing conditions that are really conducive to the readers’ moral growth, because the moral reasoning level they present is not necessarily higher than that of its readers. The editorial pieces in the student newspaper were not presenting high level of reasoning to stimulate a progress in readers’ moral development. The local newspaper, on the other hand by choosing some of the columns that speak from universal principled level, had better performance in moral education in this perspective.
Nevertheless, both newspapers still stayed mostly on the conventional level, promoting the community value and reinforcing the importance of maintaining stereotypical image. They are talking more about maintaining what it is—the existing community rules, the stereotypical good images, and the defined obligations—instead of discussing what ought to be like—the principles underneath rules and the rationales underlying contractual duties.

“The picture of journalists as sophisticated moral reasoners is not one held by the general population” (Coleman & Wilkins, 2002, p.212). The result of this study unfortunately served as an evidence to support this public belief. Although the DIT test results have shown that journalists ranked fourth among various professions (Wilkins & Coleman, 2005), the texts they generated may not show the same level of sophistication.

Nevertheless, the editorial contents in these two newspapers are helpful in moral education in terms of exposing the readers to constant thinking about the moral issues the incidents demonstrated, such as social media behavior, sexual violence victims, and bystander intervention, and engaging the readers in discussing them. As Kohlberg (1981) suggested, one of the very first steps in moral education is to expose students to moral issues and help them to find inadequacy about their knowledge of the good (Kohlberg, 1981). Exposing readers constantly to moral issues and engaging them in debates facilitates people to find moral inconsistency and inspire their cognitive conflict which may lead to an effort to devote more reasoning resources to see things previously invisible. The presentation of the multi-faceted characters of a moral issue through moral argumentations in the editorial contents at least gave the public a chance to view the issues from different moral perspectives. Especially by providing columns that address
various or even conflicting and controversial aspects of an issue, newspapers can infuse multi-dimensional values to the platform, showing a moral issue as comprehensively as possible. This is also part of the educational function—informing the readers of different values for making judgment. This is exactly the important function of the newspaper editorial page, and they still have the great potential to do that. But on top of that, the newspaper should also provide higher level reasoning and more sophisticated argumentations to truly fulfill its responsibility as moral educator.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study has demonstrated how media texts can be evaluated by Kohlberg’s moral development model. Moral argumentations, as a textual presentation of cognitive moral judgment, are also measurable by this hierarchical model. It also evaluated the performance of newspaper editorial contents as moral educators and whether they helped to stimulate readers’ moral growth.

The study also provides a way to approach moral argumentations with a cognitive model that can evaluate level of moral reasoning, by developing a system that links conversational argumentations and identifies justifications to Kohlberg’s stages, and by organizing the argumentations with modal elements to facilitate the analysis. Although the instrument may still need some improvement, it is a good start for exploring the moral reasoning in media messages.

The sample of this study is limited to two newspapers from the same town, referring to two local incidents. The results are not generalizable, but nonetheless provided a relevant case study of how the newspaper is playing a role as moral educator. This author believes that using specific incidents better describes and demonstrates moral reasoning in media contents than an overall quantitative investigation. People expose different levels of moral judgment in different situations. Therefore, editorial contents will display different moral reasoning levels regarding different topics. Just like the Moral Judgment Interview and the Defining Issues Test both use particular stories to measure moral judgment stages, the study chose specific topics to get a narrow but focused scenario, which allows the analysis to address specifics and identify the
reasoning levels more accurately. It is thus more helpful for drawing a picture of the newspaper’s performance in moral education.

The choice of using Critical Discourse Analysis enables a close look at the media texts and deconstruction of the meanings to find out what the texts, the discursive practice, and the social practice contribute to the quality of moral argumentations, and the reasoning levels. It also facilitates the effort to look at the “meaning-making within texts” rather than the “manifest levels of meanings” (Richardson, 2007, p.21), which is what this study hopes to achieve: to look at the reasoning and moral justification process embedded in the text.

The subjective interpretation in the analysis of this study may lead to some questions regarding the accuracy of the determination of the moral reasoning levels. It is important to note that first, by using Critical Discourse Analysis, a method that has been developed from semiotics and recognized by many qualitative researchers, the purpose is not to find an accurate or correct interpretation of the texts. In fact, there is no such thing as correct interpretation. The aim is to discover the meaning and implications underneath the textual surface that might be otherwise invisible to the public, and demonstrate the power of language. What is being used in the analysis is always the terms and understandings picked up from the public discourse, in order to make sense out of the texts (McKee, 2001). To minimize the doubts, in the process of using the instrument to analyze the texts, the researcher of this study asked a classmate to look over the interpretations using the same instrument. It turned out that those interpretations make sense to this person in the same way as they do to the researcher.
The study demonstrated the different patterns of moral reasoning stage between the student newspaper and the local newspaper, and a discrepancy between journalists’ moral judgment level shown by DIT results and the moral reasoning levels addressed in journalistic contents. These findings opened up many questions for future research.

The first question that can be derived is what are the major driving factors that determine the moral reasoning levels addressed in the editorial texts? As shown in the comparison section, writers’ age, education, and the other three components of moral psychology—moral sensitivity, moral character, and moral motivation—may all play roles in determining the outcome of the writing. Also, length of editorials and attitudes towards their roles may also exert influence on the moral reasoning levels in the writing. It is unknown which of these factors have an impact and which one serves as the main influence. Exploring this question is important because from an educational perspective, knowing key factors that determine moral reasoning levels in editorial texts can help in finding a way for the newspapers to produce or present high quality argumentations that are conducive to readers’ moral growth in terms of Kohlberg’s moral development model, and to really fulfill the potential for moral education.

Secondly, this study shows a discrepancy between journalists’ high DIT scores and low and mid-level reasoning in journalistic contents. Some more careful comparative studies would be needed to examine a journalist’s DIT result and the moral message the same journalist generates. It would be an effort to discover how much morality can be translated from journalists’ perception of morals into the actual reasoning they choose to present to the readers. Furthermore, this would be a start of the exploration of whether higher DIT score can predict higher level of reasoning presented in writings.
Notwithstanding the outcome of future research, this case study on the moral argumentation about rape culture in editorial contents of two local papers determined confidently that the journalists argued below the expected level when measured against journalists’ high-ranking DIT scores, whereas the outside columnists crafted their arguments on the upper levels of Kohlberg's six stage model, which are more conducive to stimulating a moral growth for most adults. One can thus question whether these newspapers sufficiently fulfilled their responsibility of moral education. Future research is needed to find out whether this discrepancy is a general trend in editorials.

By developing and applying a new analytical instrument, based on Critical Discourse Analysis and moral development theory, this study made a significant and original contribution to the evaluation of levels of moral reasoning in media messages. It is the hope of this researcher that future studies will apply and further develop this instrument. Thus, the instrument will be refined and, at the same time, become a valuable tool in the investigation of the level of morality represented in other kinds of media messages.
References


**Sample list**


Table 3

Defining Issues Test Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Importance</th>
<th>Much Importance</th>
<th>Some Importance</th>
<th>Little Importance</th>
<th>No Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether a community’s laws are going to be upheld. (Stage 4, page 29)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isn’t it only natural for a loving husband to care so much for his wife that he’d steal? (Stage 3, page 28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Heinz willing to risk getting shot as a burglar or going to jail for the chance that stealing the drug might help? (Stage 2, page 26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether Heinz is a professional wrestler, or has considerable influence with professional wrestlers. (Non-stage item — serves as a check on random responding)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether Heinz is stealing for himself or doing this solely to help someone else. (Stage 3, page 28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether the druggist’s rights to his invention have to be respected. (Stage 4, page 29)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether the essence of living is more encompassing than the termination dying, socially and individually. (Meaningless item used as a check on tendency to endorse complex items blindly)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What values are going to be the basis for governing how people act toward each other? (Stage 6, page 57)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether the druggist is going to be allowed to hide behind a worthless law which only protects the rich anyhow. (Stage 4½, antiauthoritarian rejection of the conventional order)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether the law in this case is getting in the way of the most basic claim of any member of society. (Stage 5A, page 54)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether the druggist deserves to be robbed for being so greedy and cruel. (Stage 3, page 28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would stealing in such a case bring about more total good for the whole society or not? (Stage 5A, page 54)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the list of questions above, select the four most important:

Most important  Second Most Important  Third Most Important  Fourth Most Important

# Appendix B: Identifiers for Moral Judgment Stages

## Table 4

Identifiers for Moral Judgment Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level &amp; Stage</th>
<th>Socio-moral perspective of stage</th>
<th>What is right</th>
<th>Reasons for doing right</th>
<th>Identifier/Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preconventional: Stage 1</strong></td>
<td>Oriented toward punishment and Obedience</td>
<td>Egocentric point of view. Doesn't consider the interests of others or recognize that they differ from the actor's, doesn't relate two points of view. Actions are considered physically rather than in terms of psychological interests of others. Confusion of authority's perspective with one's own</td>
<td>Avoidance of breaking rules backed by punishment; Avoidance of physical damage to persons and property</td>
<td>To avoid punishment and the superior power of authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preconventional: Stage 2</strong></td>
<td>Instrumental-relativist Orientation</td>
<td>Concrete individualistic perspective. Aware that everybody has his own interests to pursue and these conflicts, so that right is relative (in the concrete individualistic sense.)</td>
<td>Following rules when it is to one's immediate interest; Act of meeting one's won interests and needs and letting others do the same Instrumental ideas about fair and simple equal exchange</td>
<td>To serve one's own needs or interests while recognizing other people have their interests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Typical Argument

One should not do this because he would be physically punished; Do what you are told to avoid being punished

Seeking reward and avoiding punishment

It's up to each individual to do what they wants with what they have; Staying in the law can save some trouble.
Table 4: continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level &amp; Stage</th>
<th>Socio-moral perspective of stage</th>
<th>What is right</th>
<th>Reasons for doing right</th>
<th>Identifier/Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional: Stage 3</td>
<td>Good-boy/good-girl orientation</td>
<td>Living up to expectations from significant others and society</td>
<td>The need to be a good person in others' eyes; Desire to maintain rules and authority that support stereotypical good behavior</td>
<td>Typical Argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perspective of the individual in relationships with other individuals. Aware of shared feelings, agreements, and expectations which take primacy over individual interests. Relates points of view through the concrete Golden Rule, putting yourself in the other guy's shoes. Does not yet consider generalized system perspective</td>
<td>Having good motives and caring about others</td>
<td>Caring for others</td>
<td>Seek/maintain good reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keeping mutual relationships</td>
<td>Belief in the Golden Rule</td>
<td>Reciprocity or positive reward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional: Stage 4</td>
<td>Orientation toward social order, law, and authority</td>
<td>Fulfilling duties one has agreed to</td>
<td>Keep the institution going as a whole</td>
<td>Typical Argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differentiates societal point of view from interpersonal agreement or motives. Takes the point of view of the system that defines roles and rules. Considers individual relations in terms of place in the system.</td>
<td>Believing laws are to be upheld except in extreme cases</td>
<td>Avoid the breakdown in the system &quot;if everyone did it&quot;</td>
<td>Role taking/Upholding self-respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contributing to society, the group, or institution</td>
<td>Imperative of conscience to meet one's defined obligations</td>
<td>Seeking Good group consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Serving social ideal or harmony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Typical Argument

Typical Argument: Everyone in society is obligated and protected by the law; We should stick to our roles in the society and duties come with it otherwise the system would not work.

