

Emerging Adults' Friends with Benefits Relationships

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Abstract

Friends with benefits is a relationship where friends are sexually, but not romantically, involved (Lehmiller, VanderDrift, & Kelly, 2011). It is a type of relationship that is growing in popularity for young adults, frequently replacing traditional dating (Bradshaw, Kahn, & Salville, 2010). The goal of friends with benefits relationships is to maintain a friendship while engaging in physical intimacy without romantic emotional attachment (Gusarova, Fraser & Alderson, 2012). Although this type of relationship aims for equality, friends with benefits relationships are controversial due to the presence of a sexual double standard in which men are permitted to have more sexual freedom than women (Conley, Ziegler, & Moors, 2012). In order to better understand modern emerging adult sexual relationships, it is important to consider young adults' attitudes about friends with benefits relationships and their participation in this form of relationship. Because it is possible that social views differentially influence emerging adults' attitudes and behaviors, researchers have investigated the ways that peers, parents, and media view friends with benefits relationships. Of particular importance is that there seems to be a discrepancy between the way in which male and female sexual behaviors are not evaluated equally. We began by exploring how social views on FWB relationships are related to male and female emerging adults' attitudes and behaviors. We then reported on a case study that we conducted to understand more about college-aged students' Friends with Benefits (FWB) relationships.

Societal Views on Sexual Relationships

The choice made by young adults to participate in a friends with benefits relationship may be influenced by our society's view on casual sex. Our sexual education, media, peers and how parents address sex all play a role in determining a young adults' perception of sexually appropriate behavior. Conley, Ziegler, and Moors (2012) examined whether there are gender

differences in attitudes about casual sex. The participants in this study read a scenario where a man or woman would approach someone of the opposite sex asking them to go to bed with them. The participants then addressed how people would perceive the person if they said yes or no. Conley et al. (2012) found that if a woman accepted the offer male participants perceived her negatively and female participants viewed the accepting woman as less intelligent and more socially inappropriate and sexually desperate. As a result women's knowledge of the backlash they may receive if they engage in casual sex could have an impact on their sexual decisions. In comparison, if men were to reject the offer Conley et al. (2012) found they could be perceived as homosexual. The researchers believe their study provides evidence of the presence of a sexual double standard in today's U.S. society.

If young adults are only being taught about the consequences of sex and receive their education through media or uninformed friends, it may be the case that men and women who engage in casual sex are judged differently. Brugan, Caron and Rademakers (2010) compared U.S. and Dutch college women's experiences with sex to explore differences these women faced in their sexual education. Females between the ages of 18 and 23 years participated in a survey inquiring about how they have obtained their knowledge about sexuality. Results revealed that Dutch women attributed their opinions to the influence of sexually positive parents, teachers and doctors. In contrast U.S. women reported learning from uninformed friends, adults who speak of sex negatively and the media. The study found that the education these women received was correlated with their sexual experiences; U.S. women reported more sexual experience in high school than did the Dutch women. U.S. motive for their first act of intercourse was opportunity, peer pressure or partner pressure. In contrast, the Dutch women's motive for their first intercourse was love and commitment (Brugman, Caron, & Rademakers, 2010). This study

suggests that the U.S.'s approach to sexual education is not beneficial to young adults' understanding of sex. If young women don't have the opportunity to learn about sex from those close to them they may rely on the way in which sex is portrayed to them in society. This in turn has the potential to contribute to the presence of a sexual double standard in the U.S. where women are expected to be virginal and men are expected to be sexual beings.

Comparable research was found by Marks (2008) who looked at how men and women are evaluated when engaging in a lot of sexual activity. The participants included 72 college students both male and female. They read a description of a man or woman who had 1, 7, or 19 sexual partners and were then asked to indicate how much they agreed with 15 sentences about the male or female. The data supported the hypothesis that sexually active men would be evaluated higher than equally sexually active women. Mark's findings are important because the participants' were either looking at a male or a females actions, which more closely imitates how our society judges these types of situations.

Similar findings were present in Hamilton and Armstrong's (2009) study of college women. Through longitudinal interviews, the researchers found that women felt they were disrespected when hooking up but also experienced conflicts while in a relationship. Thus, these college women reported facing double binds whether they were hooking up or in a committed relationship. When they were hooking up with someone, they enjoyed the sexual activity with low commitment but faced the criticism of "slut shaming." In contrast, when they were in a relationship they believed it complimented gender social norms but discouraged independence. These participants all had an interest in their career and delaying marriage and felt serious relationships became an obstacle in their education and career investments. The obstacles these women face could possibly be influenced by their macrosystems—U.S societal ideologies and

dominant beliefs that casual sex is not acceptable. Based on the two prior studies, it appears women who engage in casual sex may be looked down upon where as men are praised to engage in casual sex. These views and opinions are not just those of individuals but may stem from U.S. society's traditional dating background ideals.

