Camille Paglia and Her views on Date Rape: Accurate or Ignorant?

Are you a female college student? If so, here's an important fact you should know. According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, it is estimated that 25% of college women have been victims of date rape or attempted rape since age 14. Date rape is a very serious and important issue today. People have different opinions about. “It’s a Jungle Out There” by Camille Paglia is an article about rape and personal responsibility. Paglia claims in her essay that feminism hides the truth about sex from women and exaggerates the issue of rape (353). Paglia goes on to point out that rape is nothing new and has been a problem for all of recorded history. Paglia claims that women are vulnerable, and feminism tells them they are not. Paglia writes that women shouldn’t believe feminist ideas, that women can say anything, wear anything, and go anywhere. Paglia says women just need to accept that they will always be in sexual danger and learn to protect themselves. Paglia stresses in her essay that women are the ones who need to watch what they do. For example, she writes in her essay, “A girl who lets herself get dead drunk at a fraternity party is a fool” (354). Paglia claims that masculinity is aggressive and is a part of life. Paglia is saying that it is only the responsibility of the women or potentially the school to protect herself from date rape. Paglia does not put any responsibility on the men who actually commit date rape.
crimes. She claims that date rape can only be stopped when women become self-aware and practice self-control. She stresses that women, not men, need to be proactive and responsible for their actions.

In order to explore this issue in more detail, I asked myself some questions. Is Paglia right about the issue of date rape and her proposed solution? Are feminists exaggerating the issue of date rape as Paglia claims or just bringing light to an important women’s issue? What is the incidence of date rape and under what circumstances do they occur? Is the real solution to date rape women practicing self-control or is it the responsibility of the perpetrators to be self-aware and have self-control? What are some causes of date rape? Is it really rooted in men’s psychological weakness or in societal attitudes? These are the questions I wanted to ask when looking at the issue of date rape and Paglia’s views on the issue. Is it the responsibility of women or the men who commit it, to end date rape?

Paglia makes a good point that women need to be self-aware and practice self-control, although this is common knowledge. Everyone, men and women, in general need to do this in life. Woman being proactive is the solution to date rape. Women could practice self-control and be self-aware, but that would not change the behavior of men. According to David G. Curtis, a clinical psychologist, Paglia’s and other views like this have been criticized for being overly simplistic and simply submitting to the problem.

For example, Paglia says that “A girl who allows herself to get dead drunk at a fraternity party is a fool” (354) That girl may be a fool, but just because she has gotten dead drunk at a fraternity party doesn’t mean she has given consent to sex. I agree with such criticism of Paglia’s views and similar ones. Paglia’s views are excessively
simplistic. She is overlooking some things and ignoring the real issue. I also think that ideas like Paglia’s are even harmful to date rape victims and women in general. Paglia says women need to be self-aware and have self-control. What about the men who rape them? Are they exempt from being self-aware, having self-control or even merely respecting the rights of women? I think Paglia saying women need to have more self-control is ludicrous. It is obvious to me, that if a guy rapes a girl, he is the one with self-control and self-awareness issues.

First, Even if women are as proactive as they can possibly be, date rape will still happen. Paglia is really downplaying men’s role in date rape too much. Paglia is simply making excuses for men’s lack of respect for women. Paglia tries so hard to reject the feminist ideas of blaming the victim, but that is exactly what she is doing. She is specifically focusing on the behavior of the victim. The fact that she rejects the word "victim" to describe date rape victims, is crazy. These women are victims, like victims of any other crime. According to a fact sheet put out by the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, “There is no other crime, which the victim’s behavior is focused on to such an extent, like with date rape” (5). “Naïveté, poor judgment, even reckless behavior is not a crime. Rape is.” (5). “Sexual assault is the only crime where the relationship between the parties is deemed relevant and the victim’s prior behavior is considered provocation” (5).

Next, one thing, I think Paglia is wrong about is women putting themselves in dangerous situations being a reason they are raped. According to Kate Arthur in her article, “The Victim’s Right” most date rapes occur where women feel the safest. Forty percent occur in the women’s home and 20 percent in the home of a friend (2).
Therefore, Paglia stressing that girls be more careful is not a good point. What could be safer than your own home? Also according to The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, "Women ages 16 to 24 experience rape at rates four times higher than the assault rate of all women, making the college years the most vulnerable for women" (5). "College women are also more at risk for rape, than women the same age who aren't in college" (6). This suggests in my opinion, that maybe these girls are not being raped because they put themselves in dangerous situations but because they are at risk demographically. College women are a group that is at high risk, but this does not necessarily mean it is because they put themselves in dangerous situations. Also, the college environment including frequent unsupervised parties, easy access, to alcohol and the availability of private rooms may contribute to the high rape rates of women in college (7). These are some things I think Paglia needs to consider, when she insinuates in her article that girls get raped because they put themselves in dangerous situations.

Another aspect of Paglia's essay that I think is flawed is the way she approaches date rape prevention. Paglia's article claims prevention is the responsibility of the victim and the colleges, not the perpetrator. According to an article by James P. Earle about acquaintance rape workshops for men, "Exclusive emphasis on what women can do to prevent rape supports the idea that women are responsible for rape" (1). Furthermore if interventions are designed only for women, they may give women a false sense of security" (2). Unfortunately, there is nothing a woman can do to guarantee that she will not be victimized. This information suggests to me that men should be the target of date rape prevention programs. Also, according to the Earle article, "Burt (1978, 1980) hypothesized that certain attitudes that are widely accepted in Western Culture and which
are particularly held by rapists and potential rapists play an important role in contributing to sexual violence" (2). "Data consistent with Burt’s theory indicate that male college student’s levels of sexual aggression are correlated with attitudes condoning violence against women" (2). This kind of data seems to suggest that men’s attitudes about women and date rape need to be changed in order to try to end date rape. In my opinion, when men commit rape against women, it is showing a lack of respect for women that may be due to ideas or attitudes they get from society.

Another thing Paglia needs to consider is that, attitudes like hers that do in fact blame the victim, could be a reason there is such a massive underreporting of date rape. "Fewer than 5 percent of college women who are victims of rape or attempted rape report it to the police." (Earle 4)

According to Vickie Smith, a woman who runs a hotline that helps victims of rape and sexual assault, "There is a common thread with every call to the hotline, an overwhelming sense of guilt" (Arthur 2). Women will say things like, "If I hadn’t have drank or stayed out so late", Vickie and her volunteers try to put the self-blame to rest (3). It is sad that girls who were raped feel this kind of misplaced guilt. Essays and opinions like those of Paglia contribute to these problems of self-blame and victim underreporting.

In conclusion, I do not agree with Paglia’s views in her essay, “It’s a Jungle Out There.” I think Paglia’s views are one-sided and ignorant. I disagree that women becoming proactive will put an end to date rape. In order to put an end to date rape, men must be targeted as the solution. When a guy commits a crime like date rape, his behavior, and actions need to be focused on, not those of the victim. Date rape needs to
be treated like any other crime that violates someone's rights. The real issue deals with; men having respect for women, men practicing self-control, and being self-aware. Paglia's views are just anti-feminist. They are anti-female and extreme. I did not learn anything from her article that I did not already know. I just thought her opinions were simple, one-sided, and have no real value to anyone. I do not agree with Paglia's views. I do not think her article has much value.

(Not even as a conversation starter?)

B+

You argue your points well. Still some problems with quoting, but overall you've used sources well. I'd say your first research paper was a success.
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