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Corey Hamilton

English 1020

30th November 2015

ALCOHOL FOR EVERYONE[[1]](#footnote-1)

The consumption of alcohol by persons under the age of twenty-one in the United States is illegal. This was not always the case. In 1972, Michigan lowered the minimum legal drinking age from twenty-one to eighteen. At that time, the authority to set the minimum legal drinking age was a right that was left up to each individual state. The push to lower the drinking age to eighteen was due to two different factors. The first was due to men and women soldiers returning home after the Vietnam War who said that if they were old enough to fight for our country at a time of war; they were old enough to consume alcohol when they returned home. Furthermore, male soldiers who did not voluntarily enlist also argued that if they were old enough to be drafted into the war, instead of voluntarily going to war like the women who fought during this time, they should be allowed to consume alcohol when they returned home. In many states these arguments were valid enough to lower the drinking age. The other factor that called for states to lower the minimum legal drinking age was the Twenty-Sixth Amendment of the Constitution which lowered the national voting age to eighteen; people believed that if they could be a voting member of society at eighteen they should be allowed to consume alcohol as well. In 1984 the minimum legal drinking age was raised nation wide to twenty-one. Although there are people who do not believe the drinking age should be lowered again because the amount of alcohol related car accidents and deaths prevalent among young adults, the drinking age should be lowered so that young adults can learn to drink responsibly and reasonably, without having to binge drink, and without having to leave the country.

People aged twelve to twenty years old drink eleven percent of all alcohol consumed in the United States per year (CDC Fact Sheet). More than ninety percent of this eleven percent of alcohol consumed by underage persons each year is consumed in the form of binge drinking. Binge drinking is the consumption of an excessive amount of alcohol in a short period of time. According to The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism binge drinking is a way of drinking that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels to eight hundredths of a gram per deciliter of blood in less than two hours. For males this would take about five drinks in two hours, while it would only take on average four drinks in two hours for women (CDC Fact Sheet). Binge drinking is the most dangerous form of drinking because a person does not realize how much alcohol they have consumed or how much this alcohol will affect them. According to the study, Metropolitan-Area Estimates of Binge Drinking in the United States, binge drinking is an especially hazardous pattern of alcohol consumption that causes a substantial proportion of alcohol-related deaths. Also, binge drinking was significantly more common among persons aged eighteen to thirty-four years than among those aged thirty-five years and older in eighteen of the twenty metropolitan areas with the highest binge-drinking estimates (Nelson, Naimi, Brewer, Bolen, Wells). The 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Study found that twenty-one percent of high school aged students surveyed reported binge drinking within the past thirty days (CDC Fact Sheet). Binge drinking is the most common form of alcohol consumption in young adults aged eighteen to twenty. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention observes that binge drinkers are fourteen times more likely to report alcohol-impaired driving than non-binge drinkers (CDC Fact Sheet). Also people who binge drink report doing so on average about five to six times a month.In addition to binge drinking often, America’s underage drinkers consume more drinks per occasion than legal drinkers do (CDC Fact Sheet). If we lowered the minimum legal drinking age to eighteen, we could reduce the amount of young adults who are binge drinking, which would in turn lower the amount of alcohol impaired people driving. Our nation’s young adults would have the chance to learn how to consume alcohol in a more responsible and controlled way.

In states close to the Canadian or Mexican borders, many American’s are crossing the border to consume alcohol because in Canada you only have to be nineteen to drink and in Mexico you only have to be eighteen to drink. Having Americans cross the border involves our citizens adding much more alcohol related revenue to other countries revenue when that is money that could be added to America’s revenue, if we lowered the drinking age. In addition to spending money on alcohol in Canada or Mexico many young adults choose to stay the night in a hotel so they do not have to cross back over the border into America again after they have been consuming alcohol. Staying in hotels adds much more revenue to Canada’s or Mexico’s economy as well. Americans going to Canada or Mexico to drink is not the safest thing for our citizens to do either. Alcohol can impair judgment and many of our young adults are not going to be familiar with the area of Canada or Mexico they are in which can be dangerous for them. It is much safer to have our citizens on United States soil when consuming alcohol.

