Chantell Coley

Dr. Anita Underwood

English 1102

23 April 2018

The Problem with Teenagers Drinking and Driving

 Is teenage drinking and driving still considered a problem today? First off, driving under the influence is illegal, as is underage drinking. When an individual’s blood alcohol content (BAC) is over 0.1, it is considered illegal to operate a motor vehicle (Brown). According to statistics on many sources, the impaired teenage driving percentage has declined from the early 1900s. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the percentage of teenage drinking have declined by more than fifty-four percent since 1991. Since the teenage drinking percentage declined, states have passed laws between the years of 2005 and 2011 that mentioned ways to limit underage drinking (Sacks). Even though the percentage has declined, that still does not mean that teenage drunk driving still does not occur on a day-to-day basis. Teenagers who drink and drive are not only putting themselves in danger but also innocent individuals as well. Drunk driving is still a problem for teenagers because of the number of participants, the number of car accidents due to underage drinking, and the health problems that comes with drinking at a young age.

 Alcohol is one of the most used substances that is used recreationally by teenagers today. Statistics show a low percentage of teenagers who participate in drunk driving, but the statistics are only based off those certain few who get caught. According to Michelle Castillo from Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) News, a survey was conducted on teenagers by the Archives of General Psychiatry showed that seventy-eight percent of teenagers in the United States have drunk alcohol before. Other surveys that have been conducted on teenagers show that a third of the youth in the United States have tasted their first drink before the age of thirteen (Main). Children who are younger than fifteen are five times more than likely to become alcoholics one day just by drinking at such a young age (Haelle). Some reasons as to why teenagers turn to drinking alcoholic beverages could be due to peer pressure, stress, or even just the desire to try it. Other reasons as to why teenagers would like to try alcohol is because of the drinking that they may possibly see at home from their parents or relatives. Even if the number of teenagers participating in drunk driving has declined since the past years, the problem still exists today because there are still plenty of teenagers that die due to accidents while driving under the influence.

Car crashes are the most typical consequences of drunk driving. Teenagers who drive impaired is the leading cause of teenage car accidents and is also the leading cause of teenage deaths (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [NHTSA]). According to the CDC, high school teenagers are more likely to drive right after drinking more than 2.5 million times a month. When it comes to drunk driving, this act is more likely to be performed by teenagers after attending a party with peers. Out of peer pressure, teenagers think that drinking alcohol is the only way possible to have fun at a party. Underage drinking should be addressed before the issue of driving under the influence can be addressed. Drunk driving does not only affect the victim, but it also affects the family of the victim and the nation, making it one of the most serious issues that need to be reviewed to prevent more deaths.

Teenagers who drive under the influence are putting many lives in danger, including themselves. Whenever an individual is driving impaired, their reaction time is slower which puts them at a greater risk of getting involved in an accident. According to Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), the teenage crash rate is twice as high as individuals who are over the age of twenty-one. Drunk driving results in negative effects such as death or being disabled for the rest of their lives. In addition to suffering serious bodily damage and even premature death due to car accidents, teenagers also run the risk of developing health problems if they drink regularly.

Teenagers are forced to deal with many health problems because of drinking at an early age. For the most part, teenagers tend to drink irresponsibly and without self-control. Once teenagers have alcohol into their system, there are plenty of activities they would participate in that they never thought they would. Studies have shown that an individual’s brain continues to develop until the age of twenty (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIH]). The more a teenager drinks, the more the alcohol will alter the teenager’s brain functions and will make the teenager be more dependent upon alcohol (NIH). Researchers believe that the teenager’s brain would have lasting health defects due to drinking which will cause the teenager’s memory, communication, and other daily functions to be off (Help Guide). Whenever a teenager is driving impaired, the alcohol will take away what teenagers need the most to be able to function while driving.

Teenagers that decide to drink and drive today should always remember that there are consequences to all their actions. When driving under the influence, teenagers must remember that they are not only putting their life in danger, but many others around them as well. Drunk driving should be at a standstill due to the dangers and lasting effects it can have on many people. The more teenagers who participate in drinking and driving will only cause the percentage of car accidents to rise. The more teenagers that are involved in car accidents, the higher the chances are of having more teenagers with serious health issues. The teenagers who drink must realize that it is considered a crime for anyone under the age of 21 to consume alcoholic beverages and it is illegal for individuals to drive under the influence (Brown). Teenagers must become educated on the dangers that are involved when drinking while driving. There are many organizations like Students Against Destructive Decisions that are wanting to help solve the underage drinking problem. To help teenagers become familiar with the consequences, their parents or a known adult should become proactive and explain to them the dangers and consequences of driving under the influence. Teenagers should not risk their future and the lives of others just for a careless mistake on their behalf behind the wheel.

Works Cited

Brown, Nancy. “Driving Drunk Can Kill!” *Teen Health Information*, Oct. 2013, www.pamf.org/teen/risk/alcohol/drunk\_driving.html.

Haelle, Tara. “Alcohol Can Rewire the Teenage Brain.” *Science News for Students*, 3 July 2016, www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/alcohol-can-rewire-teenage-brain.

“Impaired Driving.” *Students Against Destructive Decisions*, www.sadd.org/what-we-care-about/traffic-safety/impaired-driving/.

Main, Carla T. “Underage Drinking and the Drinking Age.” *Hoover Institution*, 1 June 2009, www.hoover.org/research/underage-drinking-and-drinking-age.

Sacks, Vanessa. “An Analysis of State Underage Drinking Policies and Adolescent Alcohol Use.” *Child Trends*, 1 Sept. 2014, www.childtrends.org/publications/an-analysis-of-state-underage-drinking-policies-and-adolescent-alcohol-use-2/.

“Teen Driving.” *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*, 12 Apr. 2018, www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving.

“Teenage Drinking.” *Help Guide*, www.helpguide.org/harvard/the-dangers-of-teenage-drinking.htm.

 “Vital Signs.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, 2 Oct. 2012, www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/teendrinkinganddriving/index.html.