

Triple Language Analysis on raising the legal drinking age

Violence on the streets is nothing new, yet it continues to remain excellent fodder for columnists and politicians as a battle ground for attacking what is a typical Australian activity, the drinking of alcohol. With a perceived increase of violence on our streets and the rates of death of drunken teenagers in car accidents on the road increase, again the call to raise the legal drinking age in Australia has become an issue that has had frequent occurrence in current media. An article was published in The Age newspaper on Tuesday 11th of November 2008, titled 'Raise the legal age for drinking alcohol – now!' by Cameron Woodland supporting the call to raise the legal drinking age, with an accompanying stock image by Dallas Kilponen. Woodlands contention was, as shown in the title, that Australia should raise the legal drinking age to prevent drink driving and violence. A similar article titled 'Ban booze-driven boorish behaviour in teens' by John Brown, talk back radio host, was published on 10th of November, composing that laws should be stricter in order to stop the appalling outcomes that result from teen drinking. Contrastingly, on Wednesday the 12th of November 2008, the public relations officer of Liquor Group, SS Tregonning had an article published in The Herald Sun titled 'Stop Blaming the Liquor Industry!', contending that raising the legal drinking age would not solve the issue, but would harm the economy. Woodland, Brown and Tregonning each use powerful language and a range of strategies in order to position the reader to their different points of view.

Woodland, Tregonning and Brown each use metaphors in a similar manner to persuade readers to agree with their contention. Woodland uses the emotive metaphor "the quiet epidemic of young adult binge drinking has engulfed our community." This is implying that binge drinking is a sweeping illness taking over our community. From this readers are positioned to think that raising the legal drinking age would be beneficial for our community. Woodland also uses the metaphor "ticking time bomb" to give readers the image of an explosion causing much widespread damage. Similarly to Woodland, Tregonning uses a metaphor when talking about alcohol, portraying that "religious cracks" and "wowsers" have previously damaged the alcohol industry because they "saw alcohol as the work of the devil." This metaphor results in readers feeling sympathetic towards

the alcohol industry for what it has previously suffered, further manipulating them into agreeing with Tregonning's contention that raising the legal drinking age would not solve the issue but cause damage to the alcohol industry. As Woodland and Tregonning use metaphors to sway readers, Brown uses a metaphor with an anecdote to evoke emotion in readers. Brown tells the story of a night he was on a Saturday night train ride, and describing the drunken teenagers' behaviour on the train as "feeding time at the zoo", implying that drunk teenagers are as bad as hungry, raging animals. This therefore encourages readers to believe Brown's contention that teen drinking needs to stop.

All three authors use directives to inform readers what they believe must be done. Woodland clearly states that "the community must act to protect its young" forcing readers to think they must do this. Woodland then goes on to list solutions for the issue, such as: raising the legal drinking age to 21, enforcing a zero blood alcohol level for all drivers under 21, no alcohol advertising before 10pm and that parents should hold greater responsibility over their teenagers. These directives are listed in dot point form in the article, similar to the "facts" listed at the beginning of the article. This therefore manipulates the reader into thinking that these potential solutions are facts demonstrating what "must" be done. Tregonning uses a directive in a similar manner to Woodland. After giving a passionate argument towards why the legal drinking age should not be raised to 21, Tregonning concludes by directing readers to "not blame the liquor industry" and shifting the blame to "families and schools" who "must solve" the problem. Brown, for the same purpose as Woodland and Tregonning, directs readers into thinking that "we need as a society to stop teenagers and young adults from abusing alcohol" This, similarly to Woodland and Tregonning, influences readers into believing their view on the issue.

Each author uses evidence to support their articles in one form or another. At the beginning of 'Raise the legal age for drinking alcohol-now!', Woodland provides a wide range of statistics about the devastating consequences of young adults abusing alcohol. Because Woodland states they are facts, readers are forced to believe them as true, which therefore evokes emotion in the readers pushing them into agreeing with Woodland's contention. Another form of

evidence used by Woodland is the supporting stock image by Dallas Kilponen. The photograph shows two young adult males drinking on the street, with the blurred lights of cars behind them. This further supports Woodlands statistical evidence showing the danger on the roads when teenagers and alcohol mix. Tregonning uses evidence in the form of an expert opinion rather than statistical evidence like Woodland does. Tregonning describes how raising the legal drinking age to 21 in the USA has “not prevented binge drinking – or alcohol related road accidents involving teenagers.” He supports this with the expert opinion of the US Department of Transportation reporting that “young dinking drivers are involved in fatal crashes at over twice the rate of drivers aged 21 and older” in spite of the ban for alcohol under 21. Because this is what an expert says about the issue, readers would find it hard to disagree with this statement, consequently resulting in them agreeing that raising the legal drinking age will not solve the issue. Like Tregonning, Brown also used the technique of an expert opinion to support his argument. Brown delivers the message from Maroondah Hospital Head of Emergency medicine, Dr Thun Lum, reporting that he has seen “an increasing amount of patients admitted who are teens and who are injured whilst incredibly drunk.” This appeals to readers emotions and forces them to realise that teen drinking is an increasing issue in our society.

With the escalating amount of violence on the streets and the death rates of drunken teenagers, there is no doubt that teenage drinking is a huge issue in today’s society. The call to raise the legal drinking age in order to prevent these problems has resulted in numerous opinions in the media. Three such examples being ‘Raise the legal age for drinking alcohol – now!’ by Cameron Woodland, with a supporting stock image by Dallas Kilponen, ‘Stop Blaming the Liquor Industry!’ by the public relations officer of Liquor Group, SS Tregonning, and ‘Ban booze-driven boorish behaviour in teens’ by John Brown, talk back radio host. Each article uses powerful language and a range of strategies such as metaphors, directives and evidence in order to position the reader to their different points of view.