Arch Sex Behav (2013) 42:1443–1449
DOI 10.1007/s10508-013-0160-7

ORIGINAL PAPER

Friendship After a Friends with Benefits Relationship: Deception, Psychological Functioning, and Social Connectedness

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Received: 22 August 2012 / Revised: 18 April 2013 / Accepted: 26 May 2013 / Published online: 24 August 2013

Abstract Friends with benefits (FWB) relationships are formed by an integration of friendship and sexual intimacy, typically without the explicit commitments characteristic of an exclusive romantic relationship. The majority of these relationships do not transition into committed romantic relationships, raising questions about what happens to the relationship after the FWB ends. In a sample of 119 