Justification

Justification: Role taking/Upholding self-respect; Seeking Good group consequences; Serving social ideal or harmony.

Typical Argument: Any good xx would do this, it's just natural; We should care about others and be a good person, and so we can get along with people; Let's put ourselves in others' shoes.

Justification: Seek/maintain good reputation; Reciprocity or positive reward.
Table 4: continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level &amp; Stage</th>
<th>Socio-moral perspective of stage</th>
<th>What is right</th>
<th>Reasons for doing right</th>
<th>Identifier/Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postconventional: Stage 5</td>
<td>Legalistic orientation on social contract</td>
<td>Being aware that people hold a variety of values and opinions</td>
<td>Most values and rules are relative to one's group</td>
<td>Laws represents the basis of how people have agreed to live with each other; We have an obligation to follow those laws voluntarily; basic values of society need to be protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prior-to-society perspective. Perspective of a rational individual aware of values and rights prior to social attachments and contracts. Integrates perspectives by formal mechanisms of agreement, contract, objective impartiality, and due process. Considers moral and legal points of view; recognizes that they sometimes conflict and finds it difficult to integrate them.</td>
<td>Relative rules should be upheld because they are social contract</td>
<td>A sense of obligation to law for the welfare of all and protection of all people's rights</td>
<td>Maintaining equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some non relative values (life, liberty) must be upheld regardless of majority opinion</td>
<td>Belief that laws and duties be based on rational calculation of overall utility</td>
<td>Serving social ideal or harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining social contract or freely agreeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining procedural fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level &amp; Stage</td>
<td>Socio-moral perspective of stage</td>
<td>What is right</td>
<td>Reasons for doing right</td>
<td>Identifier/Indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postconventional: Stage 6</td>
<td>Orientation toward universal ethical principles</td>
<td>Perspective of a moral point of view from which social arrangements derive. Perspective is that of any rational individual recognizing the nature of morality or the fact that persons are ends in themselves and must be treated as such.</td>
<td>Following self-chosen ethical principles which are universal principles of justice</td>
<td>Typical Argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Believing particular laws or social agreements are usually valid because they rest on such principles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When laws violate principles, one acts in accordance with principle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Belief in the validity of universal moral principles and has a sense of commitment to them</td>
<td>Justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Serving human dignity and autonomy; Serving social ideal or harmony</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Sentence Categorization of Sample Articles

#1
Newspaper: The Post
Title: Students should rethink social media conduct
Author: Executive Editors
Date: October 16, 2013

Fact Sentences:
Many of us Bobcats spent the weekend celebrating our Ohio University pride, reveling with alumni and current students alike.

But by Sunday evening, we at The Post had a good-sized dent kicked into our Bobcat pride.

During the Uptown festivities, a woman was allegedly sexually assaulted on the sidewalk. A cheering crowd captured it on video, snapped photos and laughed.

The next day, many of that crowd took to Instagram and Twitter to post their comments and images.

The original video has since been deleted, and the woman has filed a rape complaint with the Athens Police Department.

Argumentations (Moral Argumentations/Justification italicized)
But the actions of the OU students who posted the videos and photos have now gained national attention, and not the flattering kind.

We aren’t here today to argue about the actions of the man and woman in the video (although we believe consent cannot be given if subjects are intoxicated), but rather to express our extreme disappointment with those who witnessed the event and did nothing to stop it, who in fact cheered on the act.

Frankly, it’s an embarrassment to our university.

It is extremely distressing to us that the witnesses to this event were unable to recognize anything wrong with what was happening.
It is disgusting that during the event, no one interfered.

Police were out in full force this weekend, and it would not have been difficult to tip them off.

And it is horrendous that bystanders then took to social media to shame this woman.

If it had been you, or your sister or friend, would you have wanted photos, videos and scornful comments circulating?

These pictures, comments and tweets will be online forever.

So please, put your cellphone down, show some compassion and use some common sense.

#2

Newspaper: The Post

Title: Decision needs to spark discussion

Author: Executive Editors

Date: October 29, 2013

Fact sentences:
As you might have read on our front page, Athens County Prosecutor Keller Blackburn said Monday that a grand jury did not find probable cause to press any charges on any of the parties involved in the alleged rape on Court Street during Homecoming Weekend.

He also said Monday that the woman, a 20-year-old Ohio University student, did not appear to be “intoxicated beyond the ability to consent” and noted for the first time that the 20-year-old man whom she later went home with is an OU student as well, among other details.

…….

The university jump-started that process Thursday, holding an event titled “Campus Conversation: Sexual Assault, Consent, and Bystander Intervention” that mixed top university administrators with students concerned with “sexual assault, consent, bystander intervention, victim blaming/slut shaming, university policy and community outreach,” according to a previous Post article.
Argumentations (Moral argumentations/Justification italicized.)

To some, these developments might signal the end of a highly publicized case that has been a black eye for OU.

We believe, much to the contrary, there is still much to be determined in this case. It’s unclear if the two could be charged with misdemeanors, and the university could act following its investigation as well.

*We, as OU students, should talk about the alleged rape, the social media that followed and the underlying issues that have rippled outward from this single incident.*

……

Discussions have been sparked to figure out what consent is, and that discussion should keep moving forward.

*We should continue to take steps to educate our campus about victim blaming.*

*We should continue to learn what we, as bystanders, can do.*

*As a campus, we have a lot to learn.*

*Eyes around the nation are now on us to move forward from what has happened.*

*We have become part of the national dialogue about the culture on college campuses, and have the opportunity to shape that discussion — and in a positive way.*

The discourse must include, however, plans about how we will work to prevent something like this from happening again.

The effects are real, and our actions must be just as real.

#3

Newspaper: The Post

Title: Six weeks later, not much has changed after sex act

Author: Executive Editors

Date: December 5, 2013
Fact Sentence:

About two months ago, during Homecoming Weekend, a male Ohio University student performed oral sex on a female student on Court Street.

A crowd of people—those who, on any other weekend night, avoid eye contact while walking hurriedly by street performers and grilled cheese fundraisers—stopped, stared, gawked at the show.

Some, in this age of social media, pulled out their phones, hit record and pressed post.

The tweets and Instagram photos exploded with retweets and screen grabs.

……

Amid the social media flurry, the woman who was captured in the recordings of that night reported to Athens police that those images showed a rape, not a private act gone horribly public.

As police collected video recordings and conducted interviews, Ohio University officials and activists called for discussions about campus attitudes and invoked imperatives for changes in behavior—we did the same on this very page.

A grand jury later decided there was not enough evidence to charge someone with a felony, and directors from the city law and police departments said no charges would be forthcoming.

“It was my opinion that (public indecency) did occur,” Athens County Prosecutor Keller Blackburn said in a previous Post article.

“But I think that the public embarrassment of what has gone on is more than a misdemeanor charge could be.”

Whether the pair would see any charges then came down to the city law director’s office and the police department. Officials from both said no charges would be forthcoming.

Athens Police Chief Tom Pyle said he was advised by Athens City Law Director Pat Lang and Blackburn to not pursue any charges because proving a crime would be difficult.

During the initial investigation, however, Pyle said the videos and images that circled internationally online aided investigators with additional evidence.
Argumentations (Moral arguments/Justification italicized.)

Ohio University students, infamous for their party school status and alcohol-inspired hashtags, rose to new heights of repugnancy with vulgar hashtags and blatant sexism.

……
Now, though, there seems to be a lack of it.

And what about the Ohio University student whose name and personal information were published by The Daily Beast for recording and sharing the sex act?

What about the poor woman falsely named as the student, her pictures plastered over the Internet?

Pictures that somewhat resemble the woman who reported a rape if you squint enough?

They were publicly shamed.

But the only people that know the identities of the pair are close friends, family and a few university officials.

That might not ever change.

Of course, prosecuting the pair with a misdemeanor isn’t going to make up for what happened to the others.

But fair—in this case—isn’t necessarily fair.

Yet these two students have yet to see any consequences from the university or the government and might never face any legal repercussions.

The potential repercussions extend beyond those immediately involved.

We are by no means accusing the woman of falsely alleging rape, but this incident brought with it a discussion on the subject.

Many on social media and in conversations made summary judgments about the alleged rape when it first broke, saying she was participating and that her allegation of rape was blatantly false.

Those beliefs can easily foment a generalization that can affect those men and women who truly accuse their attackers but are met with doubt because of false accusations from others.
The statistic of false reports is small, but the effect—as illustrated by some people’s immediate assumption that this was a false report—is significant.

Forty-eight days later, we have effectively gone nowhere.

As long as the national spotlight shined on us, we had a robust discussion, but we let that discourse dwindle as that spotlight faded.

Two names indirectly involved in the incident were dragged through the mud, and theirs are what we will remember most from this case.

