GENDER SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES WITHIN A FRIENDS WITH
BENEFITS RELATIONSHIP
AN HONORS THESIS
SUBMITTED ON THE 30 DAY OF APRIL 2020
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
OF THE CREATIVE PREMEDICAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM
OF NEWCOMB TULANE COLLEGE
TULANE UNIVERSITY
FOR THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS
WITH HONORS IN SOCIOLOGY
BY
Nicole Boggio

APPROVED:

Mimi Schippers
Director of Thesis

Katherine Johnson
Second Reader

Anthony Baab
Third Reader
This thesis seeks to examine what gender predicts about an individual’s feelings and behaviors within the various stages of a friends with benefits relationship (FWBR)—the pursuit, maintenance, outcome, and aftermath. Moreover, through quantitative research on college heterosexual FWBRs, I aim to uncover the ways in which men and women engaging in a FWBR may feel and/or behave differently from, and similarly to, one another. To begin, this thesis provides a thorough literature review, detailing both the essence of a FWBR and gender within relationships. Based on my research, I hypothesize that when engaging in a FWBR, (H₁) men and women will externally behave in similar, benefits-directed manners; however, (H₂) women will internally feel more emotionally invested in the relationship than men. The thesis moves to communicate the methods and results of my survey on Tulane University undergraduate students. Following, a comprehensive discussion is offered, in which the survey findings are interpreted in relation to one another, to outside scholarly literature, and to the history of the traditional sexual script and the sexual double standard. The thesis concludes largely in support of both Hypothesis 1 and 2, and ultimately demonstrates highly relevant evidence of the changing of the traditional sexual script and the erosion of the sexual double standard. At the forefront of bridging the concepts of gender and FWBRs, this thesis reveals how the implications of gender play out within a FWBR, and potentially of even greater significance, how the context of a FWBR allows for gender to deviate.
Gender Within FWBRs

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Most importantly, I would like to thank my dedicated thesis committee—Dr. Mimi Schippers, Dr, Katherine Johnson, and Mr. Anthony Baab. Your guidance and wisdom throughout this project have been indispensable. To Dr. Schippers, I thank you for igniting my interest in gender studies during our class last semester—you have sparked something in me that I believe I will carry for years to come, and hopefully even bring into the medical field. Thank you for our intellectual conversations that always left me wanting to know more; I will miss them dearly. To Dr. Johnson, I thank you for your considerable knowledge of survey methodology and quantitative data analysis. I would not have made it through the results portion of my paper without you. To Mr. Baab, I thank you, and I envy you, for your immense creativity and your ability to think abstractly and freely. You have provided me—a science person—with the thrilling and different, and sometimes a little intimidating, opportunity of going into a project without having any idea of the outcome. To all of you, I thank you for not only helping me to shape this thesis into what it is today, but also for the appreciable wealth of knowledge that you have passed on to me as I move forward with my academic career.

To my mom, dad, Taylor, and Jodi, I thank you for always supporting me in my endeavors and for providing me with each and every opportunity that you have. I am forever indebted to you, and I love you all very much. And finally, my dog Sasha, thank you for laying with as I typed away on this thesis. Your company does not go unnoticed.
Gender Within FWBRs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT..........................................................................................................................ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..................................................................................................iii

LIST OF TABLES...............................................................................................................vi

LIST OF FIGURES............................................................................................................vii

INTRODUCTION.................................................................................................................1

FWBRs: DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS.................................................................1

  Framing Friends with Benefits Relationships..........................................................1

FWBRs: WHY AND WHY NOT.......................................................................................4

  Prevalence of FWBRs..................................................................................................4

  Desire for FWBRs........................................................................................................5

  Risks Associated with FWBRs...................................................................................7

  Possible Outcomes of FWBRs....................................................................................8

GENDER DIFFERENCES.................................................................................................9

  Gender Differences Within College Hookup Culture..............................................9

  Gender Differences Within FWBRs..........................................................................11

THE PRESENT STUDY......................................................................................................13

METHODS.......................................................................................................................14

  Participants................................................................................................................14

  Procedure..................................................................................................................15

  Measures....................................................................................................................17

RESULTS..........................................................................................................................25

  Survey Demographics and FWBR Definition.........................................................24

  Pursuing a FWBR.......................................................................................................27

  Maintaining a FWBR..................................................................................................36

  FWBR Outcome.........................................................................................................45
Gender Within FWBRs

Aftermath Post-FWBR...........................................................................................................51

DISCUSSION..................................................................................................................................52

External Behaviors Within a FWBR..........................................................................................53

Internal Feelings Within a FWBR..............................................................................................63

CONCLUSIONS..............................................................................................................................70

Limitations and Future Research Directions..............................................................................73

REFERENCES...................................................................................................................................76

APPENDICES.................................................................................................................................82

Appendix A. Survey Recruitment Script.....................................................................................82

Appendix B. Survey.......................................................................................................................83

Appendix C. Variable Names and Definitions............................................................................86

Appendix D. IRB Exempt Approval.............................................................................................87
Gender Within FWBRs

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 ........................................................................................................................................24
Sample Demographics: Gender, Sexual Orientation, Year at Tulane, and FWBR Definition (N =171)

Table 2 ........................................................................................................................................28
Descriptive Statistics of the Pursuit Stage Variables (N = 130)

Table 3 ........................................................................................................................................29
Relationship Dynamic Pre-FWBR vs Initiator of the First Hookup Between FWBs (N = 130)

Table 4 ........................................................................................................................................37
Descriptive Statistics of the Maintenance Stage Variables

Table 5 ........................................................................................................................................45
Descriptive Statistics of the Outcome Stage Variables (N = 103)

Table 6 ........................................................................................................................................47
FWBs Partner Description vs Post-FWBR Outcome (N = 103)

Table 7 ........................................................................................................................................49
Post-FWBR Outcome vs Initiator of Respective Outcome (N = 103)

Table 8 ........................................................................................................................................51
Overall FWBR Experience Rating by Gender (N = 101)
Gender Within FWBRs

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.............................................................................................................................25

Definition of FWBR by Gender (N = 171)

Figure 2.............................................................................................................................31

Romantic Intentions within a FWBR by Gender (N = 130)

Figure 3.............................................................................................................................33

Initiator of First Hookup Between FWBs by Gender (N = 130)

Figure 4.............................................................................................................................38

Priority Reason for Engaging in a FWBR by Gender (N = 107)

Figure 5.............................................................................................................................40

Description of Partner’s Role by Gender (N = 112)

Figure 6.............................................................................................................................46

Post-FWBR Outcome by Gender (N = 103)

Figure 7.............................................................................................................................47

FWBs Partner Description vs Post-FWBR Outcome (N = 103)

Figure 8.............................................................................................................................49

Post-FWBR Outcome vs Initiator of Respective Outcome (N = 103)
INTRODUCTION

Sexuality scholars have increasingly considered both the context and the content of the now highly prevalent concept of friends with benefits relationships (FWBRs). Similarly, gender scholars have long studied the role of gender in the context of sexual relationships—from brief sexual encounters to more long-term romantic relationships. More recently, some scholars have begun to investigate the gender roles within the context of college hookup cultures and in part, within FWBRs (e.g., Armstrong et al. 2010; Bogle 2008; Lehmiller et al. 2011; Schippers 2019; McGinty et al. 2007). Through quantitative exploration of college students’ behaviors and feelings within FWBRs, the present research seeks to more thoroughly explore the gender differences, and more importantly, the gender similarities within the various stages of a FWBR. Ultimately, this thesis aims to document the broadening of the gender roles outlined by the traditional sexual script and the late erosion of the sexual double standard for women.

FWBRs: DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

Framing Friends with Benefits Relationships

Countless scholars have proposed various definitions and frames of friends with benefits relationships (FWBRs) depending on the context of the situation and the individual interpreting the relationship. In 2009, Bisson and Levine posited a very general definition of friends with benefits (FWBs): friends who have sex. Other, more elaborate definitions have suggested that FWBs contain a mix of friendship and sexual intimacy, while refraining from a committed romantic relationship (Bisson and Levine 2009; Owen
Gender Within FWBRs

and Fincham 2011a). Owen and Fincham also put forward that FWBRs offer “a mutual understanding, support, companionship, and bonding through activities” (2011a:311). Mathews (2014) proposed a definition for FWBs, which specified that, “those in a FWB are friends first and then decide to engage in sexual activity, but do not label the relationship as romantic” (p. 14-15). Though this may often be the case, I would argue that a FWBR may also form the other way around, as sexual partners first and then becoming friends whilst continuing to hookup. FWBRs have also been described as sexual relationships between individuals whom “lack exclusivity, commitment, a desire for a romantic relationship, and emotional attachment” (Merriam-Pigg 2013:2). This may be the intention of most FWBRs; however, I would argue that some FWBRs may actually contain some hidden degree of emotional attachment and/or the desire for a romantic relationship from one or both partners. Though the feelings may be present in secret, if the individual(s) choose(s) not to announce or act upon their feelings in order to preserve their FWBR, I would posit that the relationship would still classify as a FWBR. While many variations of a similar definition exist, one common theme that most researchers seem to all agree on is that in theory, FWBRs are quite simple; however, in reality, they are often much more complex.

Another more detailed definition of FWBs follows:

Platonic friends (i.e., those not involved in a romantic relationship) who engage in some degree of sexual intimacy on multiple occasions. This sexual activity could range from kissing to sexual intercourse and is a repeated part of your friendship such that it is not just a one-night stand. (Mongeau et al. 2013:39)

This definition brings about some important comparisons and requires some clarifications and distinctions be made. First, in order to contrast “romantic” with “platonic” and with “one-night stand,” it is important to clearly define these terms. In her discussion of
compulsory monogamy, Schippers (2019) states how “romantic” relationships are also characterized as “committed” or “serious” relationships. Thus, they are expected to be “monogamous,” meaning sexually exclusive, and both sexually and emotionally responsible and accountable. Schippers states “casual” relationships, then, must be non-monogamous and must lack responsibility and accountability. FWBRs differ from traditional romantic relationships in that “theoretically [there is] no expectation that the relationship will be furthered romantically” (Weaver et al. 2013:152). In relation, “one-night stands,” also termed “casual sex relationships” or “hookups,” are defined as acquaintances or even strangers whom share a single occurrence of sexual activity, and do not expect a relationship to further develop (Bisson and Levine 2009). FWBRs differ from “hookups” in that individuals engaging in FWBRs maintain a friendship while engaging in sexual activity more than once, and perhaps even on a regular basis. There is, however, a very fine line in which two individuals may refer to themselves as “hooking up,” a term which is often interpreted differently by different people. On one hand the individuals may mean that they are hooking up repeatedly, but that it is very casual. This, in many ways, is very similar to a FWBR. On the other hand, they may mean that they have recently started hooking up, but that it may progress into something more romantic. Most commonly, however, two individuals who say they are “hooking up” are likely just taking it slow, enjoying their time, and leisurely seeing where it goes.

When framing FWBRs, Mongeau et al. (2013) posit that, in addition to the variation in the nature of the term *benefits* (from kissing to intercourse), the degree of *friendship* may also vary. The authors propose that FWBs may (1) start as friends, and then begin hooking up; (2) initially hookup, and then continue hooking up and becoming
friends; (3) transition into a romantic relationship; or, (4) have a history of a romantic relationship. Drawing from their study on heterosexual FWBRs, the authors determined seven classification types for FWBs: “true friends,” “network opportunism” (i.e., having mutual friends), “just sex,” three types of “transition in” (to a romantic relationship)—“successful,” “failed,” and “unintentional,”—and “transition out” (of a romantic relationship) (2013:40). In their analysis, Mongeau et al. hint that FWBRs may exist as somewhat of an intermediate or transition stage along a continuous path from friendships or casual hookups to romantic relationships or vice versa. This, however; is not always the case. While FWBRs have components of both hookups and romantic relationships, we cannot always assume that FWBRs are a middle ground either leading up to or stepping down from a romantic relationship (Schippers 2019). It is important to understand that FWBRs can exist as their own separate entity. Just as a friendship or a romantic relationship can start from nothing and end as nothing, a FWBR may also start from nothing and end as nothing. For this reason, I posit that the simpler the definition, the better. For the remainder of this thesis, or until otherwise specified, I will follow that FWBRs are comprised of friends who engage in sexual activity on few or more occasions.

FWBRs: WHY AND WHY NOT

Prevalence of FWBRs

Mathews (2014) summarized the findings from various FWB studies, suggesting that roughly 60-67% of undergraduate college students have participated in at least one
Gender Within FWBRs

FWBR. Notably, it appeared that more recent studies on FWBRs showed increasing amounts of participation by college students. Similarly, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health has suggested that these trends are also common among individuals younger than college-aged (Mathews 2014). As one might expect, FWBRs occur most commonly in youth, ages 15-24, with the college setting playing a major factor in this.

Studies regarding participation in FWBRs based on gender have found relatively similar results for men and women, though some variation exists. One study found that “over half of men (54.3%) and slightly under half of women (42.9%) reported at least one FWB relationship” (Owen and Fincham 2011a:315). Jovanovic and Williams (2018) and Weaver et al. (2013) found young women to be just as likely as young men to participate in FWBRs, which thereby differentiated FWBRs from hookups, in which young men traditionally participate more.

Desire for FWBRs

FWBRs are desirable because they allow individuals to have some sense of trust and comfort with their partner, while refraining from the commitment and exclusivity that may come with a romantic relationship, should that relationship be monogamous (Weaver et al. 2013). As mentioned above, FWBRs are found to be most common among youth and within the college setting. Bisson and Levine (2009) suggest that this is because FWBRs offer college students a confidence-boosting mechanism of having recreational sex in a relatively safe and convenient environment. Research has also found hedonism—‘if it feels good, do it’—to be a primary sexual value of individuals who
engage in FWBRs (Merriam-Pigg 2013). Another appeal to FWBRs for both male and female students is that they tend to be “less emotionally risky than other relationships” (Jovanovic and Williams 2018). In other words, FWBs reap the benefits of a sexual relationship while avoiding putting their emotions out on the line and risking getting hurt. Jovanovic and Williams also advocate for FWBRs as instruments for college students, and college heterosexual women in particular, to express their sexual freedom and feel more sexually powerful and in control. According to Armstrong et al. (2012), women are more likely to experience sexual satisfaction and have an orgasm when in a relationship with their sexual partner, rather than when hooking up with a more random sexual partner. I will explain the reasons for this in greater detail further in this literature review.