When it comes to the topic of enforcing the minimum legal drinking age, most of us believe that it is heavily enforced in the United States, especially in college towns where underage drinking is much more common. This may not be as true as so many of us are lead to believe, one national survey titled “Will Increasing Alcohol Availability by Lowering the Minimum Legal Drinking Age Decrease Drinking and Related Consequences Among Youths?” by Ackleh, Fitzpatrick, Jacquez, Rasul, Rommel, and Scribner introduced that fewer than 1 in 10 underage students who drink alcohol reported experiencing any consequences for violating alcohol policies imposed by their college (Ackleh, Fitzpatrick, Jacquez, Rasul, Rommel, Scribner). Although we as a country tend to believe that the drinking age is regularly enforced, Wagner and Wolfson show that rates of enforcement of the legal drinking age are actually very low and that actions against outlets or adults providing alcohol to youth are particularly rare as well (Wagner, Wolfson). If the minimum legal drinking age of twenty-one is hardly being enforced in the united states why is our drinking age so high? There is no point to have the drinking age so high if we are not enforcing the drinking age anyway.

Alcohol consumption is shown to go down, as your age increases. More alcohol is consumed by adults ages eighteen to twenty-six than those above thirty years of age (McKim, Quinlan). With our young adults who are currently underage drinking more than our legal adults who are twenty-six years of age or older, and the legal minimum drinking age not being properly enforced, why not lower the drinking age? America’s youths are still consuming the alcohol, even though right now they should not be. America’s youth are not going to stop consuming alcohol illegally, making the drinking age eighteen would allow our youth to consume the alcohol is a more reasonable and conscientious way.

According to a study done by Henry Wechsler and Toben F. Nelson titled, “Heavy Episodic drinking on college campuses; Does changing the legal drinking age make a difference?” young adult drinkers often changed the way they drank when placed in an area with other drinkers (Wechsler, Nelson). The study found that if a young adult who was a moderate drinker was placed into an environment with other young adults who were more heavy drinkers, the moderate drinkers tended to increase their drinking to “fit in” with the other heavy drinkers around them. Lowering the drinking age would allow young adults to partake in drinking in a much more relaxed, legal environment, instead of feeling like they need to drink much more than normal for them to fit in with others around them. Proven in a National Birth Cohort Study, young adults who drink more heavily at a young age tend to be heavy drinkers their whole lives (Percy, Andrew, McKay). Lowering the drinking age would change this. Many of the young adults who are heavy drinkers are only considered to be heavy drinkers because they binge drink when they do consume alcohol, so that they do not have a higher chance of being caught with the alcohol. This pattern of binge drinking results in being labeled as heavy drinkers.

For those reasons, the legal minimum drinking age should be lowered in The United States of America. Lowering the drinking age would allow young adults to learn how to drink responsibly without being pressured to binge drink. The problem with binge drinking especially with those who are not very familiar with alcohol is that they do not realize how much alcohol they consumed or how much the alcohol will affect them. Lowering the legal drinking age within the United States would be best to help lower the amount of alcohol related issues, such as binge drinking. Lowering the drinking age would also add much more alcohol related revenue into our economy. Many young adults near the borders of Canada and Mexico would not cross the bored but would keep that money in the United States revenue, if we lowered the drinking age. Overall, lowering the minimum legal drinking age in the United States is a worthy idea and should implemented.

Work Cited

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Dear Corey Hamilton,

There were a few different positives to writing project three. These positives included learning about why the drinking age was lowered in the first place. After reading about why the drinking age was lowered, I then began to research why the drinking age was raised again. Along with learning about the history of the drinking age in the United States, project three also helped me learn what it takes to complete a collegiate research paper. I learned many research methods that will help me throughout the rest of my academic career. Being one hundred percent honest I do not believe there are any negatives to project three, except for the amount of procrastinating I did before I really started to work on my paper. But that does not have anything to do with project three, just my bad work habit.

I think I grew most in the research learning outcome. This was my first research essay completed in college. Between this course and my honors course, I have learned many new skills that have helped me develop a better understanding of what it takes to complete a collegiate research paper. In addition to learning how to use the resources at Wayne State to find information, I also learned how to pick out what was relevant information and what was not relevant information. Not only did I learn how to find research relevant to my argument but I also learned effective ways to present my research in a neat and organized way. I think it is very important to not only complete research well, but also be able to present it in an effective manor. I am fortunate to have learned how to do this while working on project three.

The part of project three that I feel proudest of is my research sources. I spent a majority of time researching my topic and finding sources that were relevant and supported my opinion. I used different databases and different key words to find relevant scholarly and popular sources. It took a lot of time to go through all my results but after reading through the outcomes I found relevant sources with worthy facts to make my argument. Not only am I proudest of my research but I also enjoyed this part of project three the most. I think it was very interesting to read through all the different opinions on lowering the drinking age.

Sincerely,

Kaitlyn Bartl

1. Alcohol for those over eighteen years of age within the United States of America [↑](#footnote-ref-1)