We seem to be no better off now than we were then.

And that is the greatest public shame of all.

---

#4

Newspaper: The Post

Title: Balanced discussion is a sign of progress on a tough subject

Author: Executive Editors

Date: April 3, 2014

---

Fact sentences:

Tonight, a crowd of people will march through Athens as part of the Take Back The Night demonstration, and for the first time since the early 2000s, men will be permitted to walk alongside women.

This rule change has sparked a discussion on campus about whether the march should remain a women-only zone or expand to include men and those with other gender identities.

We’ve been discussing the change ourselves since late last week and have been unable to settle on either side of the line.

We even talked with others invested in the march to get their input, and we still aren’t sure.

We can easily see both sides of the debate.
Argumentations (Moral argumentations/Justification italicized.)

We recognize that Take Back The Night’s cause is to empower women to feel confident and safe on the street, a traditionally intimidating place for the gender that’s typically pegged as prey.

It encourages women to convert the stigmatic action of “walking the street at night” into a show of strength.

A crowd of women proudly flooding the streets after dark is a symbolic demonstration of reclaiming territory and overcoming fear.

We understand the notion that including men in the march might weaken the impact of that gesture.

However, the deliberate exclusion of anyone who doesn’t identify as female from the march gives us, along with many others, reason to pause.

Men are also survivors of sexual violence (albeit at a much lower rate than women are), as are people who identify with variant genders.

Should they be relegated to the sidelines simply because of how they identify?

We don’t think so.

There must be a middle ground between the two stances.

We do not have all the answers, but we’re confident that this already important and powerful event can be improved further.

The sexual-violence problem is huge.

People of all gender identities will need to come together to solve it, men in particular.

But the problem isn’t going to be solved overnight.

For the time being, let’s compromise: If you feel compelled to march, march.

If you want to show your support for the cause in general, it might be best to stay on the sidelines.

Recognize that your presence in the march might be more meaningful to the people around you than you realize, and be considerate of those for whom the demonstration carries more weight.
Conclusion (Summary of the main idea)

It’s not our place to proclaim whether men belong in the march.

It’s a worthy debate that we believe has no clear resolution quite yet.

But we’re proud to be part of a campus where these questions are not taken lightly or answered easily.

We welcome your opinions and encourage this discussion to continue.

It’s an important one to have.

#5

Newspaper: The Post

Title: TBTN should democratize decision-making

Author: Damon Krane

Date: April 3, 2014

Fact sentences:

As a male sideline supporter of most of the Athens Take Back the Night marches since 2000, I would like to offer a somewhat different take on this year’s controversy surrounding how men will relate to the march.

This year’s decision to invite men to march alongside women in Take Back the Night has been particularly controversial.

With only a few exceptions the event has been a women’s march since the late 1970s.

Yet regardless of whether men march, every year Take Back the Night is surrounded by controversy.

Argumentation (Moral argumentation/Justification italicized.)

All of the controversy is educational.

Most of it is inescapable.
But some of it is more divisive than it needs to be.

Most controversial is not whether men will march in a feminist march, but whether anyone will march at all.

In every year I have participated in sideline support, male students opposed to the march have shouted sexist slurs and rape threats from the balconies of Ohio University’s fraternity houses and the windows of its residence halls.

Most years the marchers have made too much noise with their chants to hear much of this, but sideline supporters got an earful.

The current debate over men marching pales in comparison to the controversy that greets any expression of feminism in a society that remains plagued by patriarchy, and perhaps at Ohio University in particular, which, according to the U.S. Department of Education, frequently outranks even the substantially larger Ohio State University when it comes to the number of rapes reported in residence halls.

By refusing to succumb to this patriarchal rape culture, Take Back the Night marchers and supporters create division – a division between those working for a better world and those working for a worse one.

So “controversy” and “divisiveness” aren’t always bad words.

As Frederick Douglass pointed out, they’re absolutely necessary for progress.

But the controversy that is mostly unnecessary and counter-productive is the divisiveness created among Athens feminists/sexual assault opponents over whether men will march.

Some is unavoidable; even people who share the same goals will disagree about the best strategy for achieving those goals.

But much of the conflict flows from two easily corrected but longstanding problems with the march – one of messaging, the other of decision-making.

If the march’s purpose is opposition to sexual assault in general, then it makes sense for everyone to be welcomed to march, since men as well as trans and genderqueer people are also survivors of sexual assault.
Conversely, if the march is a way for women to empower themselves to combat the overwhelming majority of sexual assault committed by men against women, then a women’s march probably makes most sense. So which is it?

That’s the problem of messaging.

And who gets to determine the message is the problem of decision-making.

In her March 30 letter, Devin Aeh argues that TBTN is a women’s march for women’s empowerment and against sexual assault.

In an April 1 letter, Erin Fischer contends that Aeh speaks for only “a few bigots”; that “TBTN is not about ‘women’s empowerment’; it’s about standing up to sexual violence and assault.”

Decades of local tradition are on Aeh’s side.

So are tens of thousands of women and men I wouldn’t identify as bigots.

*But traditions and even majorities aren’t always worth going along with. So which is it?*

In past years, Take Back the Night marches for women’s empowerment eventually gave rise to an additional march against sexual assault per se.

Now, a Take Back the Night march against sexual assault per se is giving rise to a separate march for women’s empowerment.

Just as in Aeh’s and Fischer’s arguments, these developments make two things crystal clear: 1) there is a big difference between these two types of marches and 2) there are people in Athens who feel the need for each type of march.

Given that both types of marches are oriented toward worthy goals, perhaps there are even people who feel the need for both.

*But whichever type of march the organizers of a particular year’s Take Back the Night choose, the march’s message needs to be made clear so people will be less inclined to continue to fight over it, and instead focus on fighting patriarchy and/or sexual assault.*

*Yet even if the message is clear, if the process for deciding upon that message isn’t considered legitimate, then there will still be unnecessary conflict and resentment.*
The process for deciding TBTN’s message can be authoritarian or democratic.

The authoritarian option is for one person or a handful of people on OU’s Student Senate, to make the decision unilaterally, after receiving some degree of wider input (or not).

This is what usually happens.

Then the decision maker(s) can sit back and see how many marchers and would-be marchers resent not having a say.

And by “say,” I’m not talking about mere input. I’m talking about people having a share of actual decision-making power through some system of majority rule or consensus process, which would constitute a more democratic approach to determining TBTN’s message.

In addition to clearer messaging, a more democratic process that’s open to a wider constituency of TBTN stake-holders would go a long way to decrease the unnecessary kind of conflict and increase the necessary kind.

#6

Newspaper: Athens News

Title: One sober adult could have prevented sex tragedy

Author: Terry Smith

Date: October 20, 2013

Fact sentence: No pure factual information. All sentences are framed as making argument and judgment.

Argumentation: (Moral argumentations/Justification are italicized)

It appears that the public sex act in uptown Athens on Homecoming Weekend was either a sexual assault by one of the participants on the other, or a world-class lapse in judgment by both.

While I lack sufficient evidence or knowledge to say which is the case, some other truths aren’t too difficult to mine out of this unfortunate incident.
The first is that it's a tremendously unfortunate incident, not just for two people directly involved, but for Athens and Ohio University.

With the story and images exploding on the Web last week (with the painful reminder that the Web is “Worldwide), our community's reputation suffered another serious hit.

A truth that also shouldn't be surprising is that alcohol and/or drugs likely played a prominent role in what happened, not just with the two participants, but with bystanders and witnesses.

The online videos of the public sex act don't show anyone drinking, or any evidence of booze or drugs, but c'mon, it's 3 a.m. (or whatever time) on an uptown Athens weekend, Homecoming no less.

Everyone involved in this unfortunate event made gross errors in judgment - both practically and ethically - that in a reasonably functioning adult could only be explained by alcohol or narcotics impairment.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the dark-suited young man who was committing the sex acts on the young woman, an OU student, erred in a number of ways.

Foremost, even if it turns out she was able to give informed consent, something the young woman denied the next day when she accused him of rape, he blatantly took advantage of her, while smirking and boasting to camera-wielding bystanders.

He was acting upon her, not the other way around.

The guy did a sensationaly prurient (and possibly criminal) thing that got beamed to a world very interested in seeing him do this bad thing; talk about it at great length; pass it along to millions of others; and then, in most cases, condemn it savagely.

What is it about the young Facebook/Twitter generation that's so incredibly hip to the opportunities and capabilities of social media, yet so easily forgets it all when misbehaving in front of an iPhone camera?

If, in fact, the young woman was a willing participant, no more drunk or drug-addled than the man she was with, then we can say most of the same things about her. But that's a mighty big "if," and I'm not prepared to go that far, pending completion of the police investigation, and maybe not even then.

Then, what about the bystanders, the ones with the smart-phones giddily recording and then uploading an incident that even put in the best light, could only mean mortal embarrassment and potential ruination to the two in the images, as well as great harm to this community?
Some people at the scene not only didn't do the decent thing, tell the couple to stop, call the police, or simply holler, "Hey, the cops are coming!" - they continued taking pictures and videos, and then essentially broadcast them to the world.

In their iPhone screen, they too quickly saw the two people having inappropriate, convulsive sex against a brick wall as uploadable images, not human beings. Somehow, they never asked themselves, "Good grief, what's he doing to that poor girl?!"; and never considered the predictable conclusion, "This isn't going to end well."

In a better world - the one where alcohol, drugs and a cultural sink don't override common sense and human kindness - a responsible person would have taken the situation in hand. He or she would have saved these two people from starring roles in their own public humiliation, or even possibly, stopped a sexual assault in its tracks. Plus the better human impulse would have had the not insignificant side effect of saving our university and town from another reputational kick to the groin.

**Conclusion: (Suggesting the right moral behavior)**

It didn't happen that way, but there's hope for the future, next weekend in fact.

The Halloween block party is this Saturday, the booze will be flowing, and the powder and pills readily available for the mainly college-aged crowd.

Before overdoing it, Athens Halloweeners should remember what happened Homecoming Weekend below the "Welcome Students" sign in the Chase Bank storefront.

