

In her highly publicized book 'The Morning After,' Katie Roiphe says claims of date rape take power away from women. But many Yale students and professors contend this new brand of feminism marks a step in the wrong direction.

# Does date rape really happen?

A new wave of feminism is stirring the debate on date rape by arguing that there is a hysteria of victimization on college campuses and that women should take more responsibility for their actions.

In "The Morning After," a controversial book published last year, author Katie Roiphe blames the feminist movement for creating the hysteria that makes it easy for women who have regretted having sex to turn around and claim rape.

While Roiphe could not be reached for comment, campus reaction to her book among students and professors proves the issue is not clear-cut. While the debate in feminist circles and counseling groups rages, many students are reluctant to take a stand on the issue.

"I don't share [Roiphe's] opinion at all," Andy Graybill '94 said. "The problem I have is that people divide [date rape] into two camps: the people who say the man is solely responsible, and the people who say date rape is only the morning after, regretting sex, feeling better by blaming someone. I have problems with both of these views, especially the second."

Women's Studies professor Laura Wexler also expressed concerns about Roiphe's book. Contrary to Roiphe's premise, Wexler said she has not noticed any hysteria about date rape or any willingness on the part of college women to assume the victim role. "If anything, there is hardly any rape awareness on campus," Wexler said.

The difficulty of ascertaining who is telling the truth and whether rape actually occurred renders date rape a gray area, students said.

Some students say cases of date rape are often clear cut.

"The popular perception of date rape is this ambivalent thing in a dark room where he is cool with it. She isn't but she doesn't give any signs," Elizabeth Emens '94 said. "I don't think the majority of them are like that, although I do think there are such cases. It's much more common that she does give signs through body language."

Others, however, do agree with Roiphe.

"I think what she's trying to say is that lots of women, perhaps because of media hype, tend to think that if they have sex while drunk, it's rape, even if it was consensual. A lot of women on campuses have become oversensitized," said Kelly Weiss '96, chief whip of the Party of the Right. Women have to take responsibility for their choices, she said.

"I think women should take more responsibility," Kate Birney '96 said. "It's too easy to be a victim. Date rape definitely is a reality — some women aren't aggressive enough to fight back

when they are in that situation, but I think the recent feminist-hype [as expressed by Roiphe's book] is too much."

Weiss' view that women at times label bad experiences as date rape has some support on campus.

"Date rape has become an excuse for people who have had a bad sexual experience to turn around and say, 'I've been date raped,' and that sucks for people who have really been date-raped," Dimitra Doufekias '96 said.

The way in which date rape is presented on campus to first-year students is part of the problem, several students said.

"It is not productive," said Neomi Rao '95, editor-in-chief of the Yale Free Press. "In the freshman sessions, they tell men that it is all their fault no matter what happens. They should be more empowering about it. This doesn't mean that men can do anything they like to liberated women."

Many attribute the failure of date rape survivors to come forward and break the silence to their embarrassment about the experience.

"Roiphe promotes the sense that if a woman goes into a certain situation that she's asking for it," Emens said. "Part of the shame and embarrassment in not reporting date rape is that women feel that they'll be put on the spot for their decisions."

Although students think certain guidelines of communication are crucial, some question the administrative stance of Ohio's Antioch College. The college's controversial policy states that partners must gain verbal consent at all stages for all forms of physical contact.

But some students said the policy, however exaggerated, enabled some control over such situations. "Antioch's policy of yes at any point was a way for the university to control that, to provide a way for someone who was paying attention to get clear signals," Emens said.

Other students said private lives should remain under private control.

"As for Antioch College, I don't think sexual behavior should be legislated. The administration believes it is their duty to protect private lives, but it is the student's duty to do so," Weiss said.

Besides attacking systems such as the one at Antioch College, Roiphe questions measures such as Take Back the Night marches. In her book, she argues that these marches only bolster a sense of hysteria and victimization.

However, campus organizers of the statewide Take Back the Night march scheduled for April 30 in New Haven said the marches Roiphe portrays are very different from the present marches.

"I think that in the past, Take Back the Night was more of the feminist elite getting together to feel good about themselves," said Melissa Rolls '95, one of the organizers. "Ours will have groups

from all over New Haven from rape crisis groups to homeless shelters. [Roiphe's] comments may be valid for the past, but feminists have been addressing these issues, and she doesn't give that enough attention."

But Emens said Roiphe's comments were never relevant. "Take Back the Night was originally on the streets to be against all forms of violence against women," she said.

Although the controversy is currently one of the hot topics of campus feminism, most of the debate among students is fueled by media perceptions of the book in reviews and articles rather than an actual firsthand knowledge. Most of the students interviewed had not read "The Morning After."

Wexler said the uproar over this book was largely fabricated and not based on fact or reality. Roiphe is "very young and published a book on the subject which is not very imaginative or all that well crafted," she said. "She is not aware how her attempts at writing are used by people who don't have her best interests in mind."

Although the media is touting the book and its stance on date rape as the "new wave" of feminism, Wexler refused to herald it as a breath of fresh air. "It's awful that debate has gotten so thin that this is a new wave of feminism," Wexler said. "It makes me sad that this is the accepted range of feminist debate. It's too narrow, not very historically aware or resonant."

Wexler said the feminist debate is far richer than the book makes it out to be. "I'm all for people reading it, but we're getting tunnel vision," she said, adding, "I grieve for this generation. We think this is what feminism is. It is one position, not representative of a very rich political and philosophical discourse."

By Alessandra Phillips