Although the societal view on FWB relationships appears to be negative, specifically for women, the mass media portrays FWB relationships often, normalizing this type of relationship behavior and may further explain why young adults have FWB relationships. Bleakly, Hennesy, Fishbein and Jordan (2011) examined the role that mass media plays in young adults' sexual behavior. To understand how media may influence young adults, the researchers recruited 547 male and female adolescents ranging from ages 14 to 16 years. The participants took a survey measuring intention attitudes, perceived normative pressure and self-efficacy related to engaging in sexual intercourse. Twelve months after the survey students reported whether they had sex since the survey was taken, and also reported their exposure to certain media sources and the amount of sexual content involved. The researchers found a correlation between participants' exposure to sexual media content and the adolescents' sexual behavior. They believe the reasons the media content affects their sexual behavior is because it increases their perceptions of social pressure to have sex (Bleakly et al., 2011). This may be due to the young adults' heightened exposure to FWB relationships in media, making them feel that these relationships are not only normal, but will further their sexual experience. The concept of mass media as an influence on young adults' falls under Bronfenbrenner's' exosystem, and in the case of FWB relationships may impact emerging adults' sexual behavior.

Peer and parental attitudes about FWB relationships.

In addition to the mass media playing a role in young adults' behavior, their peers and parents appear to influence their attitudes and behavior. Several studies have shown that young adults' perception of those who participate in a friends with benefits relationship depends on which gender is involved. Allison and Risman (2013) examined college students' attitudes towards casual sex. Students took a survey and the results showed that casual sex is not accepted, but that the level of non-acceptance varies by gender. Women lost respect for anyone who hooks up "a lot," whereas men lost respect for only women who hook up "a lot," reinforcing the presence of a sexual double standard. The researchers believe that this may attribute to a deep-rooted ambivalence towards casual sex. Lehmler, Vander Drift, and Kelly (2011) determined similar conclusions while investigating how men and women experience and perceive their FWB relationships. Both men and women who have been in a FWB relationship were surveyed. The results indicated that women's expectations for the relationship to become romantic whereas men wanted the relationship to stay how it was. The researchers believe a reason the women may have reported focusing on future relationships because they may fear being viewed negatively by their peers for engaging in casual sex.

Bradshaw, Kahn, and Saville (2010) revealed a contrasting viewpoint where in both genders expressed a preference for traditional dating versus hooking up. The catch to this was that it was the case when both options were available but in reality traditional dating and hooking up are not readily available to everyone. Women felt that developing feelings for a partner who wasn't reciprocating those feelings risks hooking up with them; whereas men favored having more sexual encounters, which is easier to achieve with hooking up rather than dating. This research supports the previous articles that society has still not fully accepted casual sex and

traditional dating is preferred. The previous articles explore how peers view FWB relationships but another aspect of the individuals' microsystem that has a direct influence are their parents.

Sommers and Ali (2011) wanted to better understand the role parents play in young adults' sexual attitudes and behaviors. The participants in this study included 194 males and females ranging from ages 12 to 15 who had a lower socioeconomic status. They were given a survey that collected background information, parental approval of premarital sexuality, parent-adolescent communication about sexuality, parental social support and religiosity. They found that parents who were less likely to approve of the teens having sex in high school resulted in the teens having more conservative attitudes about premarital sex. However, if the parents were less likely to approve of sex before marriage the teens had more liberal attitudes. The researchers also found that when teens had social support from home they were more likely to resist risky situations. This study suggests that parents' views and communication to their children about sex does have an influence on their child's attitude towards sex.

These studies illustrate that, although hookups and friends with benefits are not widely accepted as a relationship type due to our society's negative view of casual sex and traditional values they still play a substantial role in the sexual experiences of today's young adults. The way in which peers and parents influence young adults' view on FWB relationships is under the microsystem—the people that the individual interacts with the most. Yet with societal, parental and peers negative views on casual sex and FWB relationships it appears that it's only influencing young adults' attitudes not their behavior. Because these FWB relationships exist irrespective of young adults' negative perception this paper aims to further investigate why young adults' participate in these types of relationships.