Consider how much better off you'll be if you don't end the evening lamenting, "I was so wasted I didn't know what I was doing!"

And fellow smart-phone users, when faced with a situation where you can keep someone from hurting himself or someone else, even if you've had a few drinks, put your stupid phone back in your pocket or purse and do something.
Fact sentences:

Last week it was announced that no charges will be filed in conjunction with a reported sexual assault between two Ohio University students that was photographed and videotaped.

The female student involved, who was intoxicated and does not remember what happened, made a report after images were circulated on social media by onlookers who chose to stand by, watch it, record it and share it.

The Athens County Prosecutor stated that the woman didn't remember what happened, and testing showed no sign of any "date rape drug."

In reality, alcohol is the most common drug to facilitate sexual assault.

Perpetrators look for intoxicated victims who have higher vulnerabilities.

Being intoxicated to the point of memory loss renders one incapable of giving consent.

From Athens to Circleville to Steubenville and all across Ohio, these cases highlight a glaring reality that we live in a culture that perpetuates sexual violence, degrades girls and women over social media, and glorifies bystanders who are too willing to photograph, videotape and share what they see, rather than intervene.

......

The number of those willing to supply such images to the world is unfortunately eclipsed by the number of people who are too happy to consume such images.

Recently, I was searching online for a brief video to be used in a presentation about teen sexual assault. I found several tasteful, impactful videos of teen survivors willingly telling their stories.

These videos had been viewed up to 3,000 times.

Among the list of links to "related" videos on the side of the webpage was the link to a video entitled "Hottest Gang Rape Ever."

It had been viewed over 14 million times. Sexual violence is not for consumption, and it should never be tolerated or glorified.

Argumentations (Moral argumentation/Justification italicized.)

Not only are survivors and their traumatic experiences fully exposed for public scrutiny, but the recording and sharing of such images is also a form of sexual violence, causing more harm to victims.
It's easy to blame this problem on the see-it-now, sensationalistic nature of social media and the ease with which one can record and share images.

Technology at our fingertips does, to some extent, remove a certain amount of accountability, time and effort that might prompt one to stop and think.

Still, there seems to be no short supply of people who are willing to 1) stand by and watch sexual assaults without intervening; 2) take out one's phone with the intention of recording what they see; 3) photograph and/or record a video of it; and 4) share that image - irrevocably, permanently - with the world.

Technology may provide the means, but people must first provide the desire and consent.

When images of sexual violence are so casually procured, shared and viewed, everyone is impacted.

Survivors are further re-victimized and traumatized, with violations of their privacy distributed for the world to watch like it's some movie... when it's actually that person's life.

Our society has become further desensitized to the reality of sexual violence and has lost sight of the impact on victims.

Survivors deserve better.

Everyone has an active role in preventing abuse.

To build safer communities, everyone must speak up against incidents or messages that normalize sexual harm, abuse or exploitation.

Conclusion: (Suggest right moral behavior)

Become an engaged bystander: someone who intervenes before, during or after a situation when they see or hear behaviors that promote sexual violence. Not sure what to do? Get someone who does.

And after you read this, share this, talk about this, and be sure to change the social media conversation and retweet #EndRapeCultureOhio.

#8

Newspaper: Athens News

Title: Crying wolf about crying wolf: Debate over public sex incident teaches more than grand jury findings
Fact sentences

In his Oct. 17 statement about the Oct. 12 public sex incident and alleged sexual assault that occurred on a busy Court Street sidewalk, Ohio University President Roderick McDavis urged "members of the university community to embrace the educational opportunity that this unfortunate incident has presented."

But few seem to have needed the president's encouragement.

A fierce debate has raged ever since images of the incident were first posted online minutes after being captured.

Argumentation (Moral argumentation/Justification italicized.)

And this debate has been nothing if not educational.

What we have seen is a kind of educational battle - a fight, not only over how we should understand the Oct. 12 incident, but over what broader lessons we should draw about sex, violence and the responsibilities of individuals and institutions.

So many of us have participated in this battle - and often participated so passionately - because its subjects could not hit any closer to home.

Sex is among the most basic of human desires and certainly a top concern of college students.

So regardless of whether we are survivors or perpetrators of sexual assault, or know people who are, we all have a very personal stake in this debate.

It is part of broader societal deliberations that will establish what is and is not permissible behavior for and toward each of us, and for and toward practically everyone we know.

So now that a Grand Jury has decided not to indict the alleged assailant in the Oct. 12 incident, what can this debate teach us?

The Grand Jury's findings may be criticized.

(Should consent given by a person who later claims to have been blacked out qualify as consent, either legally or morally?)
But the findings likely will make some debaters defensive and others feel vindicated.

*Most defensive will likely be those who, from the very beginning, asserted that this was a clear-cut case of sexual assault.*

But serious charges merit serious investigation.

A mere half-century ago, African American men were routinely lynched on the basis of unsubstantiated accusations of raping white women.

Fast forward to the present, and we have a president who routinely carries out modern-day lynchings via drone strikes on the basis of unsubstantiated accusations of terror plots against Americans.

*The due-process rights of the accused are among the most basic principles of justice, and they are always under attack by bigots of one variety or another - people who give vastly more weight to the suspicions of some than they do to the lives and liberty of others.*

*Obviously, those rushing to condemn the accused in this case have not been bigots armed with torches, ropes or unchecked executive power.*

*Still, any rush to judgment should be cause for concern - and that would be true even if the Grand Jury had decided to indict the accused.*

*Conversely, the debaters most likely to feel vindicated by the Grand Jury findings are those who didn't rush to condemn the accused but instead condemned his accuser.*

*We've all heard their popular refrain: "The woman involved only claimed to have been assaulted because she was embarrassed by the viral video and photo posts online."*  

*But this was no less a rush to judgment, and it is the most troubling aspect of this debate. What is so remarkable about this claim is that it was always as popular as it was unlikely - and the Grand Jury's decision doesn't change that, either.*

Rape and other legally defined varieties of sexual assault generally are not the kind of crimes that get over-reported.

On the contrary, a 1995 report by the American Medical Association ranked sexual assault as the most under-reported of all violent crimes in the U.S., and a large body of subsequent research suggests the category of offenses remains at or near the top of that list.

*According to the U.S. Justice Department's National Crime Victimization Survey, more than half of the nearly 1.2 million sexual assaults that occurred in the U.S. from 2008 through 2012 went unreported to police.*
Last year alone 72 percent were unreported, down from 73 percent in 2011.

In contrast, most research into false accusations of rape puts their prevalence at between just 2 and 8 percent of reported incidents.

Therefore, the chances of anyone crying wolf about sexual assault appear to be very slim - a 2 to 8 percent exception that would prove a 92 to 98 percent rule.

Yet long before Athens County Prosecutor Keller Blackburn announced the Grand Jury's findings and reasoning, countless people had rushed to condemn the woman involved.

Some argued the incident was not sexual assault because cunnilingus and digital penetration aren't performed for a man's benefit.

Or because the woman supposedly wasn't observed crying out for help or trying to ward off her alleged assailant.

Or because both parties were likely intoxicated.

But none of this warrants the crying wolf thesis.

Cunnilingus and digital penetration are routinely depicted in pornography for the sexual benefit of heterosexual men.

More importantly, the Ohio Revised Code defines both acts as sexual assault when they are performed without consent, and a substantially intoxicated person legally cannot give consent.

The crying wolf thesis becomes even less plausible when we look at its underlying assumptions.

The first is that claiming to have been sexually assaulted is a way for a woman to avoid the embarrassment of further public scrutiny and judgment.

Contained within this assumption, then, is the notion that women who claim to have been assaulted are most often greeted with sympathy, honored as survivors of harrowing experiences, and seen as courageously striving to hold violent men accountable.

Yet in this case the allegation of sexual assault caused increases in media coverage, public scrutiny and harsh condemnation of the woman involved.

What's more, those results were totally predictable - and not just to anyone who has followed the horrendous Steubenville and Maryville rape cases, but to anyone who has ever cared enough to pay the slightest bit of attention to this issue.
Psychologists and sexual-assault survivors frequently refer to the experience that follows reporting a sexual assault as "the second rape."

The unfortunate cost women typically must endure as they attempt to hold their attackers accountable is a major reason why so many sexual assaults go unreported and unpunished in the first place.

But let's think even more specifically about Ohio University.

If crying wolf about sexual assault was a surefire way for a woman to escape the embarrassment of a tryst she subsequently regretted, then given the number of sloppy drunken hook-ups that occur at a university of more than 25,000 students frequently ranked as America's number-one party school, we would expect sexual assaults to be reported on a daily or even hourly basis in Athens.

However, according to the U.S. Department of Education and OU's annual campus security reports, the total number of sexual assaults reported on or near OU's main campus during the entire 12-year period from 2001 through 2012 is 230. Rounded to the nearest whole number, that's an average of just 19 per year.

Granted, that number is unacceptably high considering the heinous nature of the crime and the high rate of unreported incidents.

What's more, during five of the past 12 years, more sexual assaults in residence halls were reported at OU than at any other public university in the state.

During a sixth year, OU tied with Miami University for the highest number of these incidents. And during all six of those years, more residence hall assaults were reported at OU than at Ohio State University, even though OSU then had two to three times more students than OU.

Nevertheless, an annual average of 19 reported incidents is infinitely lower than what we would expect if the crying wolf thesis rested on correct assumptions.

Finally, the ultimate irony of the crying wolf thesis is that its adherents refute their argument by making it.

That's because if sexual assault survivors were generally celebrated as heroes, there wouldn't have been an enormous chorus of people so eager to condemn this alleged survivor (or any other) as a villain.

*Managing to disprove one's own thesis is quite a feat of stupidity.*

Combined with everything else that's dumb about this sadly predictable rush to judgment, it teaches us two things - first, just how much of their own intelligence many people are willing to sacrifice in the defense of privilege (and in this case, we're talking about the
privilege of men in our society to most often rape with impunity) and two, that when feminists talk about "rape culture," they're probably on to something.

**Conclusion: (A summary of the main idea.)**

The Grand Jury has let an alleged assailant off the hook - maybe even for legitimate reasons.