Similar to romantic relationships, Schippers (2019) described FWBRs as desirable in that they allow college students to engage in agreed-upon, on-going, non-monogamous, sexually satisfying, heterosexual sex, and thus diminish the gender inequalities often seen in hookups or one-night-stands. Additionally, Schippers references Lisa Wade’s (2017) argument that casual sex does not always have to be as cold and unfriendly as many students conceptualize and treat it. Wade confronts that somewhere along the line, students began to associate monogamy with showing love and kindness towards one’s partner. Thus, in opposition of monogamy and in pursuit of casual sex, one must act in manners that lack not only love, but also kindness. Wade goes on to propose that not all students desire this coldness: “some want a hookup culture that is warmer: where students aren’t just poly—hooking up with multiple partners—but polyamorous—hooking up with multiple partners who are loving toward them” (2017:246). FWBRs, therefore, seem to provide students and individuals in general with the perfect outlet for
being polyamorous. Building on this, Schippers (2019) suggests that when it comes to
gender partners, college students do not only desire some sort of “interpersonal
connection,” but they also “do not want to compromise their ability to ‘see what’s out
there,’ by ‘settling’ into monogamous, dyadic relationships that close off their ability to
cultivate inter and intra-gender friendships” (2019:97). On the topic of friendship and
connection, a final argument for why college students may engage in FWBRs can be
found Easton and Hardy’s claim, “that friendship is an excellent reason to have sex and
that sex is an excellent way to maintain a friendship” (2009:48). In this sense, Easton and
Hardy argue that sexual friendships and FWBRs are desired and have the potential to
thrive in contexts in which individuals may not care to marry an on-going sexual partner,
but regardless, they maintain respect, appreciation, and love towards that partner.

*Risks Associated with FWBRs*

While the desire for a FWBR, and its associated benefits, have commonly been
found to outweigh the associated risks, still, some risks remain relevant. “One of the most
commonly identified risks is unrequited love, in which one person develops
unreciprocated romantic feelings for the other partner” (Weaver et al. 2013:152). If this is
the case, it may lead to some degree of discomfort or awkwardness from one or both
partners, and ultimately could cause the FWBR, and the friendship itself, to terminate. On
the other hand, however, if the romantic feelings are mutual between FWBs partners, the
pair could in time decide to move into more of a committed and/or romantic relationship.
Another more common risk discussed in the literature is the fear of ruining, or actually
ruining, the preexisting friendship by letting things get too complicated, and often times,
letting feelings “get in the way” of what was intended to be a purely sexual friendship (Bisson and Levine 2009; Mongeau et al. 2013; Weaver et al. 2013). Bisson and Levine (2009) also determine one of the primary risks of engaging in FWBs to be the potential for negative consequences resulting from sexual intimacy (e.g., pregnancy, STI). Schippers (2019) discusses a final risk associated with FWBRs: the possibility that outsiders view your relationship as monogamous, thereby taking you “off the market,” and thus lessening your chance of hooking up with others. Although conversations between FWBs partners regarding the parameters of their relationship are often kept at minimum, in attempt to reduce this risk, FWBs may discuss and ultimately decide to keep their FWBR a secret from their peers (Bisson and Levine 2009; Schippers 2019).

Possible Outcomes of FWBRs

Several outcomes are possible when it comes to FWBRs: no longer friends; still friends, but not as close as before the FWBR; still friends, just as close as before; still friends, even closer than before; and moved into a romantic relationship (Owen et al. 2013). Research has shown that only about 20% of FWBRs ultimately move into a romantic relationship (Eisenberg et al. 2009; Owen and Fincham 2011a). Owen et al. (2013) thus questioned the outcome of the remaining FWBRs and the degree to which the friendship itself remained after the sexual intimacy ceased. From their study of around 300 university students that had previously participated in a FWBR, the authors found that a majority (81.5%) of the individuals remained friends with their FWBs partner after they had stopped hooking up. Of these individuals, about 50% reported feeling just as close if not closer to their prior partner. Far fewer individuals reported that they were no
longer friends with their prior FWBs partner: 18% of men and 19% of women. Of these individuals, the majority were found to have engaged in a FWBR that was more sex-based as opposed to friendship-based. In comparison, in FWBRs which were more friendship-based, the friendship itself was unlikely to be negatively harmed after engagement in the “benefits” had ceased (Owen et al. 2013).

GENDER DIFFERENCES

Gender Differences Within College Hookup Culture

Research has shown that men’s and women’s experiences with sex and sexual encounters have varied quite a bit, particularly in the college setting. In Schippers’ (2019) book, her chapter on heterosexual hookup cultures explains such a divide in detail. Schippers suggests that in present-day college hookup culture, high-status, heterosexual white men appear to procure all the benefits, while virtually everyone else is put at a disadvantage (Armstrong et al. 2010; Heldman and Wade 2010; Kelly 2012). An example of this can be seen in the sexual double standard, in which men are often praised for hooking up with numerous women, while women are often negatively judged for “sleeping around” and may be seen or referred to as a “slut” or “whore.” Fronting the possibility of these stigmas and labels, college women may, and many do, modify or limit their expression of interest in and/or their physical participation in multiple hookups (Bogle 2008; Schippers 2019; Lehmiller et al. 2011).

Men and women have also been found to want varying levels of devotion from college hookup culture. In her critical film analysis of the HBO documentary Swiped:
Hooking Up in the Digital Age, Schippers recaps that “men desire sexual novelty without responsibility or emotional commitment and women desire romance and committed monogamy” (2019:69). This presumption largely results from the increased benefit to men and cost to women of hooking up, in comparison to the increased benefit to women of engaging in a relationship. In other words, whereas men desire the ability to have multiple “no strings attached” hookups with different women, women desire hookups that have the potential to develop into more of a relationship (Bogle 2008; Schippers 2019). The question further arises: why do college women seek relationships more than college men? One explanation lies in the paragraph above, through which we can infer that if a woman is in a committed, romantic relationship with a man, she is thus less likely to face the sexual double standard and get negatively judged for expressing her sexual agency. Another explanation is that women feel safer in relationships where they know their partner well, trust, and are comfortable with them, as opposed to with hookups, where they likely do not know their partner as well, if at all, and do not know what they are capable of doing. A final reason for women to seek out relationships more so than men lies in women’s increased sense of sexual satisfaction when in some sort of a relationship context (Armstrong et al. 2012; Jovanovic and Williams 2018; Schippers 2019). As touched on previously, when engaging in casual sex and hookups, Armstrong et al. (2012) found both men and women more likely to direct their attention towards the man’s sexual pleasure, and ultimately his orgasm, leaving women less-often sexually satisfied. In comparison, women have been found to receive more pleasure and attention—and thus increased sexual satisfaction and rate of orgasm—when engaging in an on-going hookup with the same individual or in a committed relationship. Schippers (2019) notes that “the
gender gap in orgasm is smallest within the context of what researchers call ‘committed’ or ‘romantic’ relationships compared to ‘one and done’ hookups” (p. 73; Armstrong et al. 2012; Backstrom et al. 2012; Kimmel 2008). It may be for this very reason that women are less likely than men to engage in hookups, but relatively equally likely to engage in relationships.

**Gender Differences Within FWBRs**

As we have seen, men benefit in far more ways from college hookup culture than do women. Following her analysis of this, Bogle (2008) goes on to propose that FWBRs may offer women an alternative approach to hooking up, one that allows them to express their sexual agency while also eschewing hooking up with “too many” people and risking negative labels. Bogle notes that just as FWBRs may prove a “better” option for women, men also find these relationships appealing, particularly for the matters of convenience and lack of effort required, while simultaneously avoiding any real commitments more typical of a romantic relationship. Like many scholars, Bogle does however caution that women, more frequently than men, are more likely to get emotionally invested in their sexual relationships, such as a FWBR (Cohen and Shotland 1996; Hill 2002; Grello et al. 2006; McGinty et al. 2007). This claim is clearly supported by McGinty, Knox, and Zusman’s (2007) study on 170 undergraduate students at a large southeastern university. This study found that when engaging in a FWBR, women were not only significantly more likely than men to view their FWBR as an emotional relationship, but also to be perceived by their male partner as being more emotionally invested in their FWBR than the man himself. Additionally, of great significance is the authors’ finding that when
engaging in a FWBR, nearly 85% of women compared to only 15% of men reported their relationship dynamic to be more so that of lovers than friends (McGinty et al. 2007). These findings suggest that while women in FWBRs foreground emotional investment and the ‘friends’ aspect of friends with benefits, men in FWBRs foreground informality and the ‘benefits’ aspect of a friends-with-benefits relationship.

On the topic of emotional involvement, a study by Owen and Fincham (2011b) found that, on average, men (50%) were more likely than women (26%) to have a positive emotional reaction to *hooking up*. Relatedly, this study found that women (49%) were more likely than men (26%) to have a negative emotional reaction to *hooking up*. Comparably, a more recent study by Owen and Fincham (2011a) found that both women and men reported more positive than negative emotional reactions to their FWBRs, though men had a larger disparity between positive and negative reactions. The distinction between women’s positive emotional reactions towards *hookups* and towards FWBRs is key here. Taken together, this, in combination with what we know about women’s sexual satisfaction increasing the more they have sex with the same partner, could suggest that women may be more likely than men to push for a FWBR. In opposition to this stance, one could argue that because men are “more likely to expect sex regardless of the physical attractiveness of [their] partner and in the absence of emotional closeness” (Hill 2002:231; Surbey et al. 2000; Grello et al. 2006; Cohen and Shotland 1996), men will be more likely than women to initiate a FWBR.

Lehmiller et al. (2011) investigated this push for a FWBR, looking at the gender differences in approaching and maintaining these types of relationships. While many similarities were found between men’s and women’s approaches, some key differences
Gender Within FWBRs

stood out. Men were more likely to initiate a FWBR as motivated by sex, while women were more likely motivated by an emotional connection. This study does not, however, explore whether men or women are more likely to do the actual initiating of the FWBR. Additionally, looking at the long-term standing of a FWBR, Lehmiller et al. found that men more often hoped that the relationship would stay the same over time, whereas women more often wanted the relationship to evolve over time into either a committed romantic relationship or a basic friendship. This finding further leads me to question: who, man or woman, is more likely to put an end to any given FWBR and what is the respective outcome? It is important to note here that in addition to the more obvious “endings” of a FWBR discussed earlier, “ending” could also, in some cases, mean moving into a romantic relationship.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The research found and discussed in the literature review above ultimately leaves me with the following research question: What does gender predict about an individual’s feelings and behaviors within the various stages of a friends-with-benefits relationship (FWBR)? In other words, through my research on college heterosexual FWBRs, I wish to uncover the ways in which men and women may feel and/or behave significantly differently from one another—and significantly similar to one another—when engaging in a FBWR. I intend to analyze gender at each of the stages of a FWBR: the pursuit, the maintenance, the outcome, and the aftermath.
Based on my research, I set forth the following presumption and hypothesis. When engaging in a FWBR, women may face some discrepancies between their internal feelings and their external behaviors. While women’s internal feelings may tend to accent the emotional or the “friends” aspect of friends with benefits, women’s external behaviors may tend to suppress the emotional and accent the physical or the “benefits” aspect of friends with benefits. If this discrepancy exists, I predict that this inconsistency likely differentiates women from men, who tend to accent the physical or the “benefits” aspect of friends with benefits in both their internal feelings and their external behaviors. Taken together, I hypothesize that when engaging in a FWBR, (H₁) men and women will externally behave in similar, benefits-directed manners; however, (H₂) women will internally feel more emotionally invested in the relationship than men. Please note that this emotional investment does not necessarily mean a romantic investment.

METHODS

Participants

For the present study, the participant population consisted of heterosexual Tulane University undergraduate students who had previously engaged in a FWBR at some point during their Tulane career, between Fall 2016 and Fall 2019. Data for this study was collected from November 2019 – January 2020. In sum, a total of 171 undergraduate Tulane students chose to participate in the study. Due to the nature of this study, with respect to analyzing gender differences within men and women in a FWBR, study criteria required participants who identified as man or woman and who were heterosexual. In
other words, to maintain data clarity and consistency, individuals with a gender identity that was not man or woman, or with a sexual orientation that was not heterosexual, were excluded from the study. Because I was interested in individuals’ post-FWBR outcomes and how individuals felt about their relationship after the fact, participants must have previously engaged in a FWBR (i.e., the sexual activity has ceased). Additionally, as mentioned, participants’ FWBRs were required to have taken place while at Tulane University. I chose to include this criterion again for consistency purposes and because I believe Tulane University has a particularly unique and intense hookup culture surrounding its campus.

Based on these exclusion criteria, 18 participants were screened out of the final study sample immediately after the first page of general, introductory questions (see Procedure below). The final sample thus contained 153 participants. Then, by designing my survey such that all questions (besides gender identity and sexual orientation) were optional, after the first page of questions, I immediately lost another 23 participants. This brought my largest sample size for any question after that to $N = 130$. My smallest sample size was $N = 56$ for a question inquiring about participants’ frequency of hookups with others, but my next smallest sample size was nearly double: $N = 101$ for participants’ overall FWBR experience rating.

