

# The Association Between Feelings of Closeness to Parents During Childhood and Binge Drinking in Adulthood, and Whether Friendship is a Protective Factor



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## Introduction

- The frequent and extensive consumption of alcohol in one sitting, known as binge drinking is a dangerous habit that nearly 17% of U.S. adults struggle with (CDC, 2023)
- Nature and quality of one's relationships with their primary caregivers is key to childhood development, which then impacts the potential having of psychological issues (such as substance abuse) later in adulthood.
- One longitudinal study suggests that close child-parent relationships lowered heavy episodic drinking in early adulthood (Madkhour et al., 2017).
- Higher levels of closeness may be a protective factor to risky behaviors. (Kapetanovic, 2019)
- Most of the research on this topic focuses on how parent-child closeness affects substance abuse in early adulthood or late adolescence— there is a gap here regarding the effect on when looking at later adulthood.
- Additionally, there is a lack of research investigating presence and quality of friendships as a protective factor.

## Research Questions

- What association is there between parental-closeness in childhood and binge drinking, later in adulthood?
- How might strong social support, like a close friendship outside of the home, impact this association?

## Methods

### Sample

- Respondents (n=6504) were drawn from the U.S. National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health), a nationally representative sample of adolescents in Grades 7-12 who began the survey during the 1994-95 school year for Wave I and were surveyed again during adulthood in 2016-18 for Wave V.

### Measures

- Binge drinking was measured using the question “during the past 12 months, on how many days did you drink [female: 4/male: 5] or more drinks in a row.”
- Closeness to parent was divided into two variables, closeness to mother and father, based on the question “how close do you feel to \_\_\_?” with responses ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).
- Categorical variable of friendship(s) quality was measured by a question that asked participants whether they felt they could open up to their friends if they needed to talk about their worries. Answers were coded dichotomously, yes and no.