But many of us still have a lot to answer for.

#9

Newspaper: Athens News

Title: Voyeurism, digital style, a sign of the times

Author: Bernhard Debatin

Date: October 23, 2013

---

**Fact sentences:**

The recent case of an alleged sexual assault on South Court Street in Athens has, in a very short period of time, led to an avalanche of reactions, from the damaging and irresponsible postings of the images on social media, to a bitter campus-wide controversy, to national and international media attention.

**Argumentations (Moral argumentation/Justification italicized.)**

Although the event has many angles worth exploring, I want to focus on digital voyeurism as a characteristic feature of this case.

It is amazing, though not surprising, how quickly and callously bystanders did what these days has become an almost Pavlovian reflex in our society: Pictures and videos of the incident were not only taken, they were immediately uploaded onto social media.

This seamless merging of individual behavior with social and mobile media relies on four main factors that facilitate and induce digital voyeurism:

First, everybody is in permanent witness mode.

Whatever happens can and will be documented with a smart-phone camera, often with an eye toward its sensational and voyeuristic value.
We need to recognize that privacy invasions do not stem solely from an ever-increasing network of governmental and corporate surveillance.

They also result from the trend of private individuals to constantly and compulsively take pictures and make them public, no matter how inappropriate the content. Worse, often these posts are instruments of willful shaming and Schadenfreude.

Second, the immediacy of networked social media allows and promotes the sharing of images before considering its implications.

There is no built-in interrupter in this swift and slick technology that would say, wait a minute, let's think about the consequences.

Instead, this instantaneous shout-out to an imaginary, yet real and potentially global audience promises immediate satisfaction and the cheap thrill of scooping a juicy story.

Instead of serving as citizen journalists (per the predictions of some Internet gurus), these digital voyeurs amount to paparazzi and tabloid producers.

Third, while the ability to post anonymously or under a pseudonym allows people to talk about things they might otherwise be afraid to address, it also promotes reckless and irresponsible behavior.

People assume, wrongly, that they cannot be tracked down and can therefore post lies, false allegations, rumors, or embarrassing information with impunity.

The irony is that most people don't understand how many digital traces they leave even under the cover of anonymity.

Those digital footprints can help to catch digital bullies and stalkers - as dramatically shown by the case with the two Florida girls arrested Oct. 14, 2013, on felony charges of harassing a classmate until she committed suicide.

Fourth, social and mobile media use occurs in the private environment of a personal phone, tablet or computer screen.

The privacy of our digital media has, as Zizi Papacharissi pointed out in her 2010 book, "A Private Sphere," created a new form of participation in public communication through private communication channels instead of the public sphere.

In other words, we treat mobile and social media as extensions of our private sphere, where we feel unobserved and uninhibited.

Protected by this ostensibly private environment, we may believe that we are only talking to our friends while actually broadcasting to an unlimited public.
We thus need a new digital ethics of self-restraint, based on the Kantian question of whether you truly would want any posted information to become known not only to your friends but to the whole world. If we took the time to ask this question and to empathize with those ridiculed and exposed in such posts, we would be much more hesitant to hit "upload."

These four factors combine to discourage thoughtful, responsible and outcome-oriented action.

Instead, we have become a society of digital voyeurs, always eager to digitally capture and forward juicy news while fooling ourselves that only our friends will see it.

But digital voyeurism doesn't end with the initial publication of images.

Once the avalanche of images and comments is unleashed, it constantly seeks new fodder. Legal scholar Cass Sunstein coined the apt term "cybercascades" for the uncontrolled dynamics of digital voyeurism and spread of rumors and false information.

Since last Wednesday, speculation about the identity of the women from the Court Street incident spread like a wildfire on social media.

A falsely identified student received a flood of harassing comments via social media, which led her to file a police complaint.

Although both Athens Police and the university stated that the student had been misidentified, her name and other personal information cascaded widely across cyberspace. She received harassing messages from as far away as Australia.

Recklessly magnified, digital voyeurism thus claimed yet another victim.

Even OU's dean of students was vilified on the Internet after clarifying that the student had no connection to the case.

The path of digital voyeurism is littered with not only embarrassing posts but - more seriously - truly damaging material that includes bullying, bragging about rape, threats of violence, and shaming of alleged victims.

Steubenville, Maryville and Athens are only the tip of an ugly iceberg, showing many of today's digital natives as cold and cynical.

It is time to publicly call out and denounce this irresponsible behavior and hold people accountable for their actions in both the real world and the virtual (but no less real) world of social media.
Fact sentences:

I was 16 years old when I attended my first Take Back the Night march.

It blew the lid off my little hillbilly brain and made me feel something I had never felt before.

I didn't have a word for that feeling then, but I have come to know it as empowerment.

Marching in solidarity with a swarm of women, chanting and yelling about how we won't be raped and beaten, opened my eyes to something I had never been told before: that women are strong.

I am strong.

I have felt that very distinct feeling of awe and empowerment every march since then (with the exception of a couple years when I lived out of the state).

I am in my 30s now, and last year I was able to share the experience with my 1-year-old daughter, who rode along in her stroller.

Argumentations (Moral argumentation/Justification italicized.)

I was heartbroken when I learned the march this year would not be solely for women.

Don't get me wrong, I love men (I made a baby with one!), but TBTN is for women.

Yes, men are victims of sexual assault, too, but not nearly at the rate women are, and when they are victimized, it is almost always by another man.

Contrary to the slogan of this year's TBTN, sexual assault does indeed discriminate.

Nine out of 10 rape victims are female.

Of all rapists, 99.6 percent are male.
One in six women will be raped at least once in their lifetime, compared to one in 33 men. *Clearly, women are at a much-higher risk than men.*

All that aside, TBTN is not a survivor walk.

It is a women's empowerment march.

There is a march for survivors that welcomes all genders every fall.

Men who understand violence against women also understand and respect that sometimes women need women-only spaces.

That is why, in past TBTN marches, our male allies have stood on the sidelines holding signs, dropping banners and cheering for the women as they march by.

Supporting us, but letting us do our thing.

Letting us reclaim the streets for ourselves.

*Heterosexual men are not afraid to walk down the street at night.*

*Most women are.*

*Being raped, followed, sexually harassed or otherwise attacked is a constant fear in the back of women's minds.*

*We are told from the time we are small girls not to go anywhere alone; not to walk home after dark; and to always have a boyfriend, brother, dad or male friend to protect us because we are weak and vulnerable.*

*Not only is this false, it also feeds into the myth that rapes are committed by strangers in dark alleys (most assaults are committed by people we know and trust).*

Nonetheless, it is nearly impossible to make it to adulthood as a woman without these fears swirling in your brain every time you dare to leave your house.

That is what taking back the night is about: literally taking back the night that was stolen from us.

Shaking off the layers of fear and false weakness we have been smothered with and reconnecting with our power as women.

**Conclusion: (reiterate main argument)**

*Men don't need to take back the night - it has always belonged to them.*
Myself, many female community members, Hollaback! and F**krapeculture are kindly asking any men who planned to march this year to instead gather on the sidelines and let the women have their space.

Our male loved ones will be there waiting for you.
Appendix D: Samples

The Post

#1 Post Editorial: Students should rethink social media conduct

Posted: Wednesday, October 16, 2013 12:00 am

Many of us Bobcats spent the weekend celebrating our Ohio University pride, reveling with alumni and current students alike.

But by Sunday evening, we at The Post had a good-sized dent kicked into our Bobcat pride.

During the Uptown festivities, a woman was allegedly sexually assaulted on the sidewalk. A cheering crowd captured it on video, snapped photos and laughed. The next day, many of that crowd took to Instagram and Twitter to post their comments and images.

The original video has since been deleted, and the woman has filed a rape complaint with the Athens Police Department.

But the actions of the OU students who posted the videos and photos have now gained national attention, and not the flattering kind.

We aren’t here today to argue about the actions of the man and woman in the video (although we believe consent cannot be given if subjects are intoxicated), but rather to express our extreme disappointment with those who witnessed the event and did nothing to stop it, who in fact cheered on the act. Frankly, it’s an embarrassment to our university.

It is extremely distressing to us that the witnesses to this event were unable to recognize anything wrong with what was happening.

It is disgusting that during the event, no one interfered. Police were out in full force this weekend, and it would not have been difficult to tip them off.

And it is horrendous that bystanders then took to social media to shame this woman. If it had been you, or your sister or friend, would you have wanted photos, videos and scornful comments circulating?

These pictures, comments and tweets will be online forever. So please, put your cellphone down, show some compassion and use some common sense.

Editorials represent the majority opinion of The Post’s executive editors.
#2 Post Editorial: Decision needs to spark discussion

Posted: Tuesday, October 29, 2013 12:00 am

As you might have read on our front page, Athens County Prosecutor Keller Blackburn said Monday that a grand jury did not find probable cause to press any charges on any of the parties involved in the alleged rape on Court Street during Homecoming Weekend.

He also said Monday that the woman, a 20-year-old Ohio University student, did not appear to be “intoxicated beyond the ability to consent” and noted for the first time that the 20-year-old man whom she later went home with is an OU student as well, among other details.

To some, these developments might signal the end of a highly publicized case that has been a black eye for OU.

We believe, much to the contrary, there is still much to be determined in this case. It’s unclear if the two could be charged with misdemeanors, and the university could act following its investigation as well.

We, as OU students, should talk about the alleged rape, the social media that followed and the underlying issues that have rippled outward from this single incident.

The university jump-started that process Thursday, holding an event titled “Campus Conversation: Sexual Assault, Consent, and Bystander Intervention” that mixed top university administrators with students concerned with “sexual assault, consent, bystander intervention, victim blaming/slut shaming, university policy and community outreach,” according to a previous Post article.

Discussions have been sparked to figure out what consent is, and that discussion should keep moving forward. We should continue to take steps to educate our campus about victim blaming. We should continue to learn what we, as bystanders, can do.

As a campus, we have a lot to learn.

Eyes around the nation are now on us to move forward from what has happened. We have become part of the national dialogue about the culture on college campuses, and have the opportunity to shape that discussion — and in a positive way.