Procedure

Student participation in this study involved completing a brief online survey about a specific, prior FWBR, personal to the respondents themselves. Please see Appendix B
for a copy of my survey. The survey was created using the SurveyMonkey software and the survey link was distributed to students in a variety of ways. The link and recruitment script (see Appendix A) were posted in Tulane University Facebook groups (e.g., Tulane sorority and fraternity groups and Tulane graduating-class groups), sent out in large sorority and fraternity GroupMe chats, and emailed to select classes of students in the Department of Sociology. Besides for two questions asking for individuals’ gender identity and sexual orientation, participants were not required to answer any question that they did not feel comfortable answering, and they were able to withdraw from taking the survey at any point without penalty. The survey contained a total of 18 questions of various formats: dichotomous questions, multiple-choice questions, open-ended questions, a nominal ranking question, and a rating scale question. All survey questions were designed to be mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive. On average, the survey took respondents three minutes and six seconds (3m:6s) to complete. All procedures were approved for exempt determination by the Tulane University IRB (ref # 2019-1982; see Appendix D).

Upon opening the survey link, students’ browsers were redirected to the survey title page, which included the participant consent form. By clicking “Next” students indicated that they agreed to the terms of participating in the survey, outlined in the consent form. Participants were then presented with the first page of general, introductory survey questions, which included four questions to indicate gender identity, sexual orientation, year at Tulane, and what they believed to be the best definition of a FWBR. If the participant indicated any response other than man or woman and heterosexual, upon clicking “Next,” they were screened out of the survey. For all other respondents,
clicking “Next” brought them to the survey instructions, which emphasized the fact that the study was looking at prior FWBRs, and instructed participants to answer all of the survey questions about one specific FWBR of theirs, rather than answering different questions referencing different FWBRs. I included this instruction with the aim of minimizing participants’ personal response biases with respect to which feelings and behaviors they may have chosen to report if considering various prior FWBRs of theirs. Participants were then asked a series of questions regarding the various stages of their FWBR, including the pursuit, the maintenance, the outcome, and the aftermath. Upon completing all that they wished to complete of the survey, participants were directed to “Submit” their responses, which brought them to the final page of the survey and thanked them for their willingness to participate.

Measures

General definition of FWBRs. The first non-demographic survey question used a multiple-choice format to ask participants to indicate what they believed to be the most accurate definition of FWBs or a FWBR (variable = defineFWBR; see Appendix C for a comprehensive list of my variables and their definitions). I provided participants with three definitions, which varied only slightly, and all of which may be considered correct. The first definition indicated that FWBs are, “Friends who engage in sexual activity on few or more occasions; may be monogamous (not hooking up with other people) or polyamorous (hooking up with other people).” The remaining two definitions differed in that one indicated that FWBs are only monogamous, and the other that they are only polyamorous. Given that all three of these response options may be true depending on the
FWBR, this question was not only intended to provide participants with a nonspecific definition of FWBRs, but it was also intended to measure whether participants believe FWBRs to be exclusive relationships.

_Pursing a FWBR._ In attempt to analyze how men versus women feel and behave when pursuing a FWBR, a total of five questions were asked (survey questions 5 through 9, see Appendix B) and responses were broken down and analyzed by participant gender. Each of these five questions followed a multiple-choice format. The first question, survey question 5, asked participants to indicate which option best represented how their prior FWBR began (i.e., what was their relationship dynamic pre-FWBR; variable = _beginning_) and offered the following response options: (a) originally strangers, began hooking up, friendship developed simultaneously as hooking up continued; (b) originally had mutual friends, began hooking up, friendship furthered simultaneously as hooking up continued; (c) originally friends, began and continued hooking up while remaining friends; and (d) had a history of a romantic relationship. Survey question 6 inquired about whether the participant or their prior FWBs partner (to their knowledge) possessed any romantic intentions at the start of their FWBR (_romint_). The responses options included (a) yes, from both of us; (b) yes, from my end; (c) yes, from my partner’s end; and (d) no. Because I broke participant responses down according to gender, these response options allowed me to see not only whether one gender was more likely to possess romantic intentions, but also if the other gender was able to pick up on or made aware of their partner’s intentions. Survey question 7 asked about the gender of the initiator of the first hookup between FWBs partners (_initialhu_) and provided the answer options (a) man, (b) woman, and (c) mutual. Using the same format and answer choices as in question 7,
question 8 asked who more intently pursued the continual hooking up between FWBs partners (contiu). Finally, the last survey question falling under the pursuit stage, question 9, inquired about whether participants explicitly defined their prior FWBR, and if so, who initiated that conversation (defined). Response options included (a) defined, initiated more so by man; (b) defined, initiated more so by woman; (c) defined, mutual initiation; (d) N/A, we did not explicitly define our FWBR.

**Maintaining a FWBR.** A total of six survey questions (questions 10 through 15, see Appendix B) were used to better understand how men compared to women feel and behave when in the maintenance stage of a FWBR. As with the questions in the pursuit stage, participant responses were broken down and analyzed by gender. The first maintenance-stage question, question 10, was a nominal ranking question that asked participants to prioritize from 1 – 5 their reasons for engaging in their prior FWBR (priority) with 1 being their highest priority and 5 being their lowest priority. The question instructs that if the option does not apply to the participant, then they should leave it out of their ranking (i.e., some participants’ rankings ranged from only 1 – 3 or 1 – 4). The five priority options included: easy/convenient, comfortable/trust in partner, sexual satisfaction, lack of commitment of a romantic relationship, and romantic intentions involved. The second survey question under the maintenance stage, number 11, was a multiple-choice question with an open-ended option. The question asked participants how they would best describe their prior FWBs partner’s role in their life at the time (partnerrole) and provided the following options: (a) sexual partner, (b) friend, (c) potential lover, and (d) other (please specify). Following data collection, only three participants in total had indicated option (d) and provided an alternate description. Thus,
for testing purposes, using the description provided I recoded these three responses to classify under one of the three options provided. For example, one participant responded, “All of the above,” so, being that ‘potential lover’ is the most all-encompassing of the three response options, I recoded this participant’s response to be ‘potential lover.’

Question 12 was an open-ended question that inquired about how often the participant hooked up with their prior FWBs partner (*parthuoft*) when in the maintenance stage. Responses ranged from daily to only a few times a year; however, the majority were based on a weekly timeframe. Hence, upon analysis, I went through each individual response and recoded it into one of three ordinal categories: (a) more often than weekly, (b) weekly, and (c) less often than weekly. Question 13 asked participants using a multiple-choice format who was more likely to initiate a hookup on any given instance (*initiate*) when in the maintenance stage of their prior FWBR. Response options included (a) man, (b) woman, and (c) we each initiated hooking up a roughly equal amount.

Question 14 was a dichotomous-styled question that investigated whether the participant hooked up with other people in addition to their prior FWBs partner during the time that they were FWBs (*otherhu*). Answer choices included (a) yes and (b) no. The last question that looked at the maintenance stage of a FWBR was question 15, which was a follow-up to question 14 and an open-ended question similar to question 12. Question 15 asked: “If you answered yes to question 14, about how often did you hookup with other people?” (*otherhuoft*). Once again, responses ranged from multiple times a week to very few times a year; however, in this case, the majority were based on a weekly – monthly timeframe. Thus, upon analysis of this question, I recoded each individual response into one of three
categories: (a) more often than or equally often with weekly, (b) less often than weekly – monthly, and (c) less often than monthly.

*FWBR outcome.* Survey questions 16 and 17 (see Appendix B) were asked with the intention of analyzing how men versus women feel and behave when in the ending stage of a FWBR. Question 16 was a multiple-choice question with an open-ended option. The question asked participants to identify which option best described the outcome of their prior FWBR (*outcome*). The options included: (a) no longer hooking up, no longer friends; (b) no longer hooking up, remained as friends, but not as close as before; (c) no longer hooking up, remained just as close of friends as before; (d) no longer hooking up, became even closer friends than before; (e) moved into a romantic relationship; and (f) other (please specify). Because so few participants indicated option (f) and provided an alternate outcome, I used each of these participant’s descriptions of their outcome to recode their response to align with one of the other five options provided. For example, one participant responded, “aren’t really friends anymore but will hookup very rarely if one of us is intoxicated and lonely,” for which I recoded as option (b) because the description indicates that the pair is less friendly than they were before. Question 17 served as a follow-up multiple-choice question to question 16 and asked participants to report who initiated the outcome that they indicated of their prior FWBR (*whooutcome*) in question 16. Response options were (a) man, (b) woman, and (c) mutual.

*Aftermath post-FWBR.* Finally, in attempt to measure men’s versus women’s overall FWBR experience, question 18 (see Appendix B) used a rating scale to ask
participants to indicate their overall experience as more negative or positive (overall) on a scale of 0 to 100, with 0 being extremely negative and 100 being extremely positive.

*Descriptive and inferential statistics.* For each of my survey questions I have compiled and outlined the variable’s descriptive statistics in my “Results” section of this paper and in Tables 1 – 8. In addition to reporting the overall response statistics for each question, I have also broken all of the participant responses down according to gender and detailed those statistics in my tables.

Being that many of my variables of interest were nominal variables, I utilized Pearson’s chi-square test of independence for the majority of my inferential analysis, with gender often serving as my independent variable. I conducted these tests by importing my data into the RStudio software and further running the appropriate codes for each variable test. I started by running global chi-square tests on each of my nominal variables. A global test means that it tests the variable at large, taking into consideration all of the variable’s possible responses. For example, when running a global chi-square test between gender and definition of a FWBR (defineFWBR), the test would consider men’s versus women’s responses for each possible definition: monogamous or polyamorous, monogamous only, and polyamorous only. Upon running these tests, however, I quickly noticed a limitation in my data. Because of my relatively small sample size (particularly my small sample of men), some of my survey questions yielded low expected count cells. Having any more than one low expected count cell can prevent the asymptotic approximation from holding. Put simply, this means that there is not enough data in the cell(s) to assume that the data follows a normal chi-square distribution, and it produces a warning message in R. To accommodate for this warning message, I altered
my R syntax to simulate the p-value, which essentially runs the chi-square test based on 2000 replicates of my data. This runs a Bayesian approximation of a chi-square posterior density, which is further used to calculate Monte Carlo p-values, or p-values based on replicated data. As seen in my “Results” section, I simulated the p-value in many of my variable’s chi-square tests with gender. Please note, when I have simulated the p-value, I use the connotation “approximate p-value of #” or “p ≈ #” to indicate that it is an approximation, and when I have not simulated the p-value, I use the connotation “p-value of #” or “p = #.”

In addition to running these global chi-square tests on my nominal variables, I also often ran more concentrated chi-square tests. These concentrated, or dummy, chi-square tests are different in that they are intended to test men’s versus women’s results to a specific response of a variable, rather than all of the variable’s response options at large. In other words, this essentially means to recode the variable so that its response options receive either a 0 or a 1, indicating either the absence or the presence of a categorical effect. Generally speaking, if the variable’s descriptive statistics showed large percent differences (roughly greater than 5% difference) between men and women for a specific response—meaning it looked like some significant trend may be taking place—I would run a dummy chi-square test for that specific response. Please see Survey Demographics and FWBR Definition of the “Results” section for the first example of this.

The only non-nominal variable that my survey contained came from the aftermath question that inquired about participant’s overall FWBR experience rating. This variable (overall) yielded interval-ratio data. Because chi-square tests do not work for interval-ratio variables, I instead chose to use the appropriate one-tailed, two-sample Z test of
Gender Within FWBRs

means for my inferential analysis. My results from this test are detailed in the Overall rating of FWBR experience portion of the “Results” section of this paper.

RESULTS

Survey Demographics and FWBR Definition

At the start of the survey—prior to the screening process—171 participants indicated their gender, sexual orientation, year at Tulane, and what they believed to be the best definition of a FWBR. The participant composition was majority women (71.9%) and heterosexuals (89.5%). Most the participants were seniors as Tulane (67.8%). The remainder of the participants were Tulane juniors (9.9%), sophomores (15.2%), and freshmen (7.0%; see Table 1).

Table 1. Sample Demographics: Gender, Sexual Orientation, Year at Tulane, and FWBR Definition (N = 171)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall %</th>
<th>Men %</th>
<th>Women %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>88.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year at Tulane</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FWBR definition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monogamous or polyamorous</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>76.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monogamous only</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyamorous only</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: due to survey criteria, only cisgender heterosexual students were allowed to participate; all students who did not meet these criteria were screened out of the survey.
Based on my response data, the majority of Tulane University undergraduates sampled believe a FWBR may be either monogamous or polyamorous (72.5%). Of the remainder, 23.4% believe FWBRs to be polyamorous and only 4.1% believe FWBRs to be monogamous. These results indicate that an overwhelming majority of Tulane undergraduates believe that FWBRs are, or have the freedom to be, nonexclusive relationships. This finding is largely supported throughout literature, with many scholars classifying FWBRs as lacking exclusivity (Bisson and Levine 2009; Jovanovic and Williams 2018; Merriam-Pigg 2013; Owen and Fincham 2011a). As with all of my variables, I reported my results according to gender in addition to reporting the overall descriptive statistics (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Figure 1. Definition of FWBR by Gender (N = 171)
When considering gender and defineFWBR inferentially, I conducted a chi-square test of independence and simulated the p-value through RStudio. I determined the \( \chi^2 \) (critical) value by using the appropriate number of degrees of freedom and the generic chi-square distribution table. Ultimately, gender and defineFWBR were found to be independent with 95% confidence (\( p \approx 0.1584 \)). This suggests that men and women similarly defined FWBRs as monogamous, polyamorous, or having the freedom to be both—monogamous and polyamorous. Although the global chi-square yielded no significant difference between men and women, the descriptive statistics showed large percentage differences between men and women for the “monogamous or polyamorous” and the “polyamorous only” response options. In order to run a more concentrated chi-square test for each of these responses, I had to dummy out the variable’s specific responses. For example, when running the dummy test for the “monogamous or polyamorous” response, I broke down the defineFWBR variable and gave the “monogamous or polyamorous” (monopoly) response option a 1 and both of the other response options a 0. Then, by running a chi-square test between gender and monopoly, I was able to see if defining a FWBR as capable of being either monogamous or polyamorous specifically was dependent upon gender. Neither dummy chi-square test between gender and “monogamous or polyamorous” nor between gender and “polyamorous only” yielded a statistically significant result—\( p \)-value = 0.06688 and 0.1294, respectively. This allowed me to conclude with 95% confidence that gender was independent of defining FWBRs. In other words, men and women similarly defined
FWBRs as exclusive relationships, non-exclusive relationships, or relationships that have the freedom to be both.