Emerging Adult Sexual Behavior

Examining friends with benefits relationship shows that women and men's motivation to participate are sometimes similar but can also be different. Kenny, Thadani, Ghaidarov and LaBrie (2013) researched women's hookup experiences and motivation for their sexual behavior. The researchers surveyed over 200 first-year college women who responded to questions about their past sexual history, and completed a follow up survey six months later regarding hookup-related questions. The results showed that women who were hooking up with their peers did it for popularity reasons. In contrast, their peers who hadn't hooked up believed people engaged in hookups for more negative reasons like coping or emotional security. This suggests that women's positive or negative perceptions of hook up motivations are associated with their own hookup behavior.

A similar study that looked at gender differences in motivation found a contrasting view. Cooper, Shapior and Powers (1998) wanted to further investigate why young adults take sexual risks. The study included 178 college students both male and female. They answered open-ended questions about their motivation for having sex. When separated by gender the results showed that men were almost twice as likely as women to cite enhancement motives for sex and women were twice as likely as men to cite intimacy reasons. While both these studies look at gender differences they found opposing motivations, which may mean further research is necessary. Other researchers have studied not only motivation but also how attachment styles influence motivation to participate in casual sex.

Schachner, and Shaver (2004) studied the relation between attachment styles and motivation for sexual behavior among college students. The participants of this study were 232 students in college both male and female. They each completed a questionnaire that asked about

experiences in close relationships, sex-motives, and affective and motivational orientation related to erotic arousal. The results found avoidant individuals who engage in casual sex do it to fit in with their social group due to peer pressure. The researchers also interpreted that avoidant women avoid sex for intimacy but rather focus on their physical desires and remain independent and self-reliant. These findings show that attachment-related differences related to sexuality correlate with motivation to have sex. This study compliments Kenny et al. (2013) research that a motivational factor for both genders to engage in casual sex is enhancement reasons—popularity. These motivational factors that influence young adults' to engage in casual sex, especially peer pressure, contradict peer attitudes towards casual sex. This may mean that while their microsystem—peers and parents—influence their attitudes towards casual sex it doesn't affect their behavior choices.

Motivations for FWB Relationships

The motivations for participating in friends with benefits relationships do vary and those different types of motivations do have an influence on the outcome of the relationship. Gusarova, Fraser, and Alderson (2012) surveyed undergraduate students in friends with benefits relationships. The results showed that the most common motive to begin a FWB relationship was to avoid emotional attachment and to maintain a friendship alike the FWB relationship definition. Developing feelings or wishfulness predicted negative outcomes in the relationship, with women more likely than men to have a negative FWB relationship experience. These findings relate back to the previous studies, if women face a sexual double standard they may receive backlash being in a FWB relationship, resulting in a negative experience. Weaver, MacKeigan, and MacDonald (2011) had similar results. They surveyed young adults regarding FWB relationship experiences. A common theme they found was that to have a successful FWB

relationship both participants must understand the script of this type of relationship. When one participant had a stronger attachment, the relationship had the potential to end negatively. These studies illustrate that if both partners have the same motivation to engage in a FWB relationship and similar feelings the outcome will generally be positive. It's when one partner desires more from the relationship than the other when the FWB relationship can end negatively.

In summary, friends with benefits is a relationship type that has become newly recognized in young adults (Moneague, Knight, Williams, Eden, & Shaw, 2013). Society has an influence on young adults' participation partially due to the type of sexual education they receive. Although both male and females participate in FWB relationships for similar reasons—sexual experience with no emotional attachment—women are faced with a double standard. Males and females both perceive females who participate in hooking up and friends with benefits more negatively than they do males, which researchers believe may be due to a deep-rooted ambivalence towards casual sex (Allison and Risman, 2013). Even with our society's negative connotation towards casual sex and the pessimistic perceptions projected by peers it appears women have the same motives as men to participate in friends with benefits relationship. It appears that society expectations, peers and parents influence young adults' attitudes and their behaviors towards FWB relationships'. Poor sexual communication and lack of essential knowledge may contribute to the sexual double standard that overwhelms modern American culture. Although limited, the existing research addresses these contradicting measurements of social acceptance that guide women to perceive noncommittal relationships as negative, even if that's the relationship type they desire or want. Taking into consideration how our society does not accept casual sex yet our mass media promotes it provides a better understanding of why young adults' are participating in FWB relationships.

