

The Company you Keep: The relationship between friendship qualities and mental health



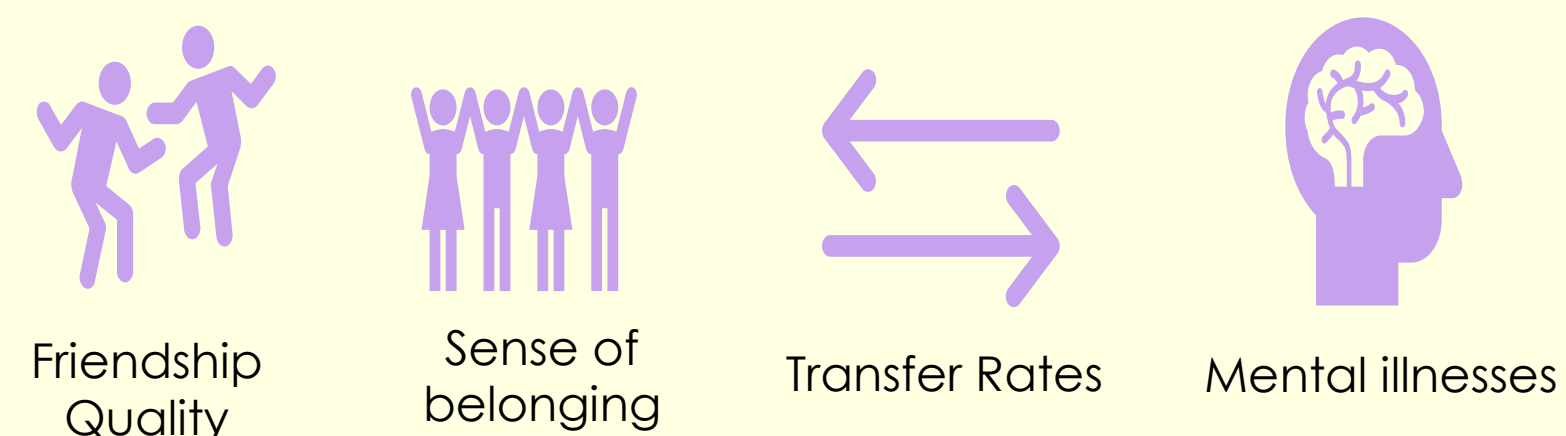
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Introduction

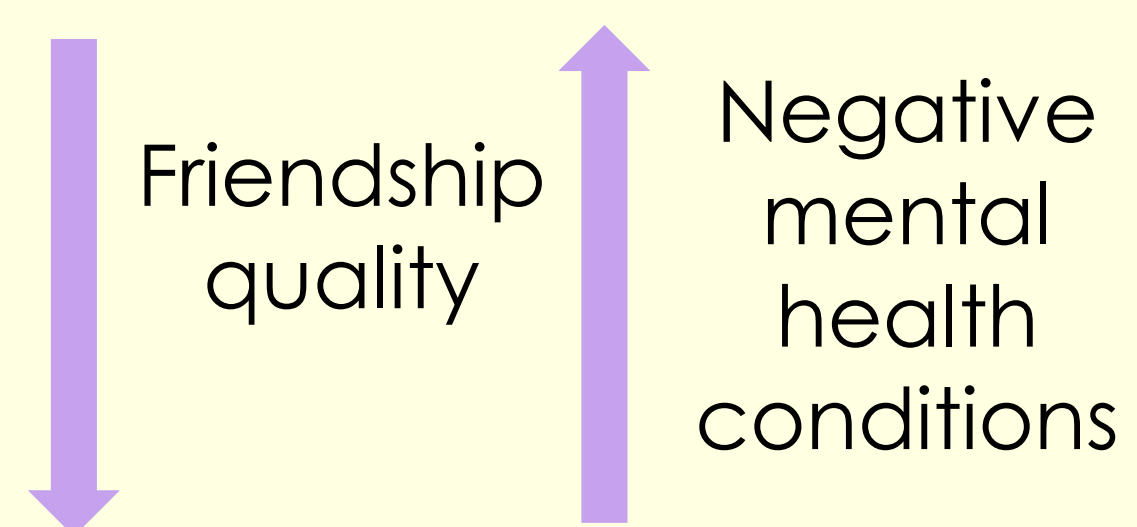
*"I have yet to make any **true friendships** here... I feel as if I **do not belong** in the Duke community. I am **considering transferring**."* – survey participant

