

To Drink or Not to Drink: The Choice is Yours

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) produces the *Illio* each year to capture student life. Through articles and photographs, the *Illio* provides historical information to students today and brings back fond memories to graduates. Jane Karr, the author of “No More Kiddie Cocktails,” builds ethos with the assumption that she is a student and her article has been edited before being published in the yearbook. In the 1974 edition of the *Illio*, Jane Karr recorded the Illinois Legislature’s decision to lower the legal drinking age and how that impacted the UIUC campus. Karr’s thesis, or claim, is that because underage students at UIUC had easy access to alcohol, the 1973 drinking age law minimally affected the campus.

To support her claim, Karr interviewed the Urbana-Champaign community. Karr viewed Urbana-Champaign as “a haven for underage drinkers because of the lax enforcement,” and she had no problem finding evidence of this (24). Wikoff, the mayor in 1973, supported the new law and stated that the large number of students made “it very hard to enforce the law” (qtd. in Karr 24). The mayor’s statement supports Karr’s view about the lax enforcement of the law. The mayor was aware that if the law failed to pass he would have to “call a crackdown on underage drinking” (Karr 24). Implying that he did not want to have to enforce underage drinking, Mayor Wikoff “came out in favor of the new law” (Karr 24). Because of the lack of enforcement, students were less likely to get caught, and this led them to drink with less fear. Karr’s interview with the mayor supports her claim that students accessed alcohol with few consequences.

To show the minimum affect the law had, Karr interviewed bars and undergraduates. Pete Stazzone bartended at Second Chance and said that people who have been in Urbana-Champaign for a year know that “nobody gets carded” because the bars do not care (qtd. in Karr 25).

Stazzone's statement supports Karr's thesis by showing that the students had easy access to alcohol. Students were able to freely drink if they were not carded. If the law enforcement did not enforce the drinking age, bars would not care about the age of the buyer because they want to make a profit. Also, if students were not carded in the first place, a lowered drinking age would not make a difference among the underage students who already drank.

Another bar, Round Robin, gave an opinion on the 1973 drinking law. Kevin Sanderson, manager of Round Robin, thought that the new law did not bring a significant increase in business (Karr 25). His input clearly states that the law affected his profit minimally adding evidence to Karr's thesis. Undergraduates did not celebrate their new freedom to drink legally; their lack of enthusiasm contributed to a slow increase in business for bars. Tim Collins, a student at UIUC in 1973, told Karr that he did not "feel there has been a drinking age in Champaign" (qtd. in Karr 25). His view supports Jane Karr's claim about access to alcohol and minimum change. A couple of girls studying elementary education also agreed that the drinking law did not make any difference (Karr 25). The statements that each of these underage students made suggests that undergraduates drink whether or not it is against the law.

Karr uses subtle language that makes it hard to find a warrant in her article. Overall, Karr seems to support the new law with an annoyed tone. Karr values her right as a legal adult to be able to make the decision to drink alcohol. She wants the audience, meaning students and alumni, to join her in the acknowledgement of the new law. Karr's warrant is supported with backing. Karr uses words like "finally" and "long-awaited" to support her warrant. She uses language like "long-awaited" to describe the realization that adults who can decide to make other major life decisions like marriage or military service are mature enough to decide their own

drinking habits (Karr 24). The word “long-awaited” suggests that Karr was annoyed that this law had not been in effect earlier.

Toward the end of her article, Karr suggests to the audience to “chug” a beer and to “toast” the Illinois House of Representatives and Illinois Senate for “finally recognizing” the right for students to drink (25). Her use of the word “finally” shows that this right should have been recognized long ago. Her interviews show that Urbana-Champaign was already filled with students who drank, and this also supports her warrant. Karr is annoyed that it took Illinois so long to recognize the right that nineteen and twenty year olds should have. The students were already drinking, and Illinois changed the law making it legal.

Finding a qualifier in Karr’s article was also difficult. In an interview, Stazzone said that “nobody gets carded.” Karr’s decision to use this statement with the word “nobody” is an example of the language of absolutes (qtd. in Karr 25). In her essay, Karr wrote “might have been cheering,” and “might” is a qualifier of possibility (24). Her use of “might” offers the reader an interpretation of what exactly the students cheered for.

Karr also sneaks a rebuttal into her article. Many students came together and convinced UIUC that alcohol should be allowed in floor lounges of approved facilities. Because of this widespread complaint made by students, UIUC had to think of what to do with the students that objected and did not want to live in an environment with alcohol. UIUC rebutted by providing a change in housing for students who did not want to live in this environment especially if a student did not want to live with a roommate who has alcohol in their room (Karr 25).

“No More Kiddie Cocktails” provides historical information from 1973. Although the drinking law did not bring enthusiasm to students, spirits were high that year. With the end of US involvement in the Vietnam War and the first American space station launched, nineteen and

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twenty year olds in Illinois were able to join in the celebrating. Karr effectively shows throughout her article that UIUC students had easy access to alcohol even before the law was passed. As a result, other than a housing change and a few extra dollars for bars, the lowered drinking age did not affect the campus nor the drinking habits of students.

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Works Cited

Karr, Jane. "No More Kiddie Cocktails." *Illio*. Ed. Joe Urschel. Vol. 81. Urbana-Champaign:
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