Gender Differences in FWB Relationships

Friends with benefits relationships are a fairly new interest for research, so there is much unknown about the topic. While previous studies, such as Hamilton and Armstrong's 2009 study, have implied there is a sexual double standard, other researchers have conflicting opinions, along with findings suggesting information about how gender affects the view of the relationship, the sexual enjoyment experienced, and the power experienced in these relationships.

Sexual Double Standard

When comparing and contrasting men and women's experiences within romantic and sexual relationships, there is potentially a double standard, perceived or real. Weaver, Claybourn, and Mackeigan (2013) conducted a study focusing on the sexual double standard of FWB relationships to investigate the realities of the existence of unwritten views and judgments towards the participants in regards to their gender. The researchers surveyed over 400 university students, attempting to gain results of whether women were judged more negatively than men in regards to their involvements with FWB relationships. The students were given one of four scenarios describing different FWB relationships, which varied on character gender and experience. The study examined both respondent gender and respondent FWB relationship experience. The results suggested there was no evidence of a sexual double standard in character judgment, however they did suggest outcome of the relationship and judgment by others were more negative when the character in the scenario was female. The researchers could not conclude that a sexual double standard necessarily existed within FWB relationships, but rather the perception of one does.

A similar study done by Marks and Fraley (2014) examined society's beliefs of sexual double standards, much like an above study also done by Marks in 2008 described above. Marks defined the standard as implying when men have many sexual partners, they are praised, while

the opposite would happen to women. The researchers conducted a survey with 144 undergraduate students and 8,080 Internet participants. All the participants were asked to evaluate experimental confederates, both male and female, to determine whether this double standard does indeed exist. The results of the study suggested the confederates were more likely to be derogated as their number of sexual partners increased regardless of their gender. The researchers also reported the results suggested society does not necessarily hold men and women to different sexual double standards. Unlike the previous study in which a perceived double standard was reported, this study suggests not only that a double standard does not exist, but also a perceived double standard isn't present either. These findings are contradictory to what other researchers have found, which suggests much more research must be done to come to firmer conclusions.

Power, Relationship Equity, and Sexual Enjoyment

A common theme and question that appears when discussing FWB relationships is how perceived power and relationship equity affects sexual enjoyment between the two genders. Researchers focus on which gender tends to hold more power in the relationship, how relationship equity is determined, and how these factors, along with gender, affect sexual enjoyment.

Galinsky and Sonenstein (2012) measured sexual enjoyment in relation with relationship equality in a longitudinal study. They measured over 2,900 men and women ranging from 18 to 26 years of age by means of surveys and interviews. This group of young people had been studied since they were 13 years old, and this particular study was Wave III. Some of the individuals were in relationships, casually dating someone, or single. There were four measures of sexual enjoyment and three measures of relationship context, as well a perceived equity in the relationship. Galinsky and Sonenstein (2012) found relationship equity predicted virtually all

sexual enjoyment measures for all participants, male and female alike. Those who perceived themselves to have less power in the relationship had less sexual enjoyment, however the feelings of someone who has the perceived power may be inconsistent with what may be expected. Those who had a perceived sense of higher power in the relationship also had lower sexual enjoyment, along with a sense of guilt (Galinsky & Sonenstein, 2012). These findings were consistent across gender, both men and women feeling less sexual enjoyment if they perceived themselves to have more or less power within a relationship (Galinsky & Sonenstein, 2012). This study suggests that the highest form of sexual enjoyment for both men and women come from being in a relationship where power is shared as well as men and women sharing the same views and feelings in these situations.

A recent study by Armstrong, England, and Fogarty, (2012), investigated the sexual enjoyment of college women's relationships and hookups. A large online survey was sent out via email to women at 21 different United States universities, and conducted 85 in depth interviews at two universities. They identified sources of sexual enjoyment, including stimulation, partner-specific learning, commitment, and gender equality. The young women described in what scenarios they felt the most and the least amount of sexual enjoyment. The research revealed women experienced more sexual enjoyment when in a relationship rather than during a casual hookup. Past experiences with a particular partner as well as commitment had a large influence on women's sexual enjoyment as well (Armstrong, England, & Fogarty, 2012). The study revealed these women related the ease of sexual enjoyment to how much they cared for their partner and how comfortable they were with them, components consistent with committed relationships. The study went on to suggest with more sexual experience with the same partner, the more gender equal the practice became. Instead of this being an awkward experience with a

partner's unfamiliar body, one becomes in tune with the partner's body and tastes in a committed relationship (Armstrong, England, & Fogarty, 2012).