The discourse must include, however, plans about how we will work to prevent something like this from happening again. The effects are real, and our actions must be just as real.

Editorials represent the majority opinion of The Post’s executive editors.
#3 Post Editorial: Six weeks later, not much has changed after sex act

Posted: Thursday, December 5, 2013 12:00 am

About two months ago, during Homecoming Weekend, a male Ohio University student performed oral sex on a female student on Court Street. A crowd of people—those who, on any other weekend night, avoid eye contact while walking hurriedly by street performers and grilled cheese fundraisers—stopped, stared, gawked at the show.

Some, in this age of social media, pulled out their phones, hit record and pressed post.

The tweets and Instagram photos exploded with retweets and screen grabs. Ohio University students, infamous for their party school status and alcohol-inspired hashtags, rose to new heights of repugnancy with vulgar hashtags and blatant sexism.

Amid the social media flurry, the woman who was captured in the recordings of that night reported to Athens police that those images showed a rape, not a private act gone horribly public.

As police collected video recordings and conducted interviews, Ohio University officials and activists called for discussions about campus attitudes and invoked imperatives for changes in behavior—we did the same on this very page. A grand jury later decided there was not enough evidence to charge someone with a felony, and directors from the city law and police departments said no charges would be forthcoming.

“It was my opinion that (public indecency) did occur,” Athens County Prosecutor Keller Blackburn said in a previous Post article. “But I think that the public embarrassment of what has gone on is more than a misdemeanor charge could be.”

Whether the pair would see any charges then came down to the city law director’s office and the police department. Officials from both said no charges would be forthcoming.

Athens Police Chief Tom Pyle said he was advised by Athens City Law Director Pat Lang and Blackburn to not pursue any charges because proving a crime would be difficult.

During the initial investigation, however, Pyle said the videos and images that circled internationally online aided investigators with additional evidence. Now, though, there seems to be a lack of it.

And what about the Ohio University student whose name and personal information were published by The Daily Beast for recording and sharing the sex act?

What about the poor woman falsely named as the student, her pictures plastered over the Internet? Pictures that somewhat resemble the woman who reported a rape if you squint enough?
They were publicly shamed.

But the only people that know the identities of the pair are close friends, family and a few university officials. That might not ever change.

Of course, prosecuting the pair with a misdemeanor isn’t going to make up for what happened to the others. But fair—in this case—isn’t necessarily fair.

Yet these two students have yet to see any consequences from the university or the government and might never face any legal repercussions.

The potential repercussions extend beyond those immediately involved.

We are by no means accusing the woman of falsely alleging rape, but this incident brought with it a discussion on the subject. Many on social media and in conversations made summary judgements about the alleged rape when it first broke, saying she was participating and that her allegation of rape was blatantly false. Those beliefs can easily foment a generalization that can affect those men and women who truly accuse their attackers but are met with doubt because of false accusations from others.

The statistic of false reports is small, but the effect—as illustrated by some people’s immediate assumption that this was a false report—is significant.

Forty-eight days later, we have effectively gone nowhere. As long as the national spotlight shined on us, we had a robust discussion, but we let that discourse dwindle as that spotlight faded. Two names indirectly involved in the incident were dragged through the mud, and theirs are what we will remember most from this case. We seem to be no better off now than we were then.

And that is the greatest public shame of all.

Editorials represent the majority opinion of The Post’s executive editors.
#4 Editorial: Balanced discussion is a sign of progress on a tough subject

Posted: Wednesday, April 2, 2014 12:00 am

Tonight, a crowd of people will march through Athens as part of the Take Back The Night demonstration, and for the first time since the early 2000s, men will be permitted to walk alongside women.

This rule change has sparked a discussion on campus about whether the march should remain a women-only zone or expand to include men and those with other gender identities.

We’ve been discussing the change ourselves since late last week and have been unable to settle on either side of the line. We even talked with others invested in the march to get their input, and we still aren’t sure. We can easily see both sides of the debate.

We recognize that Take Back The Night’s cause is to empower women to feel confident and safe on the street, a traditionally intimidating place for the gender that’s typically pegged as prey. It encourages women to convert the stigmatic action of “walking the street at night” into a show of strength. A crowd of women proudly flooding the streets after dark is a symbolic demonstration of reclaiming territory and overcoming fear. We understand the notion that including men in the march might weaken the impact of that gesture.

However, the deliberate exclusion of anyone who doesn’t identify as female from the march gives us, along with many others, reason to pause. Men are also survivors of sexual violence (albeit at a much lower rate than women are), as are people who identify with variant genders. Should they be relegated to the sidelines simply because of how they identify? We don’t think so.

There must be a middle ground between the two stances. We do not have all the answers, but we’re confident that this already important and powerful event can be improved further. The sexual-violence problem is huge. People of all gender identities will need to come together to solve it, men in particular. But the problem isn’t going to be solved overnight.

For the time being, let’s compromise: If you feel compelled to march, march. If you want to show your support for the cause in general, it might be best to stay on the sidelines. Recognize that your presence in the march might be more meaningful to the people around you than you realize, and be considerate of those for whom the demonstration carries more weight.

It’s not our place to proclaim whether men belong in the march. It’s a worthy debate that we believe has no clear resolution quite yet. But we’re proud to be part of a campus where these questions are not taken lightly or answered easily.
We welcome your opinions and encourage this discussion to continue. It’s an important one to have.

*Editorials represent the majority opinion of The Post’s executive editors.*
#5 TBTN should democratize decision-making

By Damon Krane

Posted: Thursday, April 3, 2014 12:00 am

As a male sideline supporter of most of the Athens Take Back the Night marches since 2000, I would like to offer a somewhat different take on this year’s controversy surrounding how men will relate to the march.

This year’s decision to invite men to march alongside women in Take Back the Night has been particularly controversial. With only a few exceptions the event has been a women’s march since the late 1970s. Yet regardless of whether men march, every year Take Back the Night is surrounded by controversy. All of the controversy is educational. Most of it is inescapable. But some of it is more divisive than it needs to be.

Most controversial is not whether men will march in a feminist march, but whether anyone will march at all. In every year I have participated in sideline support, male students opposed to the march have shouted sexist slurs and rape threats from the balconies of Ohio University’s fraternity houses and the windows of its residence halls. Most years the marchers have made too much noise with their chants to hear much of this, but sideline supporters got an earful. The current debate over men marching pales in comparison to the controversy that greets any expression of feminism in a society that remains plagued by patriarchy, and perhaps at Ohio University in particular, which, according to the U.S. Department of Education, frequently outranks even the substantially larger Ohio State University when it comes to the number of rapes reported in residence halls. By refusing to succumb to this patriarchal rape culture, Take Back the Night marchers and supporters create division – a division between those working for a better world and those working for a worse one. So “controversy” and “divisiveness” aren’t always bad words. As Frederick Douglass pointed out, they’re absolutely necessary for progress.

But the controversy that is mostly unnecessary and counter-productive is the divisiveness created among Athens feminists/sexual assault opponents over whether men will march. Some is unavoidable; even people who share the same goals will disagree about the best strategy for achieving those goals. But much of the conflict flows from two easily corrected but longstanding problems with the march – one of messaging, the other of decision-making.

If the march’s purpose is opposition to sexual assault in general, then it makes sense for everyone to be welcomed to march, since men as well as trans and genderqueer people are also survivors of sexual assault. Conversely, if the march is a way for women to empower themselves to combat the overwhelming majority of sexual assault committed by men against women, then a women’s march probably makes most sense. So which is it? That’s the problem of messaging. And who gets to determine the message is the problem of decision-making.
In her March 30 letter, Devin Aeh argues that TBTN is a women’s march for women’s empowerment and against sexual assault. In an April 1 letter, Erin Fischer contends that Aeh speaks for only “a few bigots”; that “TBTN is not about ‘women’s empowerment’; it’s about standing up to sexual violence and assault.” Decades of local tradition are on Aeh’s side. So are tens of thousands of women and men I wouldn’t identify as bigots. But traditions and even majorities aren’t always worth going along with. So which is it?

In past years, Take Back the Night marches for women’s empowerment eventually gave rise to an additional march against sexual assault per se. Now, a Take Back the Night march against sexual assault per se is giving rise to a separate march for women’s empowerment. Just as in Aeh’s and Fischer’s arguments, these developments make two things crystal clear: 1) there is a big difference between these two types of marches and 2) there are people in Athens who feel the need for each type of march. Given that both types of marches are oriented toward worthy goals, perhaps there are even people who feel the need for both.

But whichever type of march the organizers of a particular year’s Take Back the Night choose, the march’s message needs to be made clear so people will be less inclined to continue to fight over it, and instead focus on fighting patriarchy and/or sexual assault.

Yet even if the message is clear, if the process for deciding upon that message isn’t considered legitimate, then there will still be unnecessary conflict and resentment.

The process for deciding TBTN’s message can be authoritarian or democratic. The authoritarian option is for one person or a handful of people on OU’s Student Senate, to make the decision unilaterally, after receiving some degree of wider input (or not). This is what usually happens. Then the decision maker(s) can sit back and see how many marchers and would-be marchers resent not having a say. And by “say,” I’m not talking about mere input. I’m talking about people having a share of actual decision-making power through some system of majority rule or consensus process, which would constitute a more democratic approach to determining TBTN’s message.

In addition to clearer messaging, a more democratic process that’s open to a wider constituency of TBTN stake-holders would go a long way to decrease the unnecessary kind of conflict and increase the necessary kind.

Damon Krane is a former weekly columnist for The Post, contributor to The Athens News and editor of InterActivist magazine from 2005-2008.
The Athens News

#6 One sober adult could have stopped damaging incident

By Terry Smith

Sunday, October 20, 2013

It appears that the public sex act in uptown Athens on Homecoming Weekend was either a sexual assault by one of the participants on the other, or a world-class lapse in judgment by both.

While I lack sufficient evidence or knowledge to say which is the case, some other truths aren't too difficult to mine out of this unfortunate incident.