33% of students drop out due to¹:



- Strong social support contributes to better mental health²
- Low-quality relationships may worsen mental illnesses³

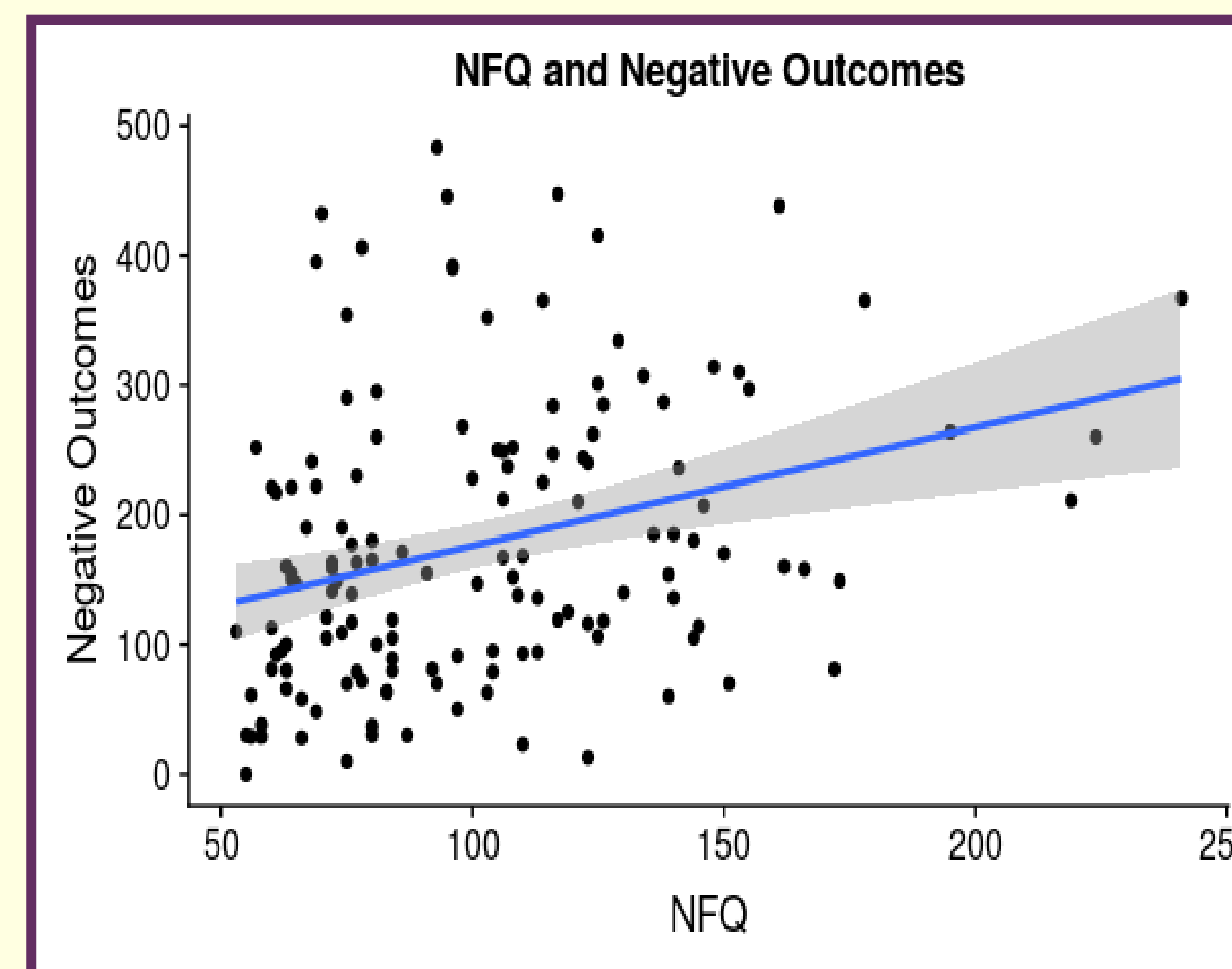
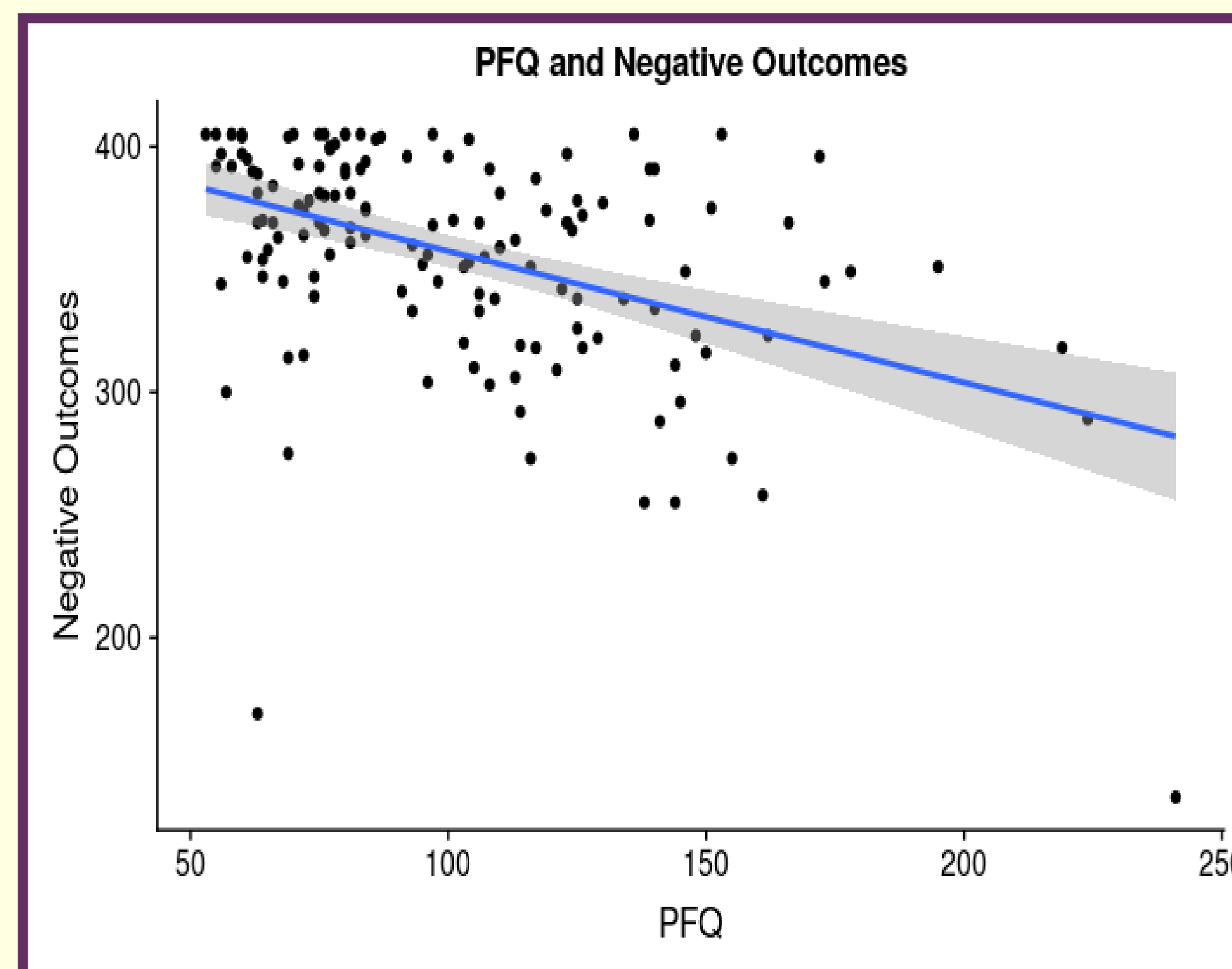
Hypothesis