While there is still much more information needed in regards to gender differences in romantic and sexual relationships, some aspects are clear. Yet, recent studies seem to have contradictory results, suggesting double standards may or may not exist, along with a perception of the double standard. This suggests there may not be a difference in the way bystanders view individuals of different genders when it comes to their actions in sexual relationships. Others suggest that sexual enjoyment is affected by relationship equity and type. While both men and women report they experience most sexual enjoyment when there is not a power struggle, women also reported they experience more sexual enjoyment while in a romantic, committed relationship. There is still much to be learned about FWB relationships and other casual relationships. To date research suggests that men and women differ with respects to their motivations to participate in this type of a relationship. What is missing however, is the perspective of partners currently participating in the same relationship. Seeing both sides of the relationship will identify whether what has been said in current studies regarding motivation, stigma associated with FWB relationships and feminist ideology is applicable to actual FWB relationships versus the perceptions of them.

The current research has society's perspective on friends with benefits, women's and men's perspective on friends with benefits and their motivations to participate in this type of a relationship. But it doesn't have two people's different perspectives that are currently participating in the same relationship. Seeing both sides of the relationship will gather information as to whether what has been said in current studies is applicable. Current research states that if both people in the relationship want the same outcome they will generally have a

positive friends with benefits experience but if participants want a different outcome they will have a negative friends with benefits experience. (Weaver, MacKeigan, & MacDonald, 2011). Current research also states that a relationship with equal power is the most enjoyed relationship. As a way of understanding partner perspectives we conducted a case study with two college-aged students who are currently participating in a FWB relationship. To do this we interviewed separately the male and female participant.

Method

Case Study Participants

Participants included one heterosexual couple currently participating in a friends with benefits relationship with one another since autumn 2014. The male participant was 20 years old, a junior in college studying engineering, and Caucasian, while the female participant was 23, a senior in college, studying Child Development and Caucasian. Both participants attended a large public university on California's central coast. The couple had no prior involvement with the current research, and were merely asked to be interviewed by the researchers to discuss their current relationship. The participants voluntarily agreed upon being asked to participate in the study, with no underlying incentives presented to them.

Procedure

The researchers began by recruiting one couple currently participating in a friends with benefits relationship to participate in the study at hand. The female participant was a fellow Child Development major of the researchers, so the recruiting happened in a face-to-face encounter. The researchers then coordinated a time to meet with the participants and set a meeting spot on the university's campus. One of the researchers interviewed the female participant, while the other researcher interviewed the male participant. The interviews happened on different days in

different locations. Once the participants arrived, the interview began. The researchers explained why the study was being conducted—to explore the role of FWB relationships on campus. The researchers then provided the participants with a consent and nondisclosure form (Appendix A). The participants were ensured the entire interview would be kept confidential. The interview began with a writing activity in which the participants wrote down what a friends with benefits relationship meant to them, followed with the researchers defining the predetermined definition. The participants were then asked to read their meanings out loud. The interview then began, and consisted of research questions that can be found in Appendix B. The interviews lasted around 20 minutes. The goal of the interview was to guide the conversation with the previously thought out discussion questions, but also leaving room to allow conversation to flow and collect as much information from the participants about their opinions and personal experiences regarding FWB relationships.

The interview questions were the same ones used in previous focus groups regarding the same topics, and have been approved not only by the researchers supervisors, but also Cal Poly Human Subjects.

Topics

Our questions focused on several topics: motivation, stigma associated with FWB relationships and feminist ideology in their FWB relationship. The interview questions included asking each person what they thought their partners responses on questions would be as well.

Motivation. The first section of the questions in the interview were focused on understanding the participants motivation to participate in a FWB relationship and how satisfied they are with their experience. The questions asked why they began their FWB relationship and if there was communication about starting the relationship. The questions also geared towards how positive

or negative their current experience with FWB is. As well as how the participant thought their partner would answer to these questions—why their relationship began and if they're satisfied in the relationship. In a more general sense the participants were asked if communication is different depending on a hookup, FWB and relationship as well as does the degree of communication change the relationship.

Stigma Associated with FWB Relationships. The second section of the questions in the interview were focused on understanding the participants perception of how others view them in their FWB relationships as well as how the power and control in their relationship is distributed. The questions asked how they felt they're viewed and how their partners viewed in participating in a FWB relationship and if they're treated equally by those that know they participate in a FWB relationship. They were also asked who has more power or control in their relationship and what are indicators of the power or control. As well as how they thought their partner would respond to how power was distributed in the relationship and if they were viewed differently.

