Drinking Age Within the United States of America

Picture that you're eighteen and you're at your first college party. Everyone around you is consuming alcohol. Everyone knows the drinking age is twenty-one, and you know that the people around you are not of age to be drinking. Does knowing this stop them from drinking? Does it stop you from having a drink or two? In most cases, knowing the drinking age is twenty-one doesn't stop underage people from indulging in alcoholic beverages. In many cases actually, knowing that you are breaking the law makes people drink a lot of alcohol quickly, rather than just sit around and sip on a beer or two, because they don't want to risk getting caught having the alcohol around for a long time. My research question is: Should the drinking age, in the United States of America, be lowered, completely abolished, or left at twenty-one. I chose this as my research question because I am very curious as to why the United States has one of the highest drinking ages in the world. I also think it is very ironic that in the United States you have to be twenty-one to drink legally, but if you live near the border you can go to Mexico to drink at eighteen or Canada to drink at nineteen.

I know that the drinking age in the United States was raised from eighteen to twenty-one in July of 1984. I never really researched this topic, but I am very curious as to why we
would raise the drinking age so high when many countries in the world don't even have a drinking age. Another thing that I already know is that before 1984 the drinking age was left up to the states. At one point, before the drinking age was raised nation wide to twenty-one you could be eighteen and be legal to drink in your own state but if you crossed the border into the neighboring state you may no longer be legal. I think it is best that we have a country wide drinking age, but I do not believe that it should be twenty-one. I chose this topic because since I live so close to Windsor, Ontario, I can go to Canada all I want when I am nineteen to add to their alcohol revenue. But, I can't drink legally at my own house where I know I will not be traveling, and I am safe. If I go to Canada to drink, that means I will be indulging in alcoholic beverages, which can impair your judgment, in a foreign country that I have not been. Then I will either have choose to stay the night in a hotel, which adds more money to Canada's revenue, or have a Designated Driver to take me home, back across the border. I don’t think that going to Canada to drink is the safest thing. I would much rather sit at home and enjoy a beer than to travel to a foreign country, this is one of the main reasons that I chose this as my research topic.

I started my research by going to Wayne State's Library website, from there I went to the English 1020 guide page. Once I got to the English 1020 Guide page I went to The ProQuest Research Library. All three of my sources came from the ProQuest. On the ProQuest page I came up with a few different ways to look for articles to support my argument. I narrowed down my search by using different key words. Some of my searches included key words such as; Lower, Drinking Age, United States, Young Adults, and Alcohol consumption. Changing my search words gave me many different articles. Once I narrowed the articles down to about
thirty different articles, I began to read through them until I found three that best supported my research question. Reading through the articles to find the most relevant and scholarly ones was the most time consuming of my research. I had to go through each article and decide if it was a good source or not. After I came up with a short list of six articles that seemed most appropriate, I narrowed them down again to the top three articles which became my three main sources for this paper.

My first source is “Will Increasing Alcohol Availability by Lowering the Minimum Drinking Age Decrease Drinking and Related Consequences Among Youths?” By Henry Wechsler, PhD, and Toben F. Nelson, ScD. This is one of the best sources I found on ProQuest. I found a lot of relevant information from this source, such as approximately three quarters of college students ages eighteen to twenty reported drinking alcohol within the past year. According to Wechsler and Nelson, one national survey reported that less than one in ten underage college students who reported using alcohol regularly reported experiencing any consequences for violating alcohol policies imposed by their college. Another piece of relevant information from this source was that the national drinking age was lowered to 18 in the early 1970’s due to the Selective Service being put in place. The rationale at that point was that men who were old enough to serve in the military were old enough to consume alcoholic beverages.

My second source is “Changes in Alcohol Consumption with Age” by William A. Mckim, PhD, and L. Terrance Quinlan B.A., B.SC. This article gave a lot of good insight as to how much alcohol is consumed between different age levels and between both sexes. One thing I found very interesting from this article was that according to their study, the amount of alcohol
consumed goes down as the age of the person raises. The age at which the most alcohol is consumed is between the ages of 18-26. I thought this was interesting because before the age of 21 you are not even legal to drink in the U.S. but yet that is still when the most alcohol is being consumed. One thing mentioned in the article that I had previously known was that on average men consume more alcohol per year than women do. This article also indicated that men tend to not only consume more alcohol but they also consume it in much greater quantities in a specific amount of time. All of the facts mentioned above from the article “Changes in Alcohol Consumption with Age” will help my argument by showing that even when people are not legal they are still consuming more alcohol than most people who are legal within the United States.

Last but not least, my third source is “Heavy Episodic Drinking on College Campuses; Does Changing the Legal Drinking Age Make a Difference?” by Azmy S. Ackleh, Ben G. Fitzpatrick, Geoffrey M. Jacquez, Jawaid W. Rasul, Robert G. Rommel and Richard A. Scribner. This article was produced by The Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs. This source gave more of a background on when college students, who are under the legal drinking age, drink and how they consume alcohol. This article talked about how people who are light drinkers tend to drink more when in an environment with heavy drinkers. College students tend to change their drinking habits based on what other kind of drinkers are in the atmosphere at the time. This article stated that lowering the legal drinking age would allow college students to partake in drinking in a more relaxed setting. This source made a lot of great points that will help me make my argument to lower the national drinking age within the United States.
While doing my research to support my research question I learned many new ways to find evidence to support my statement. Before this project I never knew databases such as ProQuest, or Mel CAT even existed. I had never needed to come up with search terms like we did in class with Judith. I learned that research is much more than just going and getting a book from the library or just going to the google home page. Research takes a lot of time and effort. Research is not like it seemed in middle or high school where you could google something and then write a whole essay based of one source. Research requires more than one source. Research requires you to compare and contrast what different sources have to say so you can effectively make an evaluative claim about the subject you have researched. I learned that even with the high drinking age that the United States has today, it is not being enforced like it could be, and that drinking is still a huge thing for young adults age 18 and over. After researching this project, I argue that it would be for the better if the United States of America lowered the national drinking age to eighteen but that the drinking and driving laws should be hardened and the drinking age itself should be more strictly enforced throughout the country.
Work Cited

