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## Introduction

The social influence of close peer social networks has emerged as a consistent predictor of college student drinking (see Knox et al., 2019 for a review). Specifically, higher rates of exposure to alcohol-related content on social media is associated with alcohol consumption in college student samples (Curtis et al., 2018). Further, several other qualities of relationships with social network members have been found to be associated with individual drinking behavior including drinking buddy status (i.e., a friend who you get together with regularly for activities which involve drinking; Lau-Barraco et al., 2012), and relationship closeness (Fujimoto & Valente, 2012). The current study examined if having more close friends post alcohol-related content on social media was associated with individual alcohol consumption using an egocentric social network design. We also investigated how qualities of relationships with social network members interacted with sharing alcohol-related content on social media to influence alcohol consumption.

## Method

### Participants

- 129 college students
- Mean age = 23.42, *SD* = 5.64; 86.8% female
- 56.6% White or Caucasian, 23.3% African American or Black
- Data collected between May 2020 through December 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Online survey for course credit

### Materials

#### Social Media Usage

- Used in previous research (Boyle et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2014; Nesi et al., 2017)
- Questions about how they use social media and if/what kinds of content they personally share depicting alcohol use
  - e.g., what social media platforms are used, how often they check them

#### Egocentric Social Network

- Brief Important People Interview (BIPI; DeMartini et al., 2013; Zywiak & Longabaugh, 2002)
- Identified 10 people important to them since the start of the school year, with follow-up questions about each person:
  - E.g., If they were a drinking buddy, if they were friends on social media, if they post alcohol content on social media
- Follow-up questions also included qualities of their relationship:
  - E.g., How close do you feel to this person? Could you rely on them for advice? Are they available for concrete support?

#### Alcohol Consumption

- Daily Drinking Questionnaire (DDQ; Collins et al., 1985)
- Enter standard drinks consumed each day of a typical week for the past 30 days

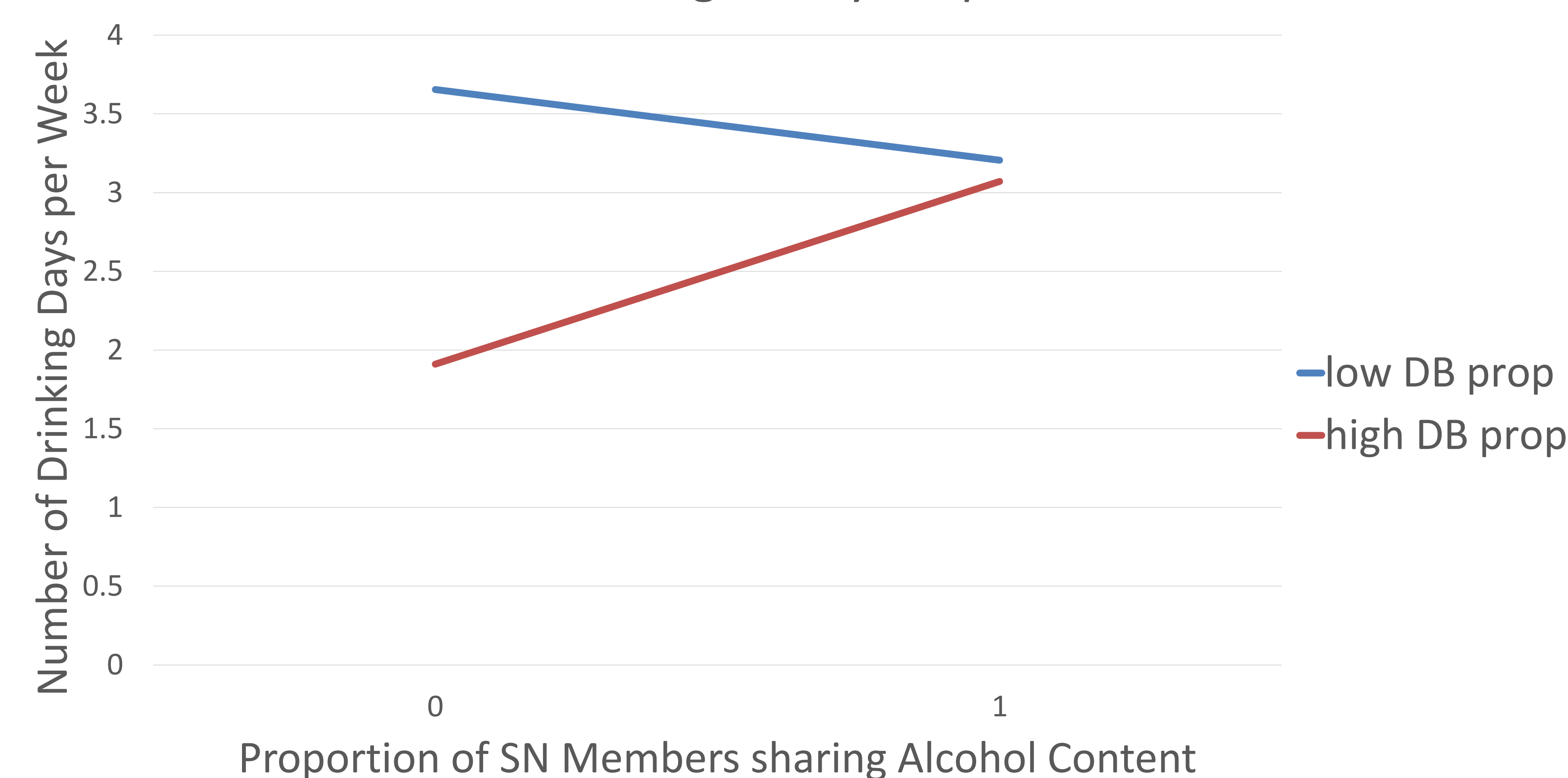
#### Analysis Approach: Multiple Regressions