Methods

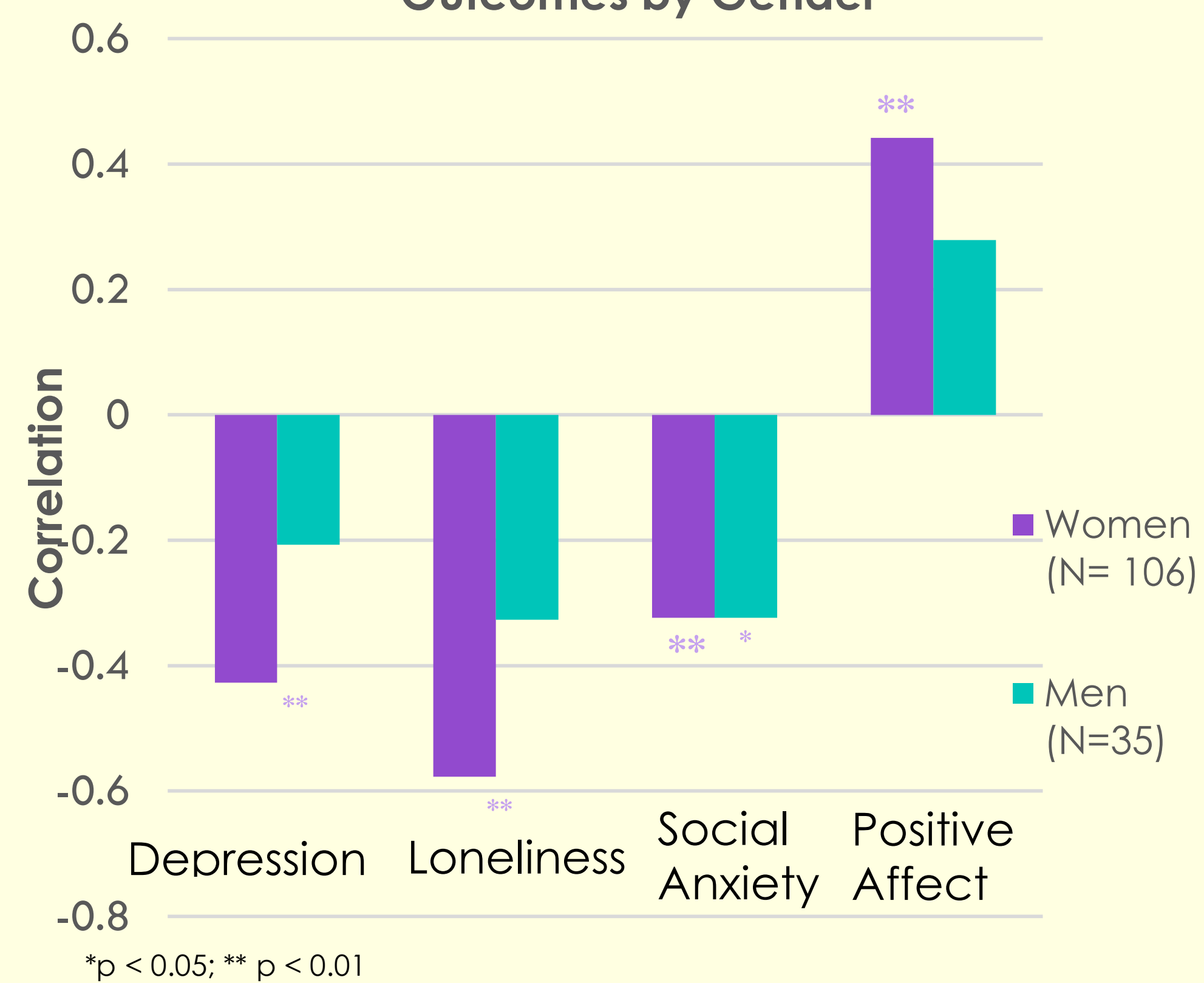
- N = 141 Duke undergraduates
- Mixed Methods Survey
- Measures:
 - **Positive Friendship Qualities (PFQ):**
 - Intimacy, Help, Stimulating Companionship, Reliable Alliance, Emotional Security, Self-Validation
 - **Negative Friendship Qualities (NFQ)**
 - Conflict Resolution Ease, Dishonesty, Competitiveness, Superficiality
 - **Positive Affect**
 - **Negative Outcomes**
 - Depression, Social Anxiety, Loneliness