The first is that it's a tremendously unfortunate incident, not just for two people directly involved, but for Athens and Ohio University. With the story and images exploding on the Web last week (with the painful reminder that the Web is "Worldwide), our community's reputation suffered another serious hit.

A truth that also shouldn't be surprising is that alcohol and/or drugs likely played a prominent role in what happened, not just with the two participants, but with bystanders and witnesses.

The online videos of the public sex act don't show anyone drinking, or any evidence of booze or drugs, but c'mon, it's 3 a.m. (or whatever time) on an uptown Athens weekend, Homecoming no less. Everyone involved in this unfortunate event made gross errors in judgment - both practically and ethically - that in a reasonably functioning adult could only be explained by alcohol or narcotics impairment.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the dark-suited young man who was committing the sex acts on the young woman, an OU student, erred in a number of ways. Foremost, even if it turns out she was able to give informed consent, something the young woman denied the next day when she accused him of rape, he blatantly took advantage of her, while smirking and boasting to camera-wielding bystanders. He was acting upon her, not the other way around.

The guy did a sensationally prurient (and possibly criminal) thing that got beamed to a world very interested in seeing him do this bad thing; talk about it at great length; pass it along to millions of others; and then, in most cases, condemn it savagely.

What is it about the young Facebook/Twitter generation that's so incredibly hip to the opportunities and capabilities of social media, yet so easily forgets it all when misbehaving in front of an iPhone camera?
If, in fact, the young woman was a willing participant, no more drunk or drug-addled than the man she was with, then we can say most of the same things about her. But that's a mighty big "if," and I'm not prepared to go that far, pending completion of the police investigation, and maybe not even then.

Then, what about the bystanders, the ones with the smart-phones giddily recording and then uploading an incident that even put in the best light, could only mean mortal embarrassment and potential ruination to the two in the images, as well as great harm to this community?

Some people at the scene not only didn't do the decent thing, tell the couple to stop, call the police, or simply holler, "Hey, the cops are coming!" - they continued taking pictures and videos, and then essentially broadcast them to the world.

In their iPhone screen, they too quickly saw the two people having inappropriate, convulsive sex against a brick wall as uploadable images, not human beings. Somehow, they never asked themselves, "Good grief, what's he doing to that poor girl?!"; and never considered the predictable conclusion, "This isn't going to end well."

In a better world - the one where alcohol, drugs and a cultural sink don't override common sense and human kindness - a responsible person would have taken the situation in hand. He or she would have saved these two people from starring roles in their own public humiliation, or even possibly, stopped a sexual assault in its tracks. Plus the better human impulse would have had the not insignificant side effect of saving our university and town from another reputational kick to the groin.

It didn't happen that way, but there's hope for the future, next weekend in fact.

The Halloween block party is this Saturday, the booze will be flowing, and the powder and pills readily available for the mainly college-aged crowd. Before overdoing it, Athens Halloweeners should remember what happened Homecoming Weekend below the "Welcome Students" sign in the Chase Bank storefront. Consider how much better off you'll be if you don't end the evening lamenting, "I was so wasted I didn't know what I was doing!"

And fellow smart-phone users, when faced with a situation where you can keep someone from hurting himself or someone else, even if you've had a few drinks, put your stupid phone back in your pocket or purse and do something.
#7. Change the conversation on social media, end rape culture

By Becky Perkins

Sunday, November 3, 2013

Last week it was announced that no charges will be filed in conjunction with a reported sexual assault between two Ohio University students that was photographed and videotaped. The female student involved, who was intoxicated and does not remember what happened, made a report after images were circulated on social media by onlookers who chose to stand by, watch it, record it and share it.

The Athens County Prosecutor stated that the woman didn't remember what happened, and testing showed no sign of any "date rape drug." In reality, alcohol is the most common drug to facilitate sexual assault. Perpetrators look for intoxicated victims who have higher vulnerabilities. Being intoxicated to the point of memory loss renders one incapable of giving consent.

From Athens to Circleville to Steubenville and all across Ohio, these cases highlight a glaring reality that we live in a culture that perpetuates sexual violence, degrades girls and women over social media, and glorifies bystanders who are too willing to photograph, videotape and share what they see, rather than intervene. Not only are survivors and their traumatic experiences fully exposed for public scrutiny, but the recording and sharing of such images is also a form of sexual violence, causing more harm to victims.

It's easy to blame this problem on the see-it-now, sensationalistic nature of social media and the ease with which one can record and share images. Technology at our fingertips does, to some extent, remove a certain amount of accountability, time and effort that might prompt one to stop and think. Still, there seems to be no short supply of people who are willing to 1) stand by and watch sexual assaults without intervening; 2) take out one's phone with the intention of recording what they see; 3) photograph and/or record a video of it; and 4) share that image - irrevocably, permanently - with the world. Technology may provide the means, but people must first provide the desire and consent.

The number of those willing to supply such images to the world is unfortunately eclipsed by the number of people who are too happy to consume such images. Recently, I was searching online for a brief video to be used in a presentation about teen sexual assault. I found several tasteful, impactful videos of teen survivors willingly telling their stories. These videos had been viewed up to 3,000 times. Among the list of links to "related" videos on the side of the webpage was the link to a video entitled "Hottest Gang Rape Ever." It had been viewed over 14 million times. Sexual violence is not for consumption, and it should never be tolerated or glorified.

When images of sexual violence are so casually procured, shared and viewed, everyone is impacted. Survivors are further re-victimized and traumatized, with violations of their privacy distributed for the world to watch like it's some movie… when it's actually that person's life. Our society has become further desensitized to the reality of sexual violence
and has lost sight of the impact on victims. Survivors deserve better. Everyone has an
active role in preventing abuse. To build safer communities, everyone must speak up
against incidents or messages that normalize sexual harm, abuse or exploitation. Become
an engaged bystander: someone who intervenes before, during or after a situation when
they see or hear behaviors that promote sexual violence. Not sure what to do? Get
someone who does.

And after you read this, share this, talk about this, and be sure to change the social media
collection and retweet #EndRapeCultureOhio.

Editor's note: Becky Perkins is the statewide outreach manager for the Ohio Alliance to
End Sexual Violence.
#8. Crying wolf about crying wolf
Debate over public sex incident teaches more than grand jury findings

By Damon Krane

In his Oct. 17 statement about the Oct. 12 public sex incident and alleged sexual assault that occurred on a busy Court Street sidewalk, Ohio University President Roderick McDaniel urged "members of the university community to embrace the educational opportunity that this unfortunate incident has presented." But few seem to have needed the president's encouragement. A fierce debate has raged ever since images of the incident were first posted online minutes after being captured. And this debate has been nothing if not educational.

What we have seen is a kind of educational battle - a fight, not only over how we should understand the Oct. 12 incident, but over what broader lessons we should draw about sex, violence and the responsibilities of individuals and institutions.

So many of us have participated in this battle - and often participated so passionately - because its subjects could not hit any closer to home. Sex is among the most basic of human desires and certainly a top concern of college students. So regardless of whether we are survivors or perpetrators of sexual assault, or know people who are, we all have a very personal stake in this debate. It is part of broader societal deliberations that will establish what is and is not permissible behavior for and toward each of us, and for and toward practically everyone we know.

So now that a Grand Jury has decided not to indict the alleged assailant in the Oct. 12 incident, what can this debate teach us?

The Grand Jury's findings may be criticized. (Should consent given by a person who later claims to have been blacked out qualify as consent, either legally or morally?) But the findings likely will make some debaters defensive and others feel vindicated.

Most defensive will likely be those who, from the very beginning, asserted that this was a clear-cut case of sexual assault. But serious charges merit serious investigation. A mere half-century ago, African American men were routinely lynched on the basis of unsubstantiated accusations of raping white women. Fast forward to the present, and we have a president who routinely carries out modern-day lynchings via drone strikes on the basis of unsubstantiated accusations of terror plots against Americans.

The due-process rights of the accused are among the most basic principles of justice, and they are always under attack by bigots of one variety or another - people who give vastly more weight to the suspicions of some than they do to the lives and liberty of others. Obviously, those rushing to condemn the accused in this case have not been bigots armed with torches, ropes or unchecked executive power. Still, any rush to judgment should be cause for concern - and that would be true even if the Grand Jury had decided to indict the accused.
Conversely, the debaters most likely to feel vindicated by the Grand Jury findings are those who didn't rush to condemn the accused but instead condemned his accuser. We've all heard their popular refrain: "The woman involved only claimed to have been assaulted because she was embarrassed by the viral video and photo posts online." But this was no less a rush to judgment, and it is the most troubling aspect of this debate. What is so remarkable about this claim is that it was always as popular as it was unlikely - and the Grand Jury's decision doesn't change that, either.

Rape and other legally defined varieties of sexual assault generally are not the kind of crimes that get over-reported. On the contrary, a 1995 report by the American Medical Association ranked sexual assault as the most under-reported of all violent crimes in the U.S., and a large body of subsequent research suggests the category of offenses remains at or near the top of that list. According to the U.S. Justice Department's National Crime Victimization Survey, more than half of the nearly 1.2 million sexual assaults that occurred in the U.S. from 2008 through 2012 went unreported to police. Last year alone 72 percent were unreported, down from 73 percent in 2011. In contrast, most research into false accusations of rape puts their prevalence at between just 2 and 8 percent of reported incidents. Therefore, the chances of anyone crying wolf about sexual assault appear to be very slim - a 2 to 8 percent exception that would prove a 92 to 98 percent rule.

Yet long before Athens County Prosecutor Keller Blackburn announced the Grand Jury's findings and reasoning, countless people had rushed to condemn the woman involved. Some argued the incident was not sexual assault because cunnilingus and digital penetration aren't performed for a man's benefit. Or because the woman supposedly wasn't observed crying out for help or trying to ward off her alleged assailant. Or because both parties were likely intoxicated. But none of this warrants the crying wolf thesis. Cunnilingus and digital penetration are routinely depicted in pornography for the sexual benefit of heterosexual men. More importantly, the Ohio Revised Code defines both acts as sexual assault when they are performed without consent, and a substantially intoxicated person legally cannot give consent.