Feminist Ideology. The third and final section of the questions focused on how participants feminist identity impact their motivation and assessments of their FWB relationships. The questions asked if the participants felt a FWB relationship is empowering for themselves or their partner and if they agree that FWB relationships are a way for women to experiment and be sexual beings. The questions also asked if they define a FWB relationship as feminist or not, how they define feminism and what feminism means to them.

Results

To understand the qualitative data we collected, we made three separate charts. The charts were labeled similarities and differences—one for the male's answers and one for the female's answers. We went through and listened to each question from each participant and put their responses in one of the charts depending if they agreed or disagreed. After the responses were placed, we discussed general themes we found throughout the interviews.

Motivation

When comparing the couples' responses, there were many similarities between their answers, and much the couple agreed upon but they also had distinct differences on a few of the questions. The couple reported that the female participant was the one who suggested the relationship be one of the friends with benefits type. Overall the relationship has been a positive experience for both and they have discussed their reasons for participating. Both of the participants knew of each others motivation to participate in this relationship but the reasons were different. The female participant is graduating at the end of March and didn't want to start a romantic relationship and the male participant has a busy schedule and feels he doesn't have enough time for a romantic relationship. According to the male participant "we thought she was going to be graduating soon and didn't see a point in starting a relationship when there was an end date."

Alcohol was initially a factor, as they met while under the influence, however the couple reports they only hang out sober for the most part. The male participant responded "We hangout sober 99% of the time, sometimes we'll have a glass of wine when we're hanging out but that's it." The couple had discussed their relationship, and have agreed if they sleep with other people, protection must be used; however the couple is exclusively only sleeping with each other currently. The female participant said "As long as he's clear with me and using protection with

other people, I'm pretty, I feel good about it." When asked how communication plays a role in the relationship the couple agreed that the degree of communication doesn't change the nature of the relationship. The participants had different opinions on distinguishing a hookup, FWB relationship and romantic relationship. The female participant felt that with a romantic relationship the partners talk much more often than those in a FWB relationship whereas the male participant felt there wasn't a large difference between a FWB relationship and a romantic relationship.

Stigma Associated with FWB Relationships

When asked how they felt others felt about their FWB relationship, the female participant said her friends are supportive but felt her FWB partner probably brags to his friends about being with an older woman. She reported, "I'm sure his friends make comments like, oh you're hooking up with an older chick, or he probably brags about it in certain ways." The male participant actually said only his closest friends are aware of his relationship but do call her his sugar momma. He reported, "we usually hang out at her house, so my friends don't know her too well. But because she's three years older than me, they always refer to her as my sugar mama". When asked about power in the relationship the female participant said there was equal power and she doesn't care about exclusivity but also doesn't want to hear about it. The female participant did think her partner would think he has more power but she feels it's equal. The male participant feels like he has more power in the relationship because he has more self-confidence in regards to the relationship. He said, "I don't use the relationship to measure my self-worth so if things aren't going well I still have self-confidence but I see that when I don't respond to her text, it shakes her up."

Feminist Ideology

When asked if a FWB is as empowering as a hookup both participants felt that it depended on the situation but the female participant focused more on gender where the male participant felt it couldn't be generalized. She said that a lot of woman participate in these relationships because they think that's appropriate and therefore not empowering but it is empowering for males because they get the best part of a romantic relationship. She said, "in the sense that you get along really well and you don't have to necessarily communicate your feelings all the time, you don't have to work with someone else but you also get the sexual pleasure from someone so I definitely think it's empowering for guys." When discussing other people's involvement in their relationship, both felt as if gender does not play a role in the way they are treated, and both felt empowered as they are getting exactly what they want. Both felt that women do sometimes get judged for attempting to be sexual beings, and that FWB relationships can be an arena with an uneven playing field, with the sexual stigma falling on the women. The couple reported equal sexual satisfaction. When asked if a FWB relationship is feminist or not, the female participant felt it wasn't either but it is sexually liberating while the male said it can be feminist or unfeminist depending on why the person is in the relationship. When asked to define feminism, and if they're a feminist the female participant wasn't sure what the definition is, she thought of stereotypes when she tried to define it and wasn't sure if she would define herself as one. The male participant defined it as both genders having equal rights and felt that he is a feminist but grew up surrounded by misogyny but he is trying to work on altering his views away from that. He reported, "I was raised learning about what misogyny was and I realize that I have a long way to go but I'm working on it, even though the people around me don't feel the same way."