Results

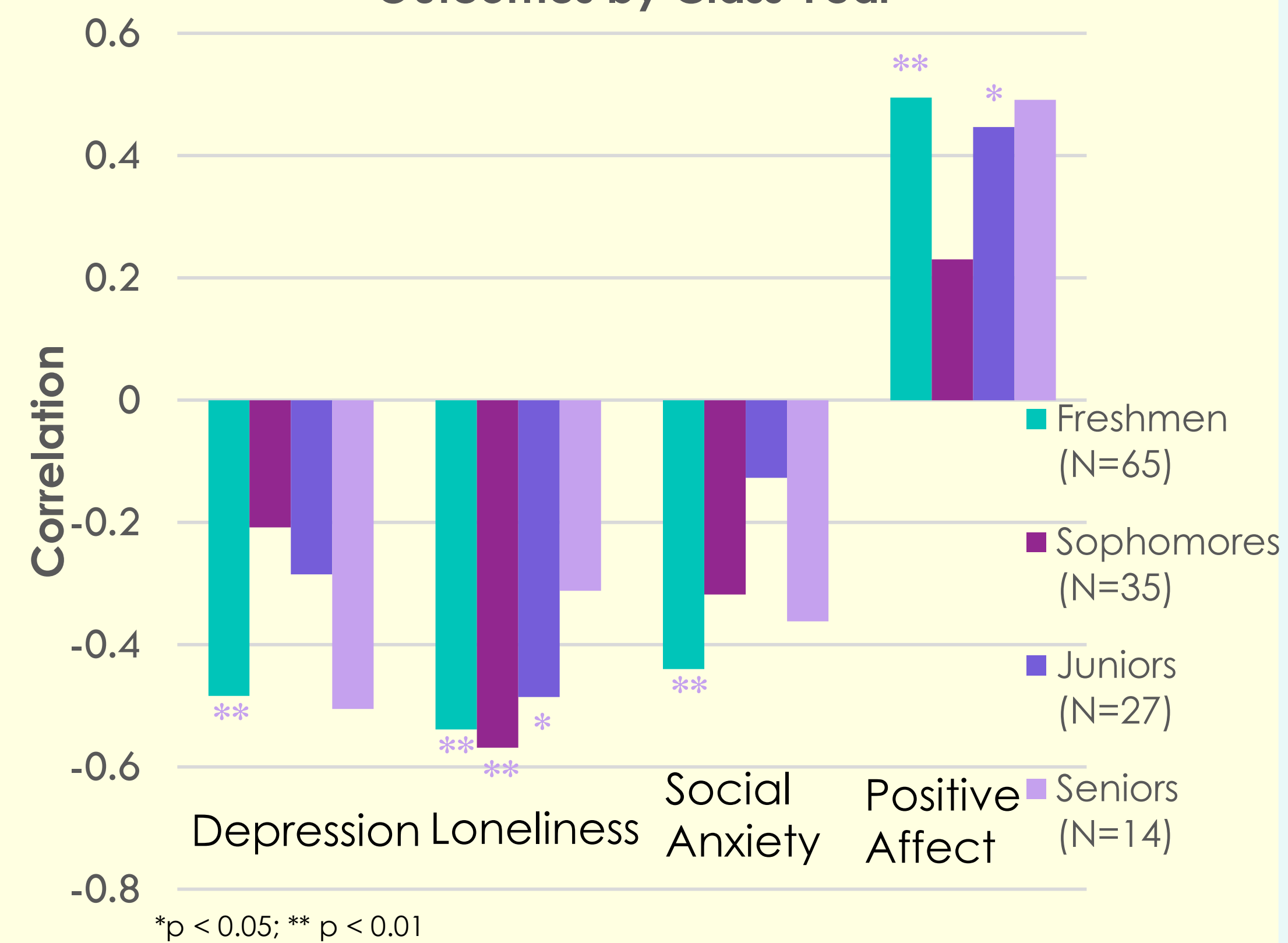


Positive friendship qualities are inversely related with negative mental health outcomes. Negative friendship qualities are directly related.