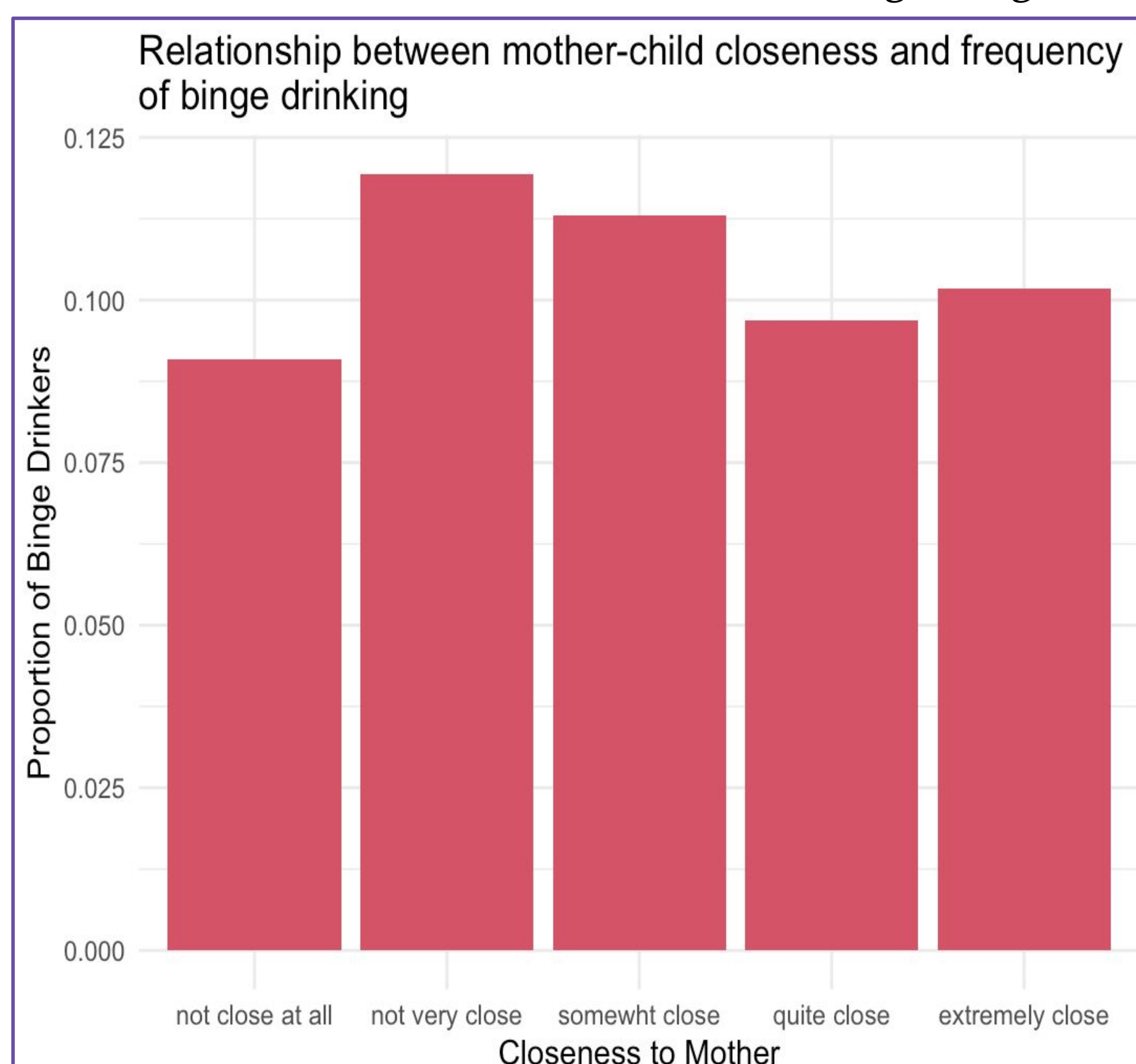
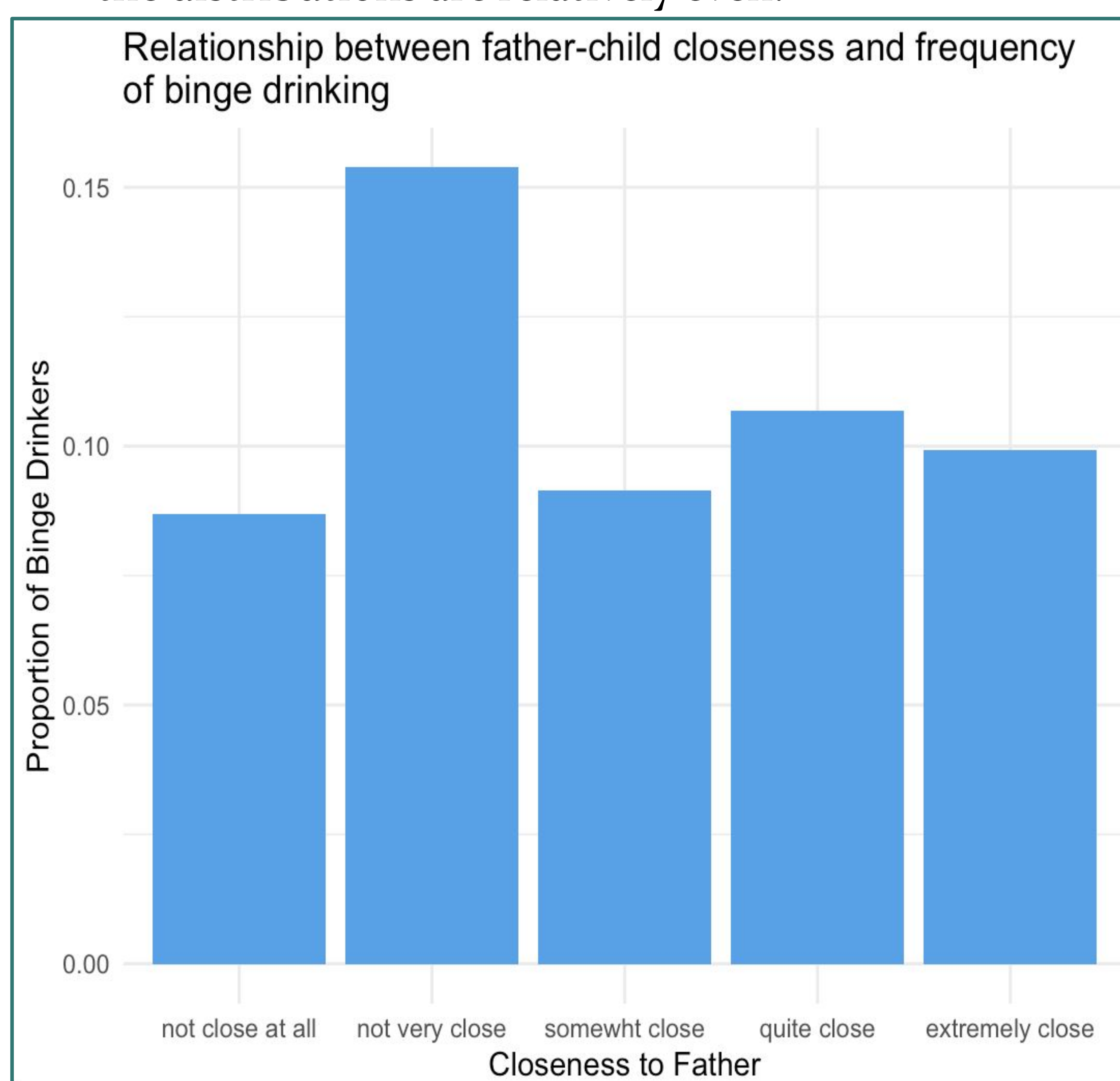
## Results

### Bivariate

- ANOVA analysis showed that participants' closeness to mother was not significantly associated with the presence of binge drinking habits later in life ( $F = 0.163, p = 0.686$ ).
- Significance was also not found from an ANOVA analysis of closeness to father and presence of binge drinking habits later in life. ( $F = 0.33, p = 0.566$ )
- The graphs below depicts these relationships. You can see that the distributions are relatively even.

### Multivariate

- A logistic regression confirms that neither of the explanatory variables of closeness to mother (OR = 0.986, CI = 0.83-1.18,  $p = 0.875$ ) or closeness to father (OR = 0.969, CI = 0.84-1.12,  $p = 0.667$ ) have significant associations with the likelihood of becoming a binge drinker.



- This logistic regression also included the variable measuring participants' ability to open up to a friend. Results showed that there is no relationship between ability to open up to friend(s) and binge drinking later in life.
- Biological sex does significantly relate to the likelihood of later binge drinking. Women are significantly less likely than men to become binge drinkers (OR = .380, CI = 0.292-0.493,  $p < 0.001$ ).

## Discussion

- The main takeaway from this study is that contrary to my hypothesis, there is not a significant relationship between one's closeness to their parent during childhood and their likelihood of becoming a binge drinker later in life.
- What this study did find, is that biological sex is significantly related to someone's likelihood of becoming a binge drinker. Specifically, women are less likely than men to develop binge drinking habits.
- The scope of this study was somewhat limited in looking at other covariates, such as variety in family structure or racial identity groups. Future research should consider these other factors.