Other Themes

When analyzing the results, the researchers detected common themes throughout the interview process. The couple was very self aware of their relationship; neither participant was playing games and conversation surrounding their relationship was open. While the motivations surrounding their reasoning for participating in the FWB relationships were different, the reasons complimented each other and the participants were aware of the other's individual motivation. The researchers believed the open line of communication had by the participants contributed to their equal satisfaction in the relationship. While the participants both acknowledge a general stigma in FWB relationships, the couple doesn't personally associate or come into contact with the gender stigma. And although the couple doesn't seem to be affected by the stigma, both participants acknowledged that the male participant might have more power within the relationship. While the couple agreed FWB relationships can be sexually liberating for a woman, only the male participant contributed this liberation to feminism. When asked about empowerment in their relationship and FWB relationships in general, the female participant put emphasis on gender differences, while the male participant felt as if he couldn't generalize and claimed each relationship is situational.

Discussion

The review of literature of FWB relationships among college students made apparent the lack of the research done on those who are participating in an actual FWB relationship. Past research has suggested much about the motivating factors of participating in a FWB relationship. It was first hypothesized by Gusarova, Fraser, and Alderson (2012) that if a participant in the relationship isn't following the script of FWB, the results would be a negative experience. Those who have stronger attachment or hope the relationship will turn into more were the participants experiencing the negativity. Even though our participants had different motivations, their

motivations were still in line with the FWB script. Neither participant expressed the desire for the relationship to become anything more than FWB, and reported having a positive experience in the relationship, thus supporting past research.

In regards to peer attitudes towards FWB relationships, research done by Allison and Risman (2013) suggested women lose respect for individuals who hook up a lot, while men lose respect for only women who hook up often. A similar study done by Kenny, Thadani, Ghaidarov, and LaBrie (2013) suggested peers believe men hook up for popularity reasons, while women do it for coping or emotional security reasons. Our case study uncovered that the female participant was supported by her peers, and while the male participant didn't reveal much about his peers, he never claimed anything negative about how they feel. In line with the latter research, the female participant believed the male participant bragged about their relationship often, when in reality only the male participant's close friends knew about it.

While some past research has indicated a presence of a double standard, our research has found conflicting results. The participants acknowledged there was a double standard in relationships of this nature, however did not feel the standard affected them personally. This conclusion supported the research conducted by Weaver, Claybourn, and Mackeigan (2013) in which the researchers suggested a double standard doesn't exist however a perception of one might. With the previous research and first hand experience by the participants, we believe there will always be a perception of a double standard, however few actually face the negativity of the double standard.

Galinsky and Sonenstein (2012) suggested relationship equity helped measure sexual enjoyment, implying the more equal the relationship the more sexual enjoyment experienced. Another study done by Armstrong, England, and Fogarty (2012) suggested the more sexual

experience with the same partner, the more gender equal the practice became. The results of our study contradict the first study presented, as the participants felt as if the male participant had more power, however both were equally sexually satisfied. This may be due to the results presented in the second study; the participants have had much sexual experience with each other, making the practice more gender equal.

The two studies above also related power within the relationship to sexual satisfaction. The studies suggested that equal power within a relationship makes for the most sexual enjoyment, and those who are experiencing both less and more power in the relationship have less sexual enjoyment. While power did not affect the participants' sexual enjoyment, the male participant felt as if he had more power and did feel a sense of guilt.

While our current research has some similarities to past research, we also found quite a few conflicting results. This is to be expected as our results are based on only one couple attending a primarily White public university on California's Central Coast. This was merely a pilot study, and further research should work towards assessing actual FWB relationships rather than only perceptions of them.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form Adolescent Sexuality: Friends With Benefits

A research project on adolescent sexuality is being conducted by Jean Williams in the Department of Political Science and Jasna Jovanovic in the Department of Psychology and Child Development at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. The purpose of the study is to find out how young women perceive "friends with benefits" (FWB) relationships.

You are being asked to take part in this study by participating in an open-ended focus group discussion. Your participation will take approximately one hour. We will tape record the discussion if you agree to that. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research, and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You also may refuse to answer any question or questions that you prefer not to answer.