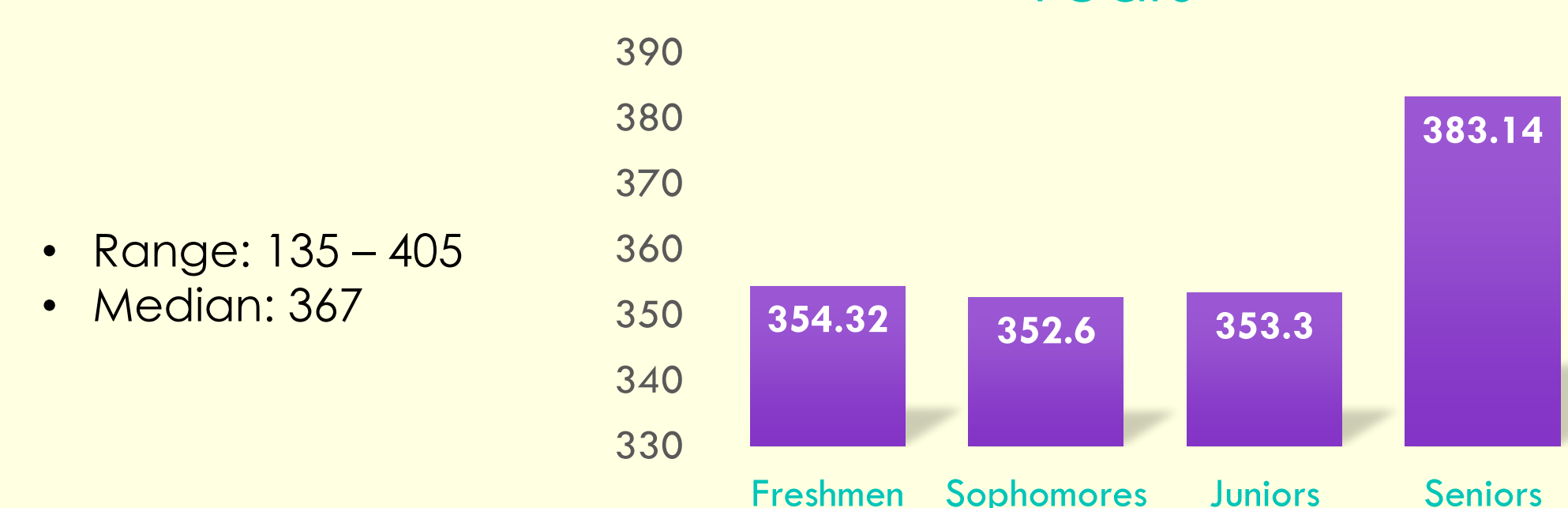
Correlation between PFQ and Mental Outcomes by Gender