Pursing a FWBR

*Relationship dynamic pre-FWBR.* Thirty-nine percent (39.0%) of survey participants characterized their relationship dynamic with their FWBs partner as being friends prior starting to hook up. Additionally, 28.5% characterized their relationship dynamic with their FWBs partner as being strangers prior to hooking up for the first time, and another 28.5% characterized their relationship as having mutual friends prior to becoming FWBs. The small remainder of participants (3.9%) reported having a history of a romantic relationship with their partner prior to engaging in a FWBR (see Table 2).
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Pursuit Stage Variables ($N = 130$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship dynamic pre-FWBR</th>
<th>Overall %</th>
<th>Men %</th>
<th>Women %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strangers</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had mutual friends</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of a romantic relationship</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship dynamic pre-FWBR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, from both of us</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, from my end</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, from my partner’s end</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, from both of us</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, from my end</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, from my partner’s end</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiator of the first hookup</th>
<th>Overall %</th>
<th>Men %</th>
<th>Women %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiator of the continuous hookups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly defining your FWBR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man defined</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman defined</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual defining</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A; did not define</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In performing an inferential analysis with gender and relationship dynamic pre-FWBR (beginning), I conducted a chi-square test of independence and simulated the p-value. This test yielded a p-value of approximately 0.5627 and a $\chi^2$(obtained) value of 2.336. Because this approximate p-value was greater than the $\alpha$ value of 0.05 and because the $\chi^2$(obtained) value was less than $\chi^2$(critical) of 7.815—meaning $\chi^2$(obtained) did not fall within the critical region—the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. I thus concluded that gender and relationship dynamic pre-FWBR were independent with 95% confidence. In other words, men and women report similar relationship dynamics with their partner pre-FWBR.
I also ran a chi-square test investigating relationship dynamic pre-FWBR as the independent variable and the gender of the initiator of the first hookup (initialhu) as the dependent variable (see Table 3). This test yielded an approximate p-value of 0.5477 and a \( \chi^2 \) (obtained) value of 4.9424. Because this approximate p-value was greater than the \( \alpha \) value of 0.05 and because this \( \chi^2 \) (obtained) value was less than the \( \chi^2 \) (critical) value of 12.592, the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. I further concluded that a pair’s relationship dynamic pre-FWBR was independent of whether the man or the woman initiated the first hookup with 95% confidence. Put another way, whether the pair of individuals were previously strangers, had mutual friends, were friends, or had a history of a romantic relationship did not predict whether the man or the woman initiated the first hookup encounter to start the FWBR.

| Initiator of the first hookup between FWBs | Relationship dynamic pre-FWBR |  \
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strangers %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to running the global chi-square test between relationship dynamic pre-FWBR and initiator of the first hookup, I also ran two dummy chi-square tests with the response options “originally strangers…” and “originally friends….” because both options displayed a greater than five percent difference between men and women. First,
the test between “originally strangers…” and initialhu yielded a p-value of 0.4408 and a \( \chi^2 \) (obtained) value of 1.6382. Because \( p > 0.05 \) and \( \chi^2 \) (obtained) < \( \chi^2 \) (critical) of 5.991, the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. I concluded that the pre-FWBs relationship dynamic “originally strangers…” was independent of whether the man or the woman initiated the first hookup between partners with 95% confidence. Second, the test between “originally friends…” and initialhu yielded a p-value of 0.1057 and a \( \chi^2 \) (obtained) value of 4.495. Again, because \( p > 0.05 \) and \( \chi^2 \) (obtained) < \( \chi^2 \) (critical) of 5.991, the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. I concluded that the pre-FWBs relationship dynamic “originally friends…” was independent of whether the man or the women initiated the first hookup between partners with 95% confidence.

**Romantic intentions within a FWBR.** Roughly half of both men (55.0%) and women (55.6%) in the survey responded “no,” that neither they nor their partner possessed any romantic intentions at the start of their prior FWBR. However, interestingly, 22.2% of women reported having romantic intentions of their own, compared to only 5.0% of men. Additionally, while only 8.9% of women reported their male partner having romantic intentions, 32.5% of men reported their female partner having romantic intentions (see Table 2 and Figure 2). In other words, women were more likely to report having their own romantic intentions within a FWBR, and men were more likely to report their female partner having romantic intentions within a FWBR.
In conducting a global chi-square test of independence and simulating the p-value between gender and possessing romantic intentions (romint), I received an approximate p-value of 0.001999. Because this approximate p-value was less than the α value of 0.01 and because $\chi^2$(obtained) of 15.229 was greater than $\chi^2$(critical) of 7.815—meaning $\chi^2$(obtained) fell within the critical region—the difference was statistically significant, and I rejected the null hypothesis. I further concluded that gender and having romantic intentions at the start of a FWBR were dependent with 99% confidence. In other words, men and women did not similarly report the presence of romantic intentions.

Moreover, being that the percent differences between men and women are greater than 5% for both the “yes, from my end” and the “yes, from my partner’s end” response options, I conducted two dummy chi-square tests. I first conducted a dummy test between
gender and the “yes, from my end” (myend) answer choice. This test yielded a statistically significant result at 95% confidence (p = 0.01565) and thus allowed us to conclude that gender and myend are dependent. In other words, because this was a concentrated chi-square test with all other answer choices dummied out, this result allowed us to conclude that women were significantly more likely than men to report that they had intentions of transitioning into a romantic relationship with their FWBs partner.

Next, I conducted a dummy test between gender and the “yes, from my partner’s end” (partend) answer choice. This test yielded a statistically significant result at 99.9% confidence (p = 0.0007352; p < 0.001) and allowed us to conclude that gender and partend were dependent. Put another way, because this was a concentrated chi-square test with all other answer choices dummied out, this significant result allowed us to conclude that men were significantly more likely than women to report that their FWBs partner had intentions of transitioning into a romantic relationship.

Initiating the first hookup between FWBs. Looking at the overall statistics, 34.6% of my survey participants reported that the man initiated the first hookup between FWBs, whereas only 14.6% of participants reported that the woman initiated the first hookup. These results are consistent with the traditional sexual script—which designates heterosexual men as the initiators and heterosexual women as the restrictors of sexual activity—and much of the literature finding that men initiate sex relatively more frequently than women (O’Sullivan and Byers 1992; Dworkin and O’Sullivan 2005; Impett and Peplau 2003). Roughly half of both men (50.0%) and women (51.1%) in my survey reported that the initiation of the first hookup between FWBs partners was mutual. Interestingly, while 40.0% of women reported that the man initiated the first hookup,
only 22.5% of men reported that they had initiated the first hookup. In addition, while 27.5% of men reported that the woman initiated the first hookup, only 8.9% of women reported that they had initiated the first hookup (see Table 2 and Figure 3).

Figure 3. Initiator of First Hookup Between FWBs by Gender (N = 130)

![Initiator of First Hookup Between FWBs by Gender](image)

Through conducting a global chi-square test between participant gender and the reported gender of the initiator of the first hookup between FWBs (initialhu), I received a p-value of 0.011. Because p < 0.05 and $\chi^2$(obtained) of 9.0196 was greater than $\chi^2$(critical) of 5.991, the difference was statistically significant, and I rejected the null hypothesis. I concluded that participant gender and the reported gender of the initiator of the first hookup between FWBs were dependent with 95% confidence. Put simply, men and women did not similarly report whether the first hookup between FWBs was initiated by the man, the woman, or was mutually initiated. This may seem rather contradictory at
first; however, here we must consider the relationships between how we behave versus how we think that we behave, and how we behave versus how we report that we behave. I will discuss this more in the “Discussion” section of this paper.

Moving forward, because the percent differences between men and women were greater than 5% for both the “man” and “woman” answer choices, I conducted two dummy chi-square tests. First, I conducted a dummy test between gender and reporting the “man” as the initiator of the first hookup between FWBs (inhman). This test yielded a p-value of 0.0529 (i.e., p > 0.05). Thus, we failed to reject our null hypothesis and concluded that gender and inhman were independent with 95% confidence. Next, I conducted a dummy test between gender and reporting the “woman” as the initiator of the first hookup between FWBs (inhwoman). This test yielded a p-value of 0.005564. Therefore, this test was statistically significant, meaning I could reject the null hypothesis and conclude that gender and reporting the woman as the initiator of the first hookup between FWBs were dependent with 99% confidence (p < 0.01). In other words, this dummy chi-square test allowed me to conclude that men were significantly more likely than women to report that the woman initiated the first hookup between FWBs.

Pursuing the continual hooking up between FWBs. The majority of both men (70.0%) and women (53.3%) reported that the continuous hooking up of FWBs partners was mutually pursued. Of the remaining men, 17.5% reported that the man pursued the continuous hooking up between FWBs and 12.5% reported that the woman pursued the continuous hooking up. Of the remaining women, half (23.3%) reported that the man pursued the continuous hooking up, while the other half (23.3%) reported that the woman pursued the continuous hooking up (see Table 2).
Upon conducting a global chi-square test between gender and the reported gender of the pursuer of the continuous hooking up (conthu), I received a p-value of 0.1847. Because p > 0.05, the test was not statistically significant, meaning we failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that gender and conthu were independent with 95% confidence. I then conducted two dummy chi-square tests, (1) between gender and reporting that the continuous hooking up was mutually pursued, and (2) between gender and reporting that the woman was the pursuer of the continuous hooking up. The tests yielded the p-values of 0.07511 and 0.1541, respectively. Hence, both dummy chi-square tests were not statistically significant. I thus concluded with 95% confidence that (1) gender and reporting that the continuous hooking up was mutually pursued were independent and that, (2) gender and reporting that the woman was the pursuer of the continuous hooking up were independent. In other words, men and women similarly reported who pursued the continuous hooking up between FWBs.

Defining a FWBR. Approximately two thirds of both men (65.0%) and women (64.4%) reported that they did not explicitly define their FWBR. Of the remaining men and women, 22.5% of men and 14.4% of women reported that they defined their FWBR through mutual initiation. Only 5.0% of men and 10.0% of women reported that the man had initiated defining their FWBR. Similarly, only 7.5% of men and 11.1% of women reported that the woman had initiated defining their FWBR (see Table 2).

By performing a global chi-square test with gender as the independent variable and explicitly defining their FWBR (defined) as the dependent variable, I received an approximate p-value of 0.5017 and a $\chi^2$(obtained) value of 2.2425. Because the approximate p-value was greater than the $\alpha$ value of 0.05 and because this $\chi^2$(obtained)
value was less than $\chi^2$ (critical) of 7.815, the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. I concluded that gender and defined were independent with 95% confidence, meaning men and women were similarly likely to report whether they explicitly defined their FWBR and in what context. Because all the answer choices for this survey question had relatively small percent differences between men and women, I did not conduct any dummy chi-square tests for this variable.

**Maintaining a FWBR**

*Reasons for engagement in a FWBR.* Fascinatingly, the plurality of women (35.1%) in the survey—and to a lesser extent, men (26.7%)—ranked “sexual satisfaction” as being their priority reason for engaging in a FWBR. In contrast, the plurality of men in the survey ranked their priority reason for engaging in a FWBR as being either “comfortable/trust in partner” (30.0%) or “easy/convenient” (30.0%). Only 26.0% and 22.1% of women ranked “comfortable/trust in partner” and “easy/convenient” as their priority reasons for engaging in a FWBR, respectively (see Table 4 and Figure 4).
Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the Maintenance Stage Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority reason for FWBR engagement (N = 107)</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy/convenient</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable/trust</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual satisfaction</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of commitment</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic interests involved</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner description (N = 112)</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual partner</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>21.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential lover</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of partner hookups (N = 105)</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Weekly</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; Weekly</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most likely to initiate a given hookup (N = 105)</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both initiated an equal amount</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hookup with others (N = 105)</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of hookups with others (N = 56)</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥ Weekly</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; Weekly monthly</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; Monthly</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In conducting a global chi-square test between gender and priority reason for engaging in a FWBR (priority), I received an approximate p-value of 0.8781. Because the approximate p-value was greater than the $\alpha$ value of 0.05 and because $\chi^2$(obtained) of 1.3396 was less than $\chi^2$(critical) of 9.488, the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. I concluded that gender and priority reason for engaging in a FWBR were independent with 95% confidence. Put simply, men and women similarly ranked their priority reasons for engaging in a FWBR.

Although the global chi-square test turned out to have statistically insignificant results, the percent differences between men and women were greater than 5% for both “sexual satisfaction” and “easy/convenient.” Hence, I conducted two dummy chi-square tests, (1) between gender and the “sexual satisfaction” priority and (2) between gender
and the “easy/convenient” priority. The tests yielded the p-values of 0.4056 and 0.3908, respectively, indicating that both dummy tests were non-statistically significant (p > 0.05). With 95% confidence I concluded that (1) gender and ranking sexual satisfaction as a priority reason for engaging in a FWBR were independent and that, (2) gender and ranking easiness/convenience as a priority reason for engaging in a FWBR were independent. In other words, men and women similarly ranked sexual satisfaction and easiness/convenience as priority reasons for engaging in a FWBR.