- Outcomes = 4 alcohol indicators (separate model for each)
- Covariates = gender and frequency of social media checking
- Main predictor = proportion of social network sharing alcohol content
- Relationship quality moderators examined in separate models (7):
  - Drinking buddy status, closeness, concrete support, advice-seeking, direction of help, how critical social network members were of the individual, and if friends on social media
- Interaction terms created at the friend/alter level, then summed across network

## Results

Variables	Quantity per week		Drinking days per week		Drinks per day		Peak drinks	
	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Gender	0.10	.252	0.06	.479	0.02	.836	0.04	.616
Frequency SM Check	0.38	.671	-0.13	.171	0.15	.090	0.11	.234
Prop Share Alcohol Content	<b>0.24</b>	<b>.007</b>	0.09	.333	<b>0.26</b>	<b>.003</b>	<b>0.28</b>	<b>.002</b>
Prop Share Alc x DB	0.28	.155	<b>0.62</b>	<b>.002</b>	-0.08	.673	-0.001	.998
Prop Share Alc x Close	0.04	.794	-0.09	.569	0.04	.786	0.06	.712
Prop Share Alc x Support	0.02	.898	-0.19	.211	0.09	.552	0.09	.534
Prop Share Alc x Advice	-0.03	.814	-0.22	.123	0.002	.986	-0.04	.779
Prop Share Alc x Critical	0.30	.144	0.19	.371	0.29	.147	0.29	.155
Prop Share Alc x Direct Help	0.18	.258	0.29	<u>.063</u>	-0.07	.676	-0.04	.794
Prop Share Alc x SM Friend	0.03	.841	-0.02	.875	0.11	.378	0.04	.753

Number of Drinking Days per Week by Proportion Alcohol Content Sharing, Moderated by Drinking Buddy Proportion



## Discussion

Overall, we found that having a higher proportion of social network members who post alcohol-related content on social media was positively associated with more drinks consumed per week. Further, considering someone to be a drinking buddy was a risk factor that strengthened this association. These findings may have implications for online brief alcohol interventions commonly administered on college campuses. Universities may want to consider including content where the influence of social media content are discussed. Limitations to this study include a convenience sample of psychology students, the cross-sectional design, and the use of an egocentric social network design.

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