Correlation between PFQ and Mental Outcomes by Class Year



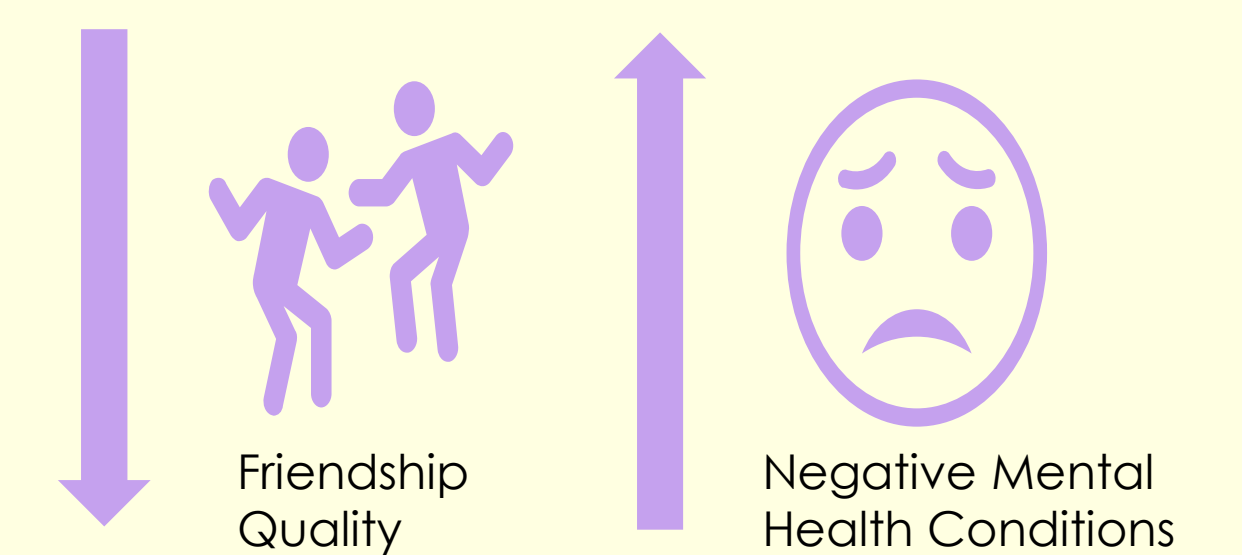
Avg PFQ Among Class Years



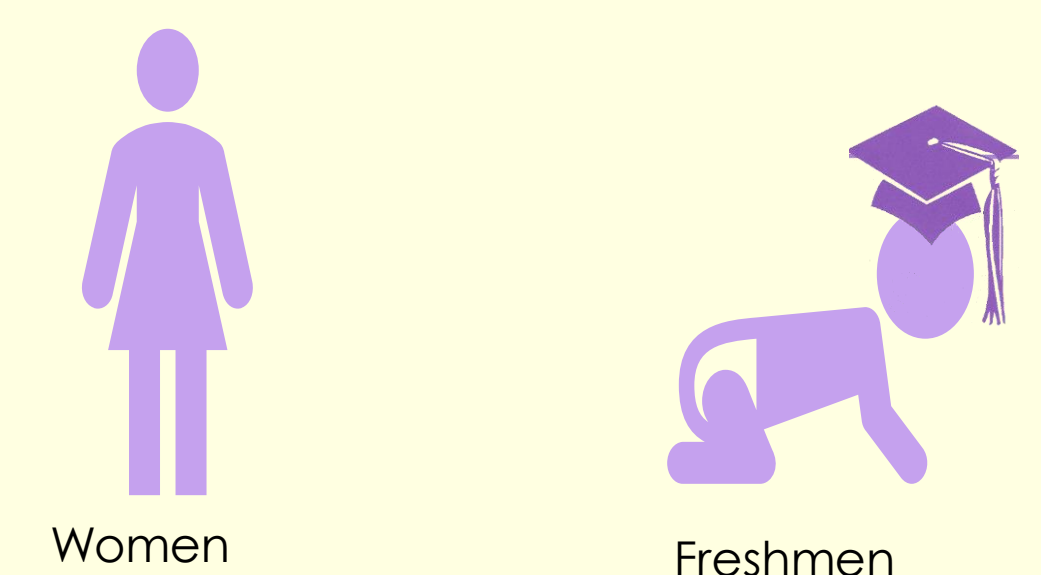
86% of upperclassmen said their friendship requirements changed

*"I cannot be friends if you have **really wrong opinions on matters of women, politics**"* – survey participant