Your responses will be protected and kept anonymous to safeguard your privacy. We will change your name to a pseudonym, so that only the pseudonym appears on the focus group transcription. Your name will not appear in a file or on the transcription. We will also change details of your background, such as age and city of residence, so that you will not be recognizable should your responses appear in any publications. All focus groups participants are required to maintain the confidentiality of the group discussion. Therefore, others in the group may not repeat any of the comments that you make during the discussion, and you may not repeat any of the comments made by others. Potential benefits associated with the study include helping to expand knowledge about female adolescent sexuality.

If you have questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Jean Williams at (805) 756-2960 or Jasna Jovanovic at (805) 756-2854. If you have questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Steve Davis, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee, at (805) 756-2754, sdavis@calpoly.edu.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research project as described, please indicate your agreement by signing and dating this consent form. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you for your reference. Thank you for your participation in this research.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Appendix B **Interview Questions**

Friends with Benefits Focus Groups
Professors Jovanovic and Williams

- We're doing a study to explore the role of Friends with Benefits relationships on campus. Last year, we constructed an anonymous survey that about 250 students filled out. This year, we're following up on some of the things that we learned from the survey with focus groups to further examine FWB. Our research will be presented at academic conferences and in academic journals that publish work on sexuality and related issues.

- Hand out consent and nondisclosure forms. Students may take these with them.

- Questions are designed so you can answer them with general knowledge about what is happening on campus. We do want to hear your personal opinions about FWB—positive or negative or somewhere in between.

-Please keep in mind that the non-disclosure form is purely voluntary and that we have no way of enforcing it.

- If you don't want to answer a question, or if you decide you don't want to take part in the focus group, you can leave any time.

- The discussion will be digitally recorded for our use in writing up the results. No one will have access to the recordings, except the two professors and the student research assistants who will transcribe the recording. You will be assigned a pseudonym immediately, so that your name will not be used at all nor appear in the transcript.

Begin with writing activity that defines FWB.

On the piece of paper in front of you, list 3 characteristics of a FWB Relationship

Finish with agreement to use the following definition of FWB for the purpose of the discussion today:

A FWB is defined as a casual relationship that combines the intimacy of a friendship with the sexual intimacy of a romantic relationship without commitment. A FWB relationship can be straight, gay, or lesbian.

RQ1) What are young women's and men's motivations to participate in and satisfaction with FWB relationships?

*We want you to think about your current FWB relationship when answering these questions.

a) why did you and your partner decide to participate in a FWB relationship?

b) So far has the experience been mostly positive or mostly negative or somewhere in the middle? Why?

*Do you think the reason you and your partner began your FWB relationship is similar or different?

*Did you and your FWB partner have any negotiation or discussion that took place when considering your FWB relationship?

* Would you say that the degree of communication between a hook up, FWB, and relationship are similar or different?

* If you start communicating with each other about the relationship or your expectations, is it still a FWB relationship, or does communication make it into something else?

* What are your thoughts on using your FWB relationship as a transition into a romantic relationship?

*Was alcohol a motivating factor for you having a FWB?

*What would you say is the proportion you and your FWB partner hangout sober versus influences involved?

RQ2) What is the extent of acceptance and/or stigma associated with FWB relationships among young men and women?

*How are you viewed by other people who know about your FWB? How is your partner viewed?

* Are you and your FWB partner treated the same way by people who know about it?

* Is there shared power or control in your FWB relationship? What would be indicators of who has more power or control in your relationship?

RQ3) Does identification with feminist ideology impact students' motivations and assessments of their FWB relationships?

* Do you think engaging in a FWB relationship is empowering or not empowering for yourself? For your partner?

* Is a FWB relationship more, less, or equally empowering as a hookup for young women? for young men?

* In another focus group, some students said that generally, women aren't encouraged to be sexual beings or to freely experiment sexually, but that men are. They said that FWB relationships can be empowering for women because it gives them a chance to experiment and be sexual beings. What do you think about that?

*Do you think that FWB relationships are an arena in which women and men are pretty equal or pretty unequal?

* Do you feel you or your partner is more sexually satisfied in a FWB, or are both equally satisfied?

*Would you say that women OR men have the power to decide what will happen in the FWB relationship? (e.g. who's doing the calling, how often they see each other, monogamous or not, who's making the rules, if they tell other people)

*What about in your current FWB relationship, who has the power to decide what will happen in the relationship?

*How do you think your partner would respond?

*If you could define FWB relationships as feminist, unfeminist, or somewhere in the middle, how would you define them? Why?

*Follow up: How are you defining "feminism"? What does it mean to you? Do you think other people your age define it the same way?

* Do you use condoms or other forms of contraception in your FWB relationship? Why or why not?