FWBs partner’s role. The majority of men (51.5%), and only 21.5% of women, reported “sexual partner” as being the best term to describe their FWBs partner’s role in their life during the time of their relationship. Conversely, the majority of women (54.4%), and only 39.4% of men, reported “friend” as being the best term to describe their FWBs partner. Lastly, 24.1% of women and only 9.1% of men reported “potential lover” as being the best term to describe their FWBs partner (see Table 4 and Figure 5).
Figure 5. Description of Partner’s Role by Gender \((N = 112)\)

Through conducting a global chi-square test between gender and description of FWBs partner’s role in the participant’s life \((\text{partnerrole})\), I received a p-value of 0.004983. Because \(p < 0.01\) and because \(\chi^2\)(obtained) of 10.604 was greater than \(\chi^2\)(critical) of 5.991, the difference was statistically significant, and I rejected the null hypothesis. I could thus conclude that gender and description of FWBs partner’s role in the participant’s life were dependent with 99% confidence. Put another way, men and women did not similarly describe their FWBs partner’s role.

Being that all three of the response choices for the \(\text{partnerrole}\) variable had a greater than five percent difference between men and women, I conducted three dummy chi-square tests on this variable. The first test, between gender and the “sexual partner” answer choice, yielded a p-value of 0.001647 and a \(\chi^2\)(obtained) value of 9.9064.
Because \( p < 0.01 \) and \( \chi^2(\text{obtained}) > \chi^2(\text{critical}) \) of 3.841, the difference was statistically significant, and I rejected the null hypothesis. I concluded that gender and describing your FWBs partner as your “sexual partner” were dependent with 99% confidence. In other words, because this was a concentrated chi-square test with all other answer choices dummied out, this result allowed us to conclude that men were significantly more likely than women to describe their FWBs partner as their “sexual partner” when choosing between “sexual partner,” “friend,” and “potential lover.” The second dummy test that I conducted for the partnerrole variable was between gender and the “friend” answer choice. This test yielded a p-value of 0.1468. The third and final dummy test that I ran for this variable was between gender and the “potential lover” answer choice. This test yielded a p-value of 0.06927. Because these two p-values were greater than the \( \alpha \) level of 0.05, both of these tests produced non-statistically significant differences. Thus, I concluded that both gender and describing your FWBs partner as your “friend,” and gender and describing your FWBs partner as a “potential lover,” were independent with 95% confidence. Put simply, men and women were similarly likely to one another to describe their FWBs partner as their “friend” and as their “potential lover.”

*Frequency of hookups with FWBs partner.* As discussed in the Measures section of this paper, I recoded the open-ended responses regarding participant frequency of hooking up with their FWBs partner into three ordinal categories: (a) more often than weekly, (b) weekly, and (c) less often than weekly. The majority of both men (51.7%) and women (53.3%) reported hooking up with their FWBs partner more often than weekly. In addition, 31% of men and 24% of women reported hooking up with their
Gender Within FWBRs

FWBs partner on a weekly-basis, and 17.2% of men and 22.7% of women reported hooking up with their FWBs partner less often than weekly (see Table 4).

Inferentially, I conducted a chi-square test between gender and frequency of hookups with FWBs partner, and I received a p-value of 0.7047 and a $\chi^2$(obtained) value of 0.69985. With a p-value > 0.05 and a $\chi^2$(obtained) value less than a $\chi^2$(critical) value of 5.991, the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. I further concluded that gender and reported frequency of hookups with a FWBs partner were independent with 95% confidence. In other words, men and women reported similar frequencies of hooking up with their FWBs partner. Finally, because all the answer choices for this survey question had relatively small percent differences between men and women, I did not conduct any dummy chi-square tests for this variable.

*Initiator of any given hookup.* When asked “Who was more likely to initiate a hookup on any given instance?” the majority of both men (72.4%) and women (59.2%) both responded that they “each initiated hooking up a roughly equal amount.” Another 17.2% of men and 31.6% of women reported that the man was more likely to initiate a given hookup. Finally, 10.3% of men and just 9.2% of women reported that the woman was more likely to initiate a given hookup (see Table 4).

Upon inferential analysis, I conducted a chi-square test of independence between participant gender and the reported gender of the likely initiator of any given hookup between FWBs. This test yielded an approximate p-value of 0.3953. Because the approximate p-value was greater than the $\alpha$ value of 0.05 and because the $\chi^2$(obtained) value of 2.1728 was less than $\chi^2$(critical) of 5.991, the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. I concluded that participant gender
and the reported gender of the likely initiator of any given hookup between FWBs were independent with 95% confidence. Put another way, men and women similarly reported whether a given hookup was most likely to be initiated by the man, the woman, or that both genders initiated hooking up roughly an equal amount. I also conducted two dummy chi-square tests, (1) between gender and reporting that the man was more likely to initiate a given hookup, and (2) between gender and reporting that both partners initiated hooking up roughly an equal amount. These two tests yielded the p-values of 0.1418 and 0.2106, respectively. Therefore, both dummy chi-square tests were found to be non-statistically significant (p > 0.05). Hence, I concluded with 95% confidence that (1) gender and reporting that the man was more likely to initiate a given hookup were independent, and that (2) gender and reporting that both partners initiated hooking up roughly an equal amount were independent. In other words, men and women similarly reported that the man was more likely to initiate a given hookup and that both genders initiated hooking up roughly an equal amount.

Hooking up with others. Roughly two thirds of both men (65.5%) and women (60.5%) reported that, while in their FWBR, they hooked up with other people in addition to hooking up with their FWBs partner. The remaining 34.5% of men and 39.5% of women reported that they did not hookup with others while in their FWBR (see Table 4).

In conducting a chi-square analysis between gender and whether a participant hooked up with other people while also hooking up with their FWBs partner (otherhu), I received a p-value of 0.6377. Because p > 0.05, there was no statistically significant difference between gender and otherhu. I further concluded that gender and likelihood that a participant hooked up with other people in addition to their FWBs partner were
independent with 95% confidence. Put simply, men and women were similarly likely to report hooking up with other people in addition to hooking up with their FWBs partner. Lastly, because both of the answer choices for the otherhu variable had relatively small percent differences between men and women, I did not conduct any dummy chi-square tests for this variable.

*Frequency of hookups with others.* As discussed in the *Measures* section of this paper, if a participant responded “Yes” to hooking up with other people in addition to their FWBs partner, they were then asked to answer an open-ended question about the frequency of their hookups with others. Following data collection, I recoded these responses into three ordinal categories: (a) weekly or more often, (b) less often than weekly – monthly, and (c) less often than monthly. The plurality of men (44.4%), and 42.1% of women, reported hooking up with someone other than their FWBs partner less often than monthly. The plurality of women (44.7%), and 38.9% of men, reported hooking up with someone other than their FWBs partner less often than weekly to monthly (see Table 4).

Applying inferential analysis, the global chi-square test between gender and frequency of hooking up with someone other than your FWBs partner yields an approximate p-value of 1.0 and a $\chi^2$(obtained) value of 0.21832. Because $p > 0.05$ and $\chi^2$(obtained) < $\chi^2$(critical) of 5.991, the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. I concluded that gender and the frequency of hooking up with someone other than your FWBs partner were independent with 95% confidence. In other words, men and women reported similar frequencies of hooking up with individuals other than their FWBs partner. I did not conduct any dummy chi-square tests
for this variable because all the answer choices had relatively small percent differences between men and women.

**FWBR Outcome**

*Relationship dynamic post-FWBR.* The plurality of both men (37.9%) and women (41.9%) in the survey characterized their post-FWBs relationship dynamic (variable = outcome) as “no longer hooking up; remained as friends, but not as close as before.” Following closely behind, 24.1% of men and 28.4% of women characterized their post-FWBs relationship outcome as “no longer hooking up; no longer friends.” Another 20.7% of men and 16.2% of women characterized their post-FWBs outcome as “no longer hooking up; remained just as close of friends as before.” The remaining men and women were split, with 13.8% of men and 6.8% of women reporting that they had “moved into a romantic relationship,” and only 3.5% of men and 6.8% of women reporting that they were “no longer hooking up; became even closer friends than before” (see Table 5 and Figure 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship dynamic post-FWBR</strong></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No longer friends</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, less close</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, same closeness</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, closer</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic relationship</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of the Outcome Stage Variables (N = 103)
Upon inferential analysis, I conducted a chi-square test between participant gender and outcome, which yielded an approximate p-value of 0.7591 and a $\chi^2$(obtained) value of 2.0286. Because this approximate p-value was greater than the $\alpha$ level of 0.05 and because this $\chi^2$(obtained) value was less than the $\chi^2$(critical) value of 9.488, the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. I concluded that gender and relationship outcome post-FWBR were independent with 95% confidence. Put another way, men and women reported similar post-FWBs relationship dynamics with their partners.

In attempt to study the relationship between the type of FWBR and the resulting post-FWBR outcome, I also conducted a global chi-square test between partnerrole and outcome (see Table 6 and Figure 7). This test yielded an approximate p-value of
0.003498 and a $\chi^2$(obtained) value of 23.391. Because $p < 0.01$ and $\chi^2$(obtained) > $\chi^2$(critical) of 15.507, the difference was statistically significant, and I rejected the null hypothesis. I concluded that participants’ descriptions of their partner’s role during their FWBR and post-FWBR outcome were dependent with 99% confidence. In other words, certain post-FWBR outcomes were more common given certain FWBs partner descriptions.

Table 6. FWBs Partner Description vs Post-FWBR Outcome ($N = 103$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Partner’s Role</th>
<th>Friend %</th>
<th>Sexual partner %</th>
<th>Potential lover %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No longer friends</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, less close</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, same closeness</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, closer</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic relationship</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7. FWBs Partner Description vs Post-FWBR Outcome ($N = 103$)
I then conducted dummy chi-square tests between *partnerrole* and each of the five possible post-FWBR outcomes. Of these five dummy tests, three exhibited statistically significant differences (*p* < 0.05). First, the statistical significance of the test between *partnerrole* and “friends, less close” (*p* = 0.02004) allowed us to conclude with 95% confidence that when a FWBs partner’s role was described as “sexual partner,” the relationship was significantly more likely to follow the post-FWBR outcome “friends, less close.” Second, the statistical significance of the test between *partnerrole* and “friends, same closeness” (*p* ~ 0.02149) allowed us to conclude with 95% confidence that when a FWBs partner’s role was described as “friend,” the relationship was significantly more likely to follow the post-FWBR outcome “friends, same closeness.” Finally, the statistical significance of the test between *partnerrole* and the outcome “moved into a romantic relationship” (*p* ~ 0.01249) allowed us to conclude with 95% confidence that when a FWBs partner’s role was described as “potential lover,” the relationship was significantly more likely (than relationships in which a FWBs partner’s role is described as “sexual partner” or “friend”) to follow the post-FWBR outcome “moved into a romantic relationship.”

*Initiator of the FWBR outcome.* In addition to looking at the descriptive statistics of the *outcome* variable according to *gender* and *partnerrole*, I also thought it may be interesting to look at the *outcome* variable according to the reported gender of the individual who initiated the respective outcome (*whooutcome*). No matter who initiated the outcome—the man, the woman, or a mutual initiation—the most common outcome for FWBs partners after they have stopped hooking up was that they remained friends,
however not as close of friends as before (see Table 7 and Figure 8). As I have just discussed, this finding also appeared to be true across gender (see Figure 6). The survey data also suggests that again, no matter who initiated the outcome, the second most common outcome for FWBs partners after they ceased to hookup was that they were no longer friends (see Table 7 and Figure 8).

Table 7. Post-FWBR Outcome vs Initiator of Respective Outcome (N = 103)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship dynamic post-FWBR</th>
<th>Initiator of the post-FWBR outcome</th>
<th>Man %</th>
<th>Woman %</th>
<th>Mutual %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No longer friends</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, less close</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, same closeness</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, closer</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic relationship</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8. Post-FWBR Outcome vs Initiator of Respective Outcome (N = 103)
Through conducting a global chi-square test of independence with *whooutcome* as my independent variable and *outcome* as my dependent variable, I received an approximate p-value of 0.3473 and a $\chi^2$(obtained) value of 9.0631. With a p-value > 0.05 and a $\chi^2$(obtained) value greater than $\chi^2$(critical) of 15.507, the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. I could then conclude that the reported gender of the initiator of the post-FWBR outcome and relationship outcome itself were independent with 95% confidence. Put simply, the gender of the individual who ended the FWBR did not predict the pair’s relationship dynamic post-FWBs.

In addition to running the global chi-square test between *whooutcome* and *outcome*, I also chose to run three dummy chi-square tests because the percent differences between the initiator of the outcome were greater than 5% for three specific outcome responses. First, I conducted a dummy test between *whooutcome* and the outcome “friends, less close.” This test yielded a p-value of 0.4172. Because p > 0.05, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that *whooutcome* and reporting the outcome “friends, less close” were independent with 95% confidence. In other words, whether the man or the woman ended the FWBR did not predict the “friends, less close” outcome.

Second, I conducted a dummy test between *whooutcome* and the outcome “friends, same closeness,” and received the approximate p-value of 0.07746 and a $\chi^2$(obtained) value of 5.2681. With an approximated p-value > 0.05 and a $\chi^2$(obtained) value less than the $\chi^2$(critical) value of 5.991, the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. I thus concluded with 95% confidence that *whooutcome* and reporting the outcome “friends, same closeness” were independent. Put another way,
whether the man or the woman ended the FWBR did not predict the “friends, same closeness” outcome. Third and finally, I conducted a dummy chi-square test between whooutcome and the outcome “moved into a romantic relationship.” This test yielded an approximate p-value of 0.2129 and a $\chi^2$ (obtained) value of 3.3344. Because this approximated p-value was greater than the $\alpha$ level of 0.05, and because this $\chi^2$ (obtained) value was less than the $\chi^2$ (critical) value of 5.991, the difference was not statistically significant, and I failed to reject the null hypothesis. Hence, I concluded that whooutcome and reporting the outcome “moved into a romantic relationship” were independent with 95% confidence. Put simply, whether the man or the woman ended the FWBR did not predict the “moved into a romantic relationship” outcome.