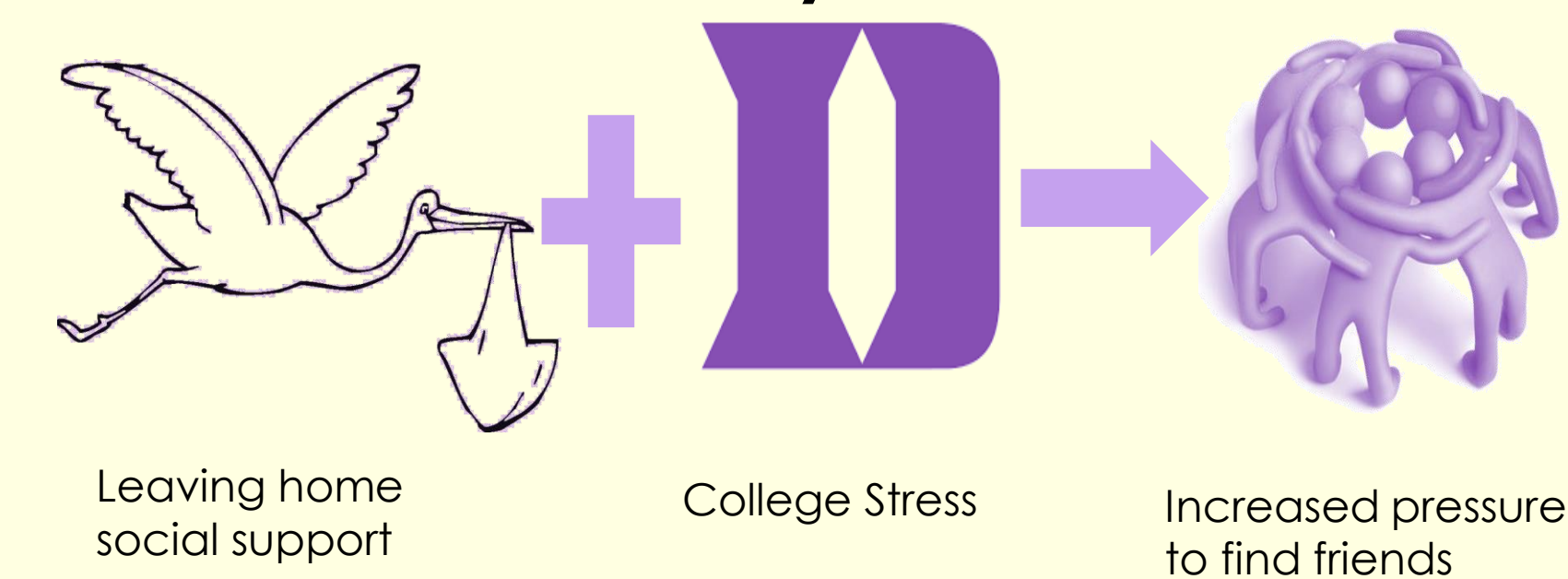
Conclusions



Significant relationships with:



Why?



Implications

- Having a **close friend** who fulfills positive functions may yield **protective factors** that strengthen one's ability to navigate life stressors.
- Reduce one's vulnerability to **negative psychosocial outcomes** (ex: mental illness, school dropout, etc.)

Limitations

- Unbalanced gender sample sizes
- Self-reported data (timing, mood, etc.)

Future Directions

- Look at best friend, acquaintance, ex-friend....
- Role of personality type
- What do high-quality close friends share in common?
- Differences in Male & Male; Male & Female; Female & Female friendships

References

1. Alkan, N. (2014). Humor, loneliness and acceptance: Predictors of university drop-out intentions. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 152, 1079 – 1086.
2. Fiori, K., Antonucci, T., & Cortina, K. (2006). Social Network Typologies and Mental Health among Older Adults. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 61(1), 25 – 32.
3. Nguyen, A. W., Chatters, L. M., Taylor, R. J., & Mouzon, D. M. (2016). Social Support from Family and Friends and Subjective Well-Being of Older African Americans. *Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-Being*, 17(3), 959-979.

Acknowledgments and Further Information

- I would like to thank: my thesis committee members: Dr. Nancy Zucker, Dr. Sarah Gaither, and Dr. Martha Putallaz; Duke University Undergraduate Research Support; Mrs. Emmaline Drew; and Ms. Ajile Owens.
- For further information, please contact me at oho@duke.edu.