The crying wolf thesis becomes even less plausible when we look at its underlying assumptions. The first is that claiming to have been sexually assaulted is a way for a woman to avoid the embarrassment of further public scrutiny and judgment. Contained within this assumption, then, is the notion that women who claim to have been assaulted are most often greeted with sympathy, honored as survivors of harrowing experiences, and seen as courageously striving to hold violent men accountable.

Yet in this case the allegation of sexual assault caused increases in media coverage, public scrutiny and harsh condemnation of the woman involved. What's more, those results were totally predictable - and not just to anyone who has followed the horrendous Steubenville and Maryville rape cases, but to anyone who has ever cared enough to pay the slightest bit of attention to this issue. Psychologists and sexual-assault survivors frequently refer to the experience that follows reporting a sexual assault as "the second rape." The unfortunate cost women typically must endure as they attempt to hold their
attackers accountable is a major reason why so many sexual assaults go unreported and unpunished in the first place.

But let's think even more specifically about Ohio University. If crying wolf about sexual assault was a surefire way for a woman to escape the embarrassment of a tryst she subsequently regretted, then given the number of sloppy drunken hook-ups that occur at a university of more than 25,000 students frequently ranked as America's number-one party school, we would expect sexual assaults to be reported on a daily or even hourly basis in Athens. However, according to the U.S. Department of Education and OU's annual campus security reports, the total number of sexual assaults reported on or near OU's main campus during the entire 12-year period from 2001 through 2012 is 230. Rounded to the nearest whole number, that's an average of just 19 per year.

Granted, that number is unacceptably high considering the heinous nature of the crime and the high rate of unreported incidents. What's more, during five of the past 12 years, more sexual assaults in residence halls were reported at OU than at any other public university in the state. During a sixth year, OU tied with Miami University for the highest number of these incidents. And during all six of those years, more residence hall assaults were reported at OU than at Ohio State University, even though OSU then had two to three times more students than OU. Nevertheless, an annual average of 19 reported incidents is infinitely lower than what we would expect if the crying wolf thesis rested on correct assumptions.

Finally, the ultimate irony of the crying wolf thesis is that its adherents refute their argument by making it. That's because if sexual assault survivors were generally celebrated as heroes, there wouldn't have been an enormous chorus of people so eager to condemn this alleged survivor (or any other) as a villain.

Managing to disprove one's own thesis is quite a feat of stupidity. Combined with everything else that's dumb about this sadly predictable rush to judgment, it teaches us two things - first, just how much of their own intelligence many people are willing to sacrifice in the defense of privilege (and in this case, we're talking about the privilege of men in our society to most often rape with impunity) and two, that when feminists talk about "rape culture," they're probably on to something.

The Grand Jury has let an alleged assailant off the hook - maybe even for legitimate reasons. But many of us still have a lot to answer for.

Damon Krane is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and community organizer who lived in Athens from 1999 to 2009, during which time he attended Ohio University, wrote for the Post, The Athens NEWS and The InterActivist magazine (which he edited from 2005-2009), and helped organize various local social justice campaigns, including efforts to combat sexual assault at OU. For more of his writing, visit www.damonkrane.com.
#9. Voyeurism, digital style, a sign of the times

By Bernhard Debatin

Wednesday, October 23, 2013

The recent case of an alleged sexual assault on South Court Street in Athens has, in a very short period of time, led to an avalanche of reactions, from the damaging and irresponsible postings of the images on social media, to a bitter campus-wide controversy, to national and international media attention.

Although the event has many angles worth exploring, I want to focus on digital voyeurism as a characteristic feature of this case. It is amazing, though not surprising, how quickly and callously bystanders did what these days has become an almost Pavlovian reflex in our society: Pictures and videos of the incident were not only taken, they were immediately uploaded onto social media. This seamless merging of individual behavior with social and mobile media relies on four main factors that facilitate and induce digital voyeurism:

• First, everybody is in permanent witness mode. Whatever happens can and will be documented with a smart-phone camera, often with an eye toward its sensational and voyeuristic value. We need to recognize that privacy invasions do not stem solely from an ever-increasing network of governmental and corporate surveillance. They also result from the trend of private individuals to constantly and compulsively take pictures and make them public, no matter how inappropriate the content. Worse, often these posts are instruments of willful shaming and Schadenfreude.

• Second, the immediacy of networked social media allows and promotes the sharing of images before considering its implications. There is no built-in interrupter in this swift and slick technology that would say, wait a minute, let's think about the consequences. Instead, this instantaneous shout-out to an imaginary, yet real and potentially global audience promises immediate satisfaction and the cheap thrill of scooping a juicy story. Instead of serving as citizen journalists (per the predictions of some Internet gurus), these digital voyeurs amount to paparazzi and tabloid producers.

Third, while the ability to post anonymously or under a pseudonym allows people to talk about things they might otherwise be afraid to address, it also promotes reckless and irresponsible behavior. People assume, wrongly, that they cannot be tracked down and can therefore post lies, false allegations, rumors, or embarrassing information with impunity. The irony is that most people don't understand how many digital traces they leave even under the cover of anonymity. Those digital footprints can help to catch digital bullies and stalkers - as dramatically shown by the case with the two Florida girls arrested Oct. 14, 2013, on felony charges of harassing a classmate until she committed suicide.
• Fourth, social and mobile media use occurs in the private environment of a personal phone, tablet or computer screen. The privacy of our digital media has, as Zizi Papacharissi pointed out in her 2010 book, "A Private Sphere," created a new form of participation in public communication through private communication channels instead of the public sphere. In other words, we treat mobile and social media as extensions of our private sphere, where we feel unobserved and uninhibited. Protected by this ostensibly private environment, we may believe that we are only talking to our friends while actually broadcasting to an unlimited public. We thus need a new digital ethics of self-restraint, based on the Kantian question of whether you truly would want any posted information to become known not only to your friends but to the whole world. If we took the time to ask this question and to empathize with those ridiculed and exposed in such posts, we would be much more hesitant to hit "upload."

These four factors combine to discourage thoughtful, responsible and outcome-oriented action. Instead, we have become a society of digital voyeurs, always eager to digitally capture and forward juicy news while fooling ourselves that only our friends will see it. But digital voyeurism doesn't end with the initial publication of images. Once the avalanche of images and comments is unleashed, it constantly seeks new fodder. Legal scholar Cass Sunstein coined the apt term "cybercascades" for the uncontrolled dynamics of digital voyeurism and spread of rumors and false information.

Since last Wednesday, speculation about the identity of the women from the Court Street incident spread like a wildfire on social media. A falsely identified student received a flood of harassing comments via social media, which led her to file a police complaint. Although both Athens Police and the university stated that the student had been misidentified, her name and other personal information cascaded widely across cyberspace. She received harassing messages from as far away as Australia. Recklessly magnified, digital voyeurism thus claimed yet another victim. Even OU's dean of students was vilified on the Internet after clarifying that the student had no connection to the case.

The path of digital voyeurism is littered with not only embarrassing posts but - more seriously - truly damaging material that includes bullying, bragging about rape, threats of violence, and shaming of alleged victims. Steubenville, Maryville and Athens are only the tip of an ugly iceberg, showing many of today's digital natives as cold and cynical. It is time to publicly call out and denounce this irresponsible behavior and hold people accountable for their actions in both the real world and the virtual (but no less real) world of social media.

Bernhard Debatin is a professor of journalism at Ohio University.
#10. Men don’t need to reclaim the night; they already own it

By Devin Aeh

Wednesday, April 2, 2014

I was 16 years old when I attended my first Take Back the Night march. It blew the lid off my little hillbilly brain and made me feel something I had never felt before. I didn't have a word for that feeling then, but I have come to know it as empowerment. Marching in solidarity with a swarm of women, chanting and yelling about how we won't be raped and beaten, opened my eyes to something I had never been told before: that women are strong.

I am strong. I have felt that very distinct feeling of awe and empowerment every march since then (with the exception of a couple years when I lived out of the state). I am in my 30s now, and last year I was able to share the experience with my 1-year-old daughter, who rode along in her stroller.

I was heartbroken when I learned the march this year would not be solely for women. Don't get me wrong, I love men (I made a baby with one!), but TBTN is for women. Yes, men are victims of sexual assault, too, but not nearly at the rate women are, and when they are victimized, it is almost always by another man. Contrary to the slogan of this year's TBTN, sexual assault does indeed discriminate. Nine out of 10 rape victims are female. Of all rapists, 99.6 percent are male. One in six women will be raped at least once in their lifetime, compared to one in 33 men. Clearly, women are at a much-higher risk than men.

All that aside, TBTN is not a survivor walk. It is a women's empowerment march. There is a march for survivors that welcomes all genders every fall. Men who understand violence against women also understand and respect that sometimes women need women-only spaces. That is why, in past TBTN marches, our male allies have stood on the sidelines holding signs, dropping banners and cheering for the women as they march by. Supporting us, but letting us do our thing. Letting us reclaim the streets for ourselves.

Heterosexual men are not afraid to walk down the street at night. Most women are. Being raped, followed, sexually harassed or otherwise attacked is a constant fear in the back of women's minds. We are told from the time we are small girls not to go anywhere alone; not to walk home after dark; and to always have a boyfriend, brother, dad or male friend to protect us because we are weak and vulnerable.

Not only is this false, it also feeds into the myth that rapes are committed by strangers in dark alleys (most assaults are committed by people we know and trust). Nonetheless, it is nearly impossible to make it to adulthood as a woman without these fears swirling in your brain every time you dare to leave your house. That is what taking back the night is about: literally taking back the night that was stolen from us. Shaking off the layers of fear and false weakness we have been smothered with and reconnecting with our power as women.
Men don't need to take back the night - it has always belonged to them.

Myself, many female community members, Hollaback! and F**krapeculture are kindly asking any men who planned to march this year to instead gather on the sidelines and let the women have their space. Our male loved ones will be there waiting for you.

_Devin Aeh of Nelsonville Devin is a prevention educator and self-defense instructor with the Sexual Assault Prevention Program and a site leader for Hollaback! Appalachian Ohio. She believes in equal rights for all people._