Aftermath Post-FWBR

Overall rating of FWBR experience. The average overall FWBR experience rating was $66.0 \pm 23.9$. For men, the average rating was $73.7 \pm 20.6$, and for women, the average rating was $62.8 \pm 24.5$. The minimum – maximum ratings for men and women were $20 – 100$ and $0 – 100$, respectively (see Table 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall FWBR experience rating</th>
<th>Overall $\bar{x}$ (s)</th>
<th>Men $\bar{x}$ (s)</th>
<th>Women $\bar{x}$ (s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall FWBR experience rating</td>
<td>$66.0 \pm 23.9$</td>
<td>$73.7 \pm 20.6$</td>
<td>$62.8 \pm 24.5$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0 – 100]*</td>
<td>[20 – 100]*</td>
<td>[0 – 100]*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ratings scored from 0 to 100 with 100 being the highest rating. *Minimum to maximum values shown in brackets.
Being that this (overall) rating variable is an interval-ratio variable and \( N \) is greater than 100, I chose to use a one-tailed, two-sample Z test of means for my inferential analysis. A one-tailed test was used because prior literature has suggested that men tend to react more positively to casual sex relationships than women (e.g., Owen and Fincham 2011a; Gusarova et al. 2012), leading me to hypothesize: \( \mu_{\text{men}} > \mu_{\text{women}} \). This test yielded a \( Z(\text{obtained}) \) value of 2.241168182. Because this \( Z(\text{obtained}) \) value was greater than the \( Z(\text{critical}) \) value of 1.65—meaning \( Z(\text{obtained}) \) fell within the critical region—the difference was statistically significant, and I could reject the null hypothesis. I then concluded that men were significantly more likely than women to feel generally positive about their FWB experience with 95% confidence. In other words, although both genders on average rated their experience more positively than negatively, relative to women, men were still significantly more likely to feel positive about their experience.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to test the ways in which men and women may feel and/or behave similarly and differently when engaging in a FWBR. I hypothesized that, when engaging in a FWBR, (H\(_1\)) men and women would externally behave in similar, benefits-directed manners; however, (H\(_2\)) women would internally feel more emotionally invested in the relationship than men. I noted that this emotional investment did not necessarily have to be a romantic investment. In large part, these hypotheses were supported by my data. In conducting a survey that inquired about both feelings and behaviors within a FWBR, I was able to classify and analyze each of my survey questions, and their respective results, as an indicator of either an internal feeling or an
external behavior. Hence, in this discussion, I will analyze the relevant behavior-based questions in respect to Hypothesis 1, and following, I will analyze the relevant feeling-based questions in respect to Hypothesis 2.

First, however, I believe it is paramount to provide a brief overview of some of the main sociological terms that I will be using in my analysis of gender in FWBRs. To begin, I will start with the concept of social scripts. Wiederman (2005) claims that societal scripts “provide individual actors with instruction as to the appropriate times, places, sequences, and so forth with regard to sexual activity” (p. 496). Moreover, our male and female societal scripts have formed into what sociologist refer to as hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity (Schippers 2007). In short, hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity refer to men and women performing their stereotypical gender roles, such that their behaviors reinforce the gendered hierarchy, in which men are dominant and women are passive (Schippers 2007). Building on this, the hegemonic sexual scripts stipulate how men and women are expected to act when approaching a sexual encounter. The masculine traditional sexual scripts define heterosexual men as initiators of sexual activity, desirers of the object (women), pursuers of greater physical intimacy, and responsible for impressing women with their sexual skill set (Wiederman 2005; Murray 2018). In comparison, the feminine sexual scripts designate heterosexual women as gatekeepers of sexual activity, objects of desire to men, passive within sexual encounters, and more likely to attach deeper meanings to on-going sexual relationships and thus more susceptible to getting hurt (Weiderman 2005).

*External Behaviors Within a FWBR*
To reiterate, Hypothesis 1 claimed that men and women would follow similar behavioral patterns when engaging in a FWBR. Regardless of whether internal, emotional feelings were present, both genders would practice behaviors that were more strongly motivated by the physical/sexual aspect of a FWBR.

**Relationship dynamic pre-FWBR vs initiator of the first hookup.** The first test that I would like to discuss looked at whether the reported gender of the initiator of the first hookup between FWBs was dependent upon the pair’s relationship dynamic pre-FWBR. Being that this test and its respective dummy tests (see *Relationship Dynamic pre-FWBR* in the “Results” section) bear statistical insignificance (*p* > 0.05), I concluded that, regardless of relationship dynamic pre-FWBR, men and women were similarly likely to initiate the first hookup with their FWBs partner. While current literature has yet to study the reported gender of the FWBs hookup-initiator in relation to the pair’s prior relationship dynamic, Lehmiller et al. (2011) and Cohen and Shotland (1996) performed studies on the ways in which men and women approach FWBRs and the timeline of sexual expectations within a relationship, respectively. Summarizing the findings from these two studies, men were more likely than women to initiate a FWBR as motivated by sex, and to hold some degree of sexual expectations in relationships regardless of emotional involvement. Likewise, women were more likely than men to initiate a FWBR as motivated by an emotional connection, and less likely than men to hold some degree of sexual expectations in relationships lacking an emotional involvement. Given the conclusions drawn from Lehmiller et al. and Cohen and Shotland, one may predict that men would be more likely than women to initiate the first hookup between FWBs when the pair’s relationship dynamic pre-FWBR was less established, such as being strangers.
On the other hand, women may be more likely to initiate the first hookup between FWBs when the pair’s relationship dynamic pre-FWBR is more emotionally involved, such as being friends or having a history of a romantic relationship. However, given that both my global and dummy chi-square tests between relationship dynamic pre-FWBR and the reported gender of the initiator of the first hookup were non-statistically significant, this was indeed not the case for my sample. In addition, the majority of both men (50.0%) and women (51.1%) in my sample reported that their first hookup with their FWBs partner was mutually initiated (see Table 2). Ultimately, these findings suggest that the participants in my sample may have utilized FWBRs as outlets to stray away from and thereby challenge the traditional sexual scripts for men and women. In conclusion, this finding supported my first hypothesis, as men and women were found to behave similarly when engaging in a FWBR with respect to likelihood of having initiated the first hookup, regardless of relationship dynamic pre-FWBR.

*Gender vs initiator of first hookup between FWBs.* Next, I analyze my finding that participant gender and the reported gender of the initiator of the first hookup between FWBs were dependent with 95% confidence. More specifically, men were significantly more likely than women to report that the woman initiated the first hookup between FWBs. In addition to this, though not statistically significant, more women (40.0%), compared to only 22.5% of men, reported that the man initiated the first hookup between FWBs. One possible explanation for these seemingly inconsistent findings could be that men and women may hold differing definitions of the exact point of ‘initiation’ between partners during an interaction. For example, a man may define a woman texting him to come “hang out” late at night as the initiation, whereas a woman may define a man going
in for the initial kiss as the initiation. In further support of this, O’Sullivan and Byers (1992) found that both men and women recalled their partner as performing more direct verbal initiations than they themselves. Here, we must consider the potential discrepancies between how we behave and how we think that we behave, and how we behave versus how we report that we behave. Moreover, were the men and women in O’Sullivan and Byers’ study accurately recalling and/or accurately reporting their participation in direct verbal initiations? Or could they have experienced some personal biases in their reporting? Next, Perper and Weis (1987) found that women often engaged in flirty preinitiation behaviors in attempt to get a feel for whether their partner was interested. It is reasonable to assume that these womanly preinitiation behaviors could easily be mistaken for and reported as the point of ‘initiation’ by men. In sum, men and women holding differing definitions of the exact point of sexual ‘initiation’ during an interaction may ultimately help to explain my seemingly incongruous results regarding which gender initiated the first hookup.

An alternate explanation for these findings also considers the discrepancies between how we behave, how we think we behave, and how we report that we behave. Moreover, this finding calls into question the traditional sexual script and many scholars’ findings, which have suggested that men initiate sexual activity more frequently than women in casual heterosexual dating (O’Sullivan and Byers 1992; Dworkin and O’Sullivan 2005; Impett and Peplau 2003). Interestingly, however, O’Sullivan and Byers attempted to explain their traditional finding with the idea that “women may be reluctant to admit to deviating from the standards designated by the traditional sexual script” (1992:444). Applying this theory here, this reluctance of women to admit their role in
initiation may explain why men were significantly more likely than women to report that the woman initiated the first hookup between FWBs. Having taken this into consideration—and given that roughly half of both men and women reported a mutual initiation of the first hookup between FWBs—it is reasonable to conclude that men and women behave in similar ways with respect to who initiated the first hookup between FWBs (supporting Hypothesis 1).

*Gender vs continuous pursuer and likely initiator.* Other related survey results suggested that (1) participant gender and the reported gender of the pursuer of the continuous hooking up between FWBs were independent with 95% confidence, and that (2) participant gender and the reported gender of the likely initiator of any given hookup between FWBs were independent with 95% confidence. In other words, men and women similarly reported not only the gender of the pursuer of the continuous hooking up, but also the gender of the likely initiator of any given hookup. Upon initial analysis, it was intriguing that men were significantly more likely than women to report that the woman initiated the first hookup between FWBs partners, but then there was no significant difference in men’s and women’s reporting of the pursuer of the continuous hooking up and the likely initiator of any given hookup. One possible explanation for this disparity could have to do with women’s beliefs about when it is appropriate for them to express their sexual agency. As touched upon in my literature review, Bogle (2008) proposed that FWBRs provide women with a “better” option for expressing their sexual agency while eschewing hooking up with “too many” people and risking negative labels. This may mean that, when their FWBR has already begun (i.e., the pair has hooked up before), women may feel less likely to face the sexual double standard and thus, more
comfortable not only in initiating sexual activity, but also in reporting their initiation. Ultimately, this unfair reality that is the sexual double standard could provide justification for why women may have understated their participation in initiating the first hookup between partners; however, accurately reported their participation in later initiations.

The descriptive statistics of these two tests told us that just under two thirds of my total sample of men and women reported that (1) the continuous hooking up between FWBs was mutually pursued (58.5%, see Table 2), and that (2) both partners initiated hooking up roughly an equal amount (62.9%, see Table 4). These descriptive statistics alone led me to believe that men and women externally behave in similar manners when engaging in a FWBR (supporting Hypothesis 1). Of the total remaining survey participants, 21.5% and 27.6% reported that the man more so pursued the continuous hooking up and was more likely to initiate a hookup on any given instance, respectively. In the context of outside literature, these results appear to challenge the respective results from nearly a generation ago. In 2003, Impett and Peplau summarized the findings of the time, which indicated that, regardless of relationship stage (e.g., new, on-going dating, or marital relationship) men initiated sexual activity significantly more frequently than women. Their summary suggested that, at least with respect to frequency of sexual initiation, men and women were continuing to act in compliance with the traditional sexual script. O’Sullivan and Byers, however, posited an opposing point in this discussion, deducing from their findings that “women may no longer serve as the restrictors of sexual activity as women respond positively to initiations as frequently as men do” (1992:435). In other words, the women from their study appeared to challenge
the traditional sexual script. Further along the timeline, Dworkin and O’Sullivan (2005) deduced that, while a majority of the college-aged men (56.3%) in their sample reported that they were currently practicing male-dominated patterns of sexual initiation, a whopping 72.2% of those men desired more egalitarian patterns of sexual initiation so as to perceive themselves as the objects of desire. Because perceiving oneself as the object of desire has long been associated with femininity, and not masculinity (Connell 1987; Wiederman 2005), these men provide yet another example of individuals challenging the traditional sexual script. Reflecting on this timeline, one can clearly see the progress that had taken place from complying with the traditional sexual script, to working to challenging it, and ultimately, in my results, actually opposing it. Further, I reason that in the context of modern sexual relationships, such as FWBRs, constructs of contemporary masculinity and contemporary femininity have broadened so greatly, so as to deem many sexual behaviors, including initiating sexual activity and responding to that initiation, as following relatively more egalitarian patterns of engagement (supporting Hypothesis 1).

Gender vs frequency of hookups with FWBs partner and others. Another behavioral area of study that my research investigated was how often participants hooked up with their FWBs partner, and if they hooked up with other people in addition to their partner, how often did those hookups take place. Lehmiller et al. (2011) compiled that men typically express more interest in casual sex with larger numbers of sexual partners (Schmitt et al. 2003), have relatively more social freedom to pursue their sexual interests (Oliver and Hyde 1993), and hence in reality, tend to have more sexual partners than women do (Laumann et al. 1994). With respect to women’s frequency of hookups with a FWBs partner, Lehmiller et al. suggested that, “perceived emotional involvement may
help to mitigate, but not completely alleviate, the double standard that exists [for women] in the case of casual sex” (2011:277). This again goes back to my argument earlier, that women may feel more comfortable expressing their sexual agency, and reporting it, when in some form of a relationship. In many ways, this relationship appears to have served as somewhat of a barrier for women against the sexual double standard. Ultimately, my results indicated that gender was independent of all three variables with 95% confidence: frequency of hookups with a FWBs partner, likelihood of hooking up with others, and frequency of hooking up with others. First, the finding that gender and frequency of hookups with a FWBs partner were independent is supported by Lehmiller et al.’s concept that women have more freedom to express, and further report, their sexual agency when acting in the context of a relationship. Next, the independence of gender and likelihood of hooking up with others, and of gender and frequency of hooking up with others, was inconsistent with Lehmiller et al.’s finding that men reported significantly greater numbers of concurrent FWBs partners. By men not being more likely than women to hookup with others, and hookup with others more often, both genders were in effect challenging the traditional sexual script. Nonetheless, the results from my study suggest that men and women behave similarly with respect to frequency of hookups with a FWBs partner, likelihood of hooking up with others, and frequency of hookups with others. Further, each of these findings support my Hypothesis 1, that men and women behave in similar, benefits-directed manners when engaging in a FWBRs.

*Post-FWBR outcome.* Another relevant finding evidencing behavioral similarities between men and women from my study was that relationship dynamic post-FWBR was independent of the gender that initiated the respective outcome with 95% confidence. In
other words, whether the man or the woman initiated the post-FWBR outcome did not make any particular outcome more likely than another. It was interesting and somewhat surprising that my results indicated that gender was independent of relationship dynamic both pre- and post-FWBR. Just as a pair’s relationship dynamic pre-FWBR did not predict whether the man or the woman initiated the first hookup (thereby initiating the FWBR), whether the man or the woman initiated the post-FWBR outcome did not predict what that outcome ultimately was. Furthermore, the relationship between gender of the outcome-initiator and the outcome itself was largely understudied in current literature—such that, I could not find a single study investigating said relationship. Henceforth, being that my results produced no statistically significant difference between the gender of the initiator of the post-FWBR outcome and the outcome itself, it was reasonable to conclude that this lack of difference reinforced my Hypothesis 1.

Looking at the descriptive statistics for relationship dynamic post-FWBR, my results indicated that the most common outcome among both men (37.9%) and women (41.9%) in my sample was “friends, less close” (see Table 5). In comparison, only 24.2% of men and 23.0% of women reported that their post-FWBR outcome was either unaffected (i.e., friends, same closeness) or improved. Owen et al. (2013) conducted a very similar investigation; however, they found that 53% of men and 48% of women reported that their post-FWBR outcome was either unaffected or improved. My results also differed in that 27.2% of my total participants’ outcomes were “no longer friends,” compared to only 18.5% of Owen et al.’s participants’ outcomes. One possible explanation for these differences could be the idea that FWBRs vary with respect to their degree and type of intimacy (Guerrero and Mongeau 2008) and may be more friendship-
directed or more benefits-directed (Owen et al. 2013; McGinty et al. 2007; Hughes et al. 2005). As discussed in the literature review, in FWBRs that emphasized their emotional connection and were more friendship-directed, the friendship itself was unlikely to be negatively harmed after engagement in the “benefits” had ceased. On the other hand, FWBRs that emphasized their physical intimacy and were more benefits-directed were more likely to encounter negative effects on their friendship after the sexual intimacy had ceased (Owen et al. 2013; Hughes et al. 2005).

In attempt to analyze the relationship between the degree/type of intimacy of a FWBR and the post-FWBR outcome within my own data, I conducted a chi-square test of independence between FWBs partner description (partnerrole) and post-FWBR outcome. This test was statistically significant, and hence I concluded that participants’ descriptions of their partners’ role during their FWBR and relationship dynamic post-FWBR were dependent with 99% confidence. I then conducted three dummy tests, all of which were significant. Thus, I concluded with 95% confidence that, relative to one another, the FWBs partner descriptions of “sexual partner,” “friend,” and “potential lover” were significantly more likely to follow the post-FWBR outcomes of “friends, less close,” “friends, same closeness,” and “romantic relationship,” respectively. These findings directly align with the above expectations and explanations set forth by Owen et al. (2013) and Hughes et al. (2005). Returning to the comparison of my results and Owen et al.’s results, because my data showed overall more negative effects on the friendships themselves, one may logically assume that my sample consisted of relatively more benefits-directed FWBRs. On the other hand, Owen et al.’s sample likely consisted of relatively more friendship-directed FWBRs. In conclusion, Hypothesis 1 is supported by
the lack of a significant difference between both (1) gender and post-FWBR outcome, and (2) the gender of the initiator of the post-FWBR outcome and the outcome itself.

Internal Feelings Within a FWBR

As a refresher, Hypothesis 2 claimed that, when engaging in a FWBR, women would *internally* feel more emotionally invested in the relationship than men. I noted that this emotional investment may not have necessarily been a romantic investment. Put another way, I predicted that relative to men, women would secretly feel more emotionally connected to their FWBR, though externally, they would suppress these feelings and behave in ways similar to men—ways which accented the physical aspects of a FWBR.

*Romantic intentions within a FWBR by gender.* The first test result that I would like to analyze here was my finding that *gender* and having romantic intentions at the start of a FWBR were dependent with 99% confidence. More specifically, women were significantly more likely than men to report that they had some intentions of transitioning into a romantic relationship with their FWBs partner ($p < 0.05$). In parallel, men were significantly more likely than women to report that their FWBs partner had intentions of transitioning into a romantic relationship ($p < 0.001$). These findings directly corresponded to McGinty et al.’s (2007) findings that, not only were women more likely to view their FWBR as an emotional relationship, but their male partner was also more likely to perceive them as being more emotionally invested in the FWBR than the man himself. Prior research has also found that while both men and women in sexual
relationships have stated that an emotional investment was a priority, the priority was far more important for women (Hill 2002). One possible explanation for this is that men and women may define what it means to have an “emotional investment” differently. Whereas men may define an emotional investment as monogamy, women may define an emotional investment as kindness and respect. Furthermore, while men approaching casual sex have tended to desire a lack of commitment or responsibility with various sexual partners, women approaching casual sex have been found to accent romance and commitment (Schippers 2019; Bogle 2008). These varying levels of desired devotion between men and women were supported by Cohen and Shotland’s finding that, “virtually all men [in their sample] indicated that they would have sex in relationships characterized by attraction, but no emotional involvement, fewer than two thirds of women would consider having sex in such a relationship” (1996:294). Taken together, these findings have shown that men are more likely than women to have sex in relationships which lack an emotional commitment, such as a FWBR.

Women have been found to engage in sexual activity with partners when they believed or wanted a new romantic relationship to evolve, and/or they believed that by doing so, they were meeting their partner’s needs (Hill 2002; Grello et al. 2006; Impett and Peplau 2003). Grello et al.’s research contributed to these claims finding that, though the majority of both men and women in the sample did not expect that having casual sex would evolve into a romantic relationship, women (18%) were more likely than men (3%) to expect this course of evolution. Still, however, “fewer than one fifth of the females who had had casual sex experiences reported that they thought a romance might be imminent” (Grello et al. 2006:264). My survey data showed very similar findings,
with 22.2% of women and only 5.0% of men expressing that they had romantic intentions at the start of their FWBR (see Table 2 and Figure 2). Reinforcingly, 32.5% of men and only 8.9% of women reported that their partner had had romantic intentions at the start of their FWBR. In sum, these findings directly aligned with my expectations, and hence, largely supported my Hypothesis 2, that women engaging in a FWBR internally feel more emotionally invested than do men.

**Priority reason for engaging in a FWBR by gender.** The next finding that I would like to discuss was my only finding that directly opposed my Hypothesis 2. This finding suggested that men and women similarly ranked their priority reasons for engaging in a FWBR. While the plurality of women in my sample (35.1%) ranked “sexual satisfaction” as their priority reason for engagement, the plurality of men in my sample ranked their priority reason as either “comfortable/trust in partner” (30.0%) or “easy/convenient” (30.0%) (see Table 4 and Figure 4).

Upon initial analysis, these findings appeared to be rather opposite of what we may have expected. To summarize what I have discussed thus far, when men versus women comply with casual sex, men’s motivations are often to increase their sexual experience, peer status, or popularity, whereas women’s motivations are often to satisfy their partner or promote intimacy within a potential relationship (Impett and Peplau 2003; Grello et al. 2006). Why, then, did my results portray virtually the opposite? One possible explanation lies in the fact that women’s sense of sexual satisfaction increases when engaging in sexual activity with an on-going partner or within some sort of a relationship context (Armstrong et al. 2012; Jovanovic and Williams 2018; Schippers 2019; see *Gender Differences within College Hookup Culture* in my “Gender Differences” section).
When participating in a one-night stand or a random hookup with a new partner, women are less likely to receive sexual attention, and thus less likely to be sexually satisfied. In comparison, when engaging in sexual activity with an on-going partner or within the context of a relationship, women are more likely to receive sexual attention, and thus more likely to be sexually satisfied. Taking this into consideration, it is reasonable to understand why women may have prioritized this relatively increased level of sexual satisfaction as grounds for engaging in a FWBR. Now from the man’s perspective, men were found to be more likely than women to be sexually satisfied regardless of the context of their sexual activity (Armstrong et al. 2012). This result was largely associated with the finding that, during casual sex and hookups both men and women were more likely to direct their attention towards the male’s sexual pleasure, rather than the female’s (Armstrong et al. 2012). Thus, the men in my sample may have been confident that, had they not engaged in a FWBR, they would have still been sexual satisfied through casual sex and hookups. Further, if confident that they would have received sexual satisfaction regardless, it is reasonable to understand that some of the men in my sample may have ranked reasons that they could not have received otherwise as a priority over sexual satisfaction. For example, these men may have ranked “comfortable/trust in partner” and/or “easy/convenient” over sexual satisfaction, because they likely would not have had as high of a degree of comfort and ease with casual sex/hookup partners compared to a FWBs partner. Another potential explanation for the fact that the men in my sample equally prioritized either comfort or ease is that men may be more interested in relationships—and FWBs-type relationship in particular—than originally thought. This idea was supported by Bogle’s (2008) proposition that, in addition to women, men may
also find FWBRs appealing, particularly for the matters of convenience and lack of effort required. Finally, Epstein et al. (2009) also provided support for this finding, insisting that, contrary to many beliefs regarding men’s desires, research suggests men may actually seek and enjoy close emotional commitment with their sexual partners just as much as women do. This enjoyment, then, could have ultimately been represented by men prioritizing their own comfort, trust, and ease with respect to their FWBR.

It is important to note again, however, that my statistical tests between gender and priority reasons for engaging in a FWBR were not statistically significant. That is, my findings that the plurality of women prioritized “sexual satisfaction,” while the majority of men prioritized either “comfortable/trust in partner” or “easy/convenient” could have been due to random chance alone. In conclusion, my finding that gender and priority reason for engaging in a FWBR were independent refuted my Hypothesis 2. In other words, this implied that the men and women in my sample may have internally felt similarly about their reasons for engaging in a FWBR, and that the men may have felt relatively more emotionally invested in their FWBs friendship than we may have thought.

FWBs partner description by gender. Shifting gears, another significant finding of mine was that gender and description of FWBs partner’s role were dependent with 99% confidence. More specifically, through conducting a dummy chi-square test, I was able to conclude that men (51.5%) were significantly more likely than women (21.5%) to describe their FWBs partner as their “sexual partner” when choosing between “sexual partner,” “friend,” and “potential lover” (p < 0.01). Additionally, though the independence test was non-statistically significant, the majority of women (78.5%) indicated either “friend” (54.4%) or “potential lover” (24.1%) when describing their
Gender Within FWBRs

FWBs partner. These findings and statistics were largely consistent with scholarly literature—that is, men were more commonly motivated to *initiate* a FWBR by sex, whereas women were more commonly motivated by an emotional connection (Lehmiller et al. 2011; Wiederman 2005). While men more often hoped that their FWBR would stay the same over time, women more often hoped that their FWBR would evolve over time into either a committed romantic relationship or a basic friendship (Lehmiller et al. 2011). My findings were, however, partially inconsistent with Lehmiller et al.’s finding regarding motivations for *continuation* of a FWBR: both men and women exhibited a significantly stronger commitment towards their friendship than their sexual relationship. Had this been true for my sample, we may have seen a larger percentage of men describing their FWBs partner as their “friend” over their “sexual partner.” Lastly, these findings were consistent with, and may in part be explained by, the traditional sexual scripts for men and women (Wiederman 2005), and the inference that women tend to emphasize the “friends” aspect of FWBs, whereas men tend to emphasize the “benefits” aspect of FWBs (McGinty et al. 2007). In summary, these findings supported my Hypothesis 2, that women engaging in a FWBR tend to internally feel more emotionally invested in their FWBR relative to men.

*Overall FWBR experience rating by gender.* The final test statistic that I would like to analyze was my finding that men were significantly more likely than women to report feeling positive about their overall FWBs experience. When given a scale from 0 (extremely negative) to 100 (extremely positive), the average experience rating for men was 73.7 ± 20.6, while the average rating for women was 62.8 ± 24.5. Although the men’s average rating was higher, we can see from these statistics that both men and
women reported more positive reactions than negative reactions to their overall FWBs experience. Similar trends were found in various related studies (e.g., Owen and Fincham 2011a; Gusarova et al. 2012; Garcia et al. 2014). Of importance, these women’s positive reactions to FWBRs were far more promising than Owen and Fincham’s (2011b) results, which found that, on average, men (50%) were more likely than women (26%) to have a positive emotional reaction to a *hooking up* experience. This increased likelihood of women reporting positive reactions to a FWBs experience, compared to a hookup experience, was supported by Hill’s (2002) summary that women have been found to report dramatically more negative feelings about sexual activity that occurred within a context that lacked emotional investment, and far more positive feelings about sexual activity that occurred within a context that involved emotional commitment. Lastly, this finding—that relative to women, men were significantly more likely to report feeling positive about their overall FWBs experience—indicated that men may not try to resist all forms of a relationship, as traditional depictions of (hegemonic) masculinity and the traditional sexual script advise (Epstein et al. 2009; Wiederman 2005). Rather, as mentioned previously Epstein et al. (2009) suggested that men may actually desire and enjoy close emotional commitment with their sexual partners just as much as women do. In conclusion, although both men and women reported overall positive reactions towards their FWBs experiences, men were still found to be relatively more likely than women to feel positive about their experience. This disparity between men and women was attributed to the notion that women may prefer more emotional investment in their relationship, and thus, this finding was in support of Hypothesis 2.
CONCLUSIONS

The results from the present study on college undergraduate students largely suggest that, when engaging in a friends-with-benefits relationship, men and women externally behave in similar, benefits-directed manners (Hypothesis 1); however, women are more likely than men to internally feel more emotionally involved with their relationship (Hypothesis 2). In other words, women’s external behaviors within a FWBR may not actually mirror their internal feelings. Though women may express feelings of emotional investment in their FWBR through their survey responses, their responses measuring their behavior suggest that they do not actually act upon their internal, emotional feelings. Rather, they appear to behave in benefits-directed manners, very similar to that of men.

While many sociologist and gender researchers tend to chiefly focus on their statistically significant study results, I believe that for my particular study, the non-statistically significant results communicate just as much if not more of a story than the statistically significant results. This story primarily conveys how gender roles have changed and broadened over time to become, in many ways, quite intersectional. That is, women have progressively come to take on more traditionally masculine roles and men have progressively taken on more traditionally feminine roles. In this sense, many of the behaviors that we once thought of as “gendered-behaviors” have gradually become more of “gender-neutral behaviors.” Moreover, for much of my analysis, receiving a non-statistically significant difference indicated that gender was independent of the variable of interest, and often that either men, women, or both genders were in one way or another challenging the traditional sexual script. This pattern is extremely important to recognize,
as it arose a number of times, and in a number of different ways, throughout my analysis. I propose two possible explanations for the prevalence of these gender similarities and transgressions of the traditional sexual script in my study: (1) my sample came from the historically liberal Tulane undergraduate population, and (2) a FWBR is a relatively modern, progressive, and fluid concept—similar to the individuals who typically engage in them.

In measuring Hypothesis 1, I conducted various chi-square tests of independence using variables from my survey that inquired about participants’ behaviors and actions while engaging in a FWBR. My results extensively depicted situations and scenarios in which no difference was found between men’s and women’s behaviors, and further the implications of their behaviors (supporting Hypothesis 1). One example of this was seen in the participants’ relationships with their partners both pre- and post-FWBR. Just as a pair’s relationship dynamic pre-FWBR did not predict whether the man or the woman initiated the first hookup (thereby initiating the FWBR), whether the man or the woman initiated the post-FWBR outcome did not predict what that outcome ultimately was. In addition, in comparison to prior research into relationship behavior and FWBRs, my findings largely suggest that in the context of a FWBR, the men and women in my sample had great room to actively challenge and potentially even completely disregard their designated gender roles within the traditional sexual script. Examples of this were seen throughout my variables relating to initiating sexual activity within a FWBR. For men, this may have meant taking a step back from the role of the initiator of sexual activity, and in some cases, serving as the object of desire (typically an attribute of femininity). For women, this may have meant not only giving up the role of the
gatekeeper of sexual activity, but also actively initiating sexual activity. In this way, women also stood to confront the unjust sexual double standard. Lastly, my various findings indicating that the majority of both men and women reported mutually equal initiations of sexual activity provide great evidence to the idea that men and women commonly follow benefits-directed, egalitarian patterns of behavior within FWBRs.

In the same way that I tested Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2 was directed at analysis of men’s and women’s internal feelings within a FWBR. In general, my results supported my hypothesis that women would internally feel more emotionally involved in their FWBR than men. Ultimately, I concluded that women’s relatively heightened degree of internal emotional involvement in their FWBRs varied in meaning, referring to a greater sense of friendship with their partner in some cases, and a stronger desire for more of a romantic commitment in other cases. However, given that my data was collected through a survey, one should take caution when interpreting my findings considering participants’ feelings. As previously discussed, men and women might hold vastly different definitions for certain terms used in my survey questions, thus leading them to answer those questions differently. In addition, a discrepancy could have occurred between how I intended my survey questions and how participants interpreted my questions.

I wish to close this thesis proposing that my findings are further evidence to McCormick’s (2010) claim that, over the past generation or so the sexual double standard has begun to erode, and consequently, the heterosexual, traditional sexual scripts have begun to change. McCormick further summarized the changes that had taken place at that time of her research:
Although men continue to initiate sexual encounters more often than women and desire a greater number and variety of sexual activities, women and men are statistically similar in their readiness to comply with or reject a partner’s sexual invitation, no longer differ in the frequency with which they had considered initiating sexual activity and underestimate how similar their ideal sexual behavior frequencies are to those of their partner. (2010: 92).

Looking at going trends from ten years ago in comparison to the findings from my study, it is within reason to state that my findings exhibit a more progressive and extreme documentation of the changing traditional sexual scripts and the erosion of the sexual double standard—at least within the context of a FWBR. Moreover, my notable findings specifically suggest that: men and women initiate sexual encounters roughly an equal amount and often through mutual initiation; men and women similarly hookup with their FWBs partners and with others; gender is independent of both pre- and post-FWBs relationship dynamics, and of priority reasons for engaging in a FWBR; women are more likely than men to possess romantic intentions within their FWBR and see their relationship as more friendship-directed, whereas men see it as more benefits-directed; and finally, men are more likely than women to feel positive about their overall FWBR experience, however, both men and women report more positive reactions than negative reactions.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The present study should be considered in light of a few methodological limitations. First, from the start I had a relatively small final sample size ($N = 153$). As explained in the “Methods” section, because participation was optional for most of my survey questions, many of my specific questions’ sample sizes were even smaller than $N$
= 153. I was unaware of these smaller sample sizes for certain questions until I had already closed my survey, and thus it was too late for me to attempt to get more participants. I was also constricted on time, and thus I could only keep my survey open to collecting responses for about two and a half months (November 2019 – January 2020). In addition to having a small sample size, I did not collect my sample using Equal Probability of Selection Method (EPSEM sampling) because of lack of accessibility. Instead, I used a combination of non-random sampling methods including convenience sampling, voluntary response sampling, and snowball sampling.

While both gender and casual sex relationships, such as FWBRs, are becoming increasingly popular topics of sociological research, studying how the two interact with one another remains a highly understudied field. Thus, there are a number of directions that one could take for future research. To begin, if I were to build on my study in the future, I would address two main things: (1) I would collect a larger sample size of participants, and (2) I would ask additional questions in the outcome stage of a FWBR. This question would inquire more about participants’ internal feelings with respect to their FWBR-outcome. For example, “were you happy with how your FWBR turned out?” or “do you wish your FWBR ended with a different outcome?” I believe these questions would be of great addition to my research, because they would allow me to infer more clearly about men’s and women’s differences (or lack thereof) between their internal feelings and their external behaviors within the specific outcome stage of a FWBR.

Another future research opportunity could be conducting a study similar to mine, but instead collect qualitative data versus quantitative data. This study could allow for more in-depth and personal answers from participants and, through simple interview
conversation, may bring up various related research questions to further investigate.

Finally, future research might also include individuals identifying with other gender identities and sexual orientations (e.g., transgenders, queer individuals, bisexuals, etc.). This research is extremely important, and while I wished I was able to conduct this study on my own, I unfortunately did not have the time, money, nor resources needed in order to take on such a grand project.
References


Easton, Dossie and Janet W. Hardy. 2009. The ethical slut: A practical guide to


APPENDICES

Appendix A. Survey Recruitment Script

Subject: Potential to respond to a survey about friends with benefits relationships?

Dear Student,

I would appreciate your participation in my survey regarding your experiences with a prior friends with benefits relationship (FWBR). I am seeking to understand what gender predicts about an individual’s attitudes towards and behaviors within the various stages of a FWBR.

Important note: In compliance with the survey’s aims, in order to participate, you must be a heterosexual Tulane University undergraduate student that has previously engaged in a FWBR at some point during their Tulane career.

If you are willing to take the survey, please find the SurveyMonkey link in this email and complete the survey in your own time. The survey should take approximately 5 minutes or less in total. You are not required to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8GFYKZ6

Thank you for your time. This project has been approved for exempt determination by IRB (# 2019—1982).

Sincerely,
Nicole Boggio
Appendix B. Survey

Survey: Gender Differences Within the Various Stages of a Friends-with-Benefits Relationship

1. What is your gender identity?
   a. Man
   b. Woman
   c. Other

2. What is your sexual orientation?
   a. Heterosexual
   b. Homosexual
   c. Other

3. What year are you at Tulane University?
   a. Freshman
   b. Sophomore
   c. Junior
   d. Senior

4. Which of the following do you believe to be the most accurate definition of friends with benefits (FWB) or a friends-with-benefits relationship (FWBR)?
   
   Note: a monogamous FWBR is different from a committed romantic relationship in that they are no romantic feelings involved.
   a. Friends who have sex on few or more occasions, may be monogamous (not hooking up with other people) or polyamorous (hooking up with other people)
   b. Friends who have sex on few or more occasions, monogamous
   c. Friends who have sex on few or more occasions, polyamorous

Please answer all of the remaining questions about your most significant prior friends with benefits relationship (FWBR). Note: prior FWBR, meaning you no longer consider you and your partner to be FWBs for whatever reason. Please answer all of the questions about one specific FWBR, i.e. please do not answer different questions referencing different FWBRs you’ve had.

5. Which of the following best represents how your prior FWBR began?
   a. Originally strangers, began hooking up. Friendship developed simultaneously as hooking up continued
b. Originally had mutual friends, began hooking up. Friendship furthered simultaneously as hooking up continued
c. Originally friends, began and continued hooking up while remaining friends
d. Had a history of a romantic relationship

6. At the start of your prior FWBR, were there any intentions to transition into a romantic relationship from one or both sides?
   a. Yes, from both of us
   b. Yes, from my end
   c. Yes, from my partner’s end
   d. No

7. Who initiated the first hookup between you and your FWB partner?
   a. Man
   b. Woman
   c. Mutual

8. Who pursued the continual hooking up? (i.e., after you had already hooked up once, who pursued it more intently from there?)
   a. Man
   b. Woman
   c. Mutual

9. Did you and your partner explicitly define your FWBR or was it more so implied? If defined, who initiated that conversation?
   a. Defined; initiated more so by man
   b. Defined; initiated more so by woman
   c. Defined; mutual initiation
   d. N/A; we did not explicitly define our FWBR

10. Please rank from 1 to 5 the most significant reasons for why you chose to engage in your prior FWBR? 1 = most significant, 5 = least significant. If the option does not apply to you, please leave it blank (e.g. your ranking may only be from 1 to 3)
    a. ___ Easy/convenient
    b. ___ Comfortable/trust in your partner
    c. ___ Sexual satisfaction
    d. ___ Lack of commitment of a romantic relationship
    e. ___ Romantic interests involved
11. How would you best describe your prior FWB partner’s role in your life at the time?
   a. Sexual partner
   b. Friend
   c. Potential lover
   d. Other (please specify) _______

12. About how often did you hookup with your FWB partner?

13. Who was more likely to initiate a hookup on any given instance?
   a. Man
   b. Woman
   c. We each initiated hooking up a roughly equal amount

14. At the time, did you hookup with other people as well as your FWB partner?
   a. Yes
   b. No

15. If you answered yes to question 14, about how often did you hookup with other people? Please skip this question if you did not hookup with other people.

16. Which of the following best describes the outcome your prior FBWR (i.e. where did you and your FWB partner go from there)?
   a. No longer hooking up; no longer friends
   b. No longer hooking up; remained as friends, but not as close as before
   c. No longer hooking up; remained just as close of friends as before
   d. No longer hooking up; became even closer friends than before
   e. Moved into a romantic relationship
   f. Other (please specify) _______

17. Who initiated the outcome that you indicated in question 16?
   a. Man
   b. Woman
   c. Mutual

18. Looking back on your prior FWBR, would you now describe your overall experience as more positive or negative?
   a. Very negative (0) ————————————————— Very Positive (100)
## Appendix C. Variable Names and Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. gender</td>
<td>Participant’s gender identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. sexualori</td>
<td>Participant’s sexual orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. year</td>
<td>Participant’s year at Tulane University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. defineFWBR</td>
<td>Most accurate definition of FWBs or a FWBR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. beginning</td>
<td>Participant’s relationship dynamic with their partner pre-FWBR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. romint</td>
<td>Presence of romantic intentions at the start of the FWBR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. initialhu</td>
<td>Gender of the initiator of the first hookup between FWBs partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. conthu</td>
<td>Gender of the pursuer of the continual hooking up between FWBs partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. defined</td>
<td>Explicitly defining a FWBR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. priority</td>
<td>Priority reasons for engaging in a FWBR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. partnerrole</td>
<td>Description of partner’s role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. parthuoft</td>
<td>Frequency of hookups with FWBs partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. initiate</td>
<td>Gender of the likely initiator of any given hookup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. otherhu</td>
<td>Hooked up with others in addition to FWBs partner (yes or no)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. otherhuoft</td>
<td>Frequency of hookups with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. outcome</td>
<td>Participant’s relationship dynamic with their partner post-FWBR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. whooutcome</td>
<td>Gender of the initiator of the post-FWBR outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. overall</td>
<td>Overall rating of FWBR experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D. IRB Exempt Approval

DATE: November 18, 2019
TO: Nicole Boggio
FROM: Tulane University Social-Behavioral IRB
STUDY TITLE: Gender Differences Within the Various Stages of a Friends with Benefits Relationship
REF #: 2019-1982
SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial Submission
ACTION: EXEMPT

On November 16, 2019, the Tulane University Social-Behavioral IRB provided a review and Exempt determination for the initial submission of this study, in accordance with the appropriate federal regulations.

The following items were submitted as part of the submission:

- Gender Differences Within the Various Stages of a Friends with Benefits Relationship (Study Protocol)
- Gender Differences Within the Various Stages of a Friends with Benefits Relationship (Consent Script)
- Gender Differences Within the Various Stages of a Friends with Benefits Relationship (Questionnaires/Surveys)
- Gender Differences Within the Various Stages of a Friends with Benefits Relationship (Recruitment Letter)
- Nicole Boggio - CITI Training Certificate (Training Certificate)

This study is approved for the local enrollment of 150 subjects.

Exempt studies are subject to institutional oversight including reviews and audits by the Human Research Protection Program. Please submit any proposed changes to the research that could potentially change the exempt status prior to implementation, unless a change is necessary to avoid immediate harm to subjects. If subject safety becomes an issue, please notify the Tulane University Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) as soon as possible.

Please submit any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others, deviations from the approved research, non-compliance, and complaints to the IRB in accordance with Tulane University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Please contact the HRPO via irbmain@tulane.edu or (504) 988-2665 if you have questions and/or concerns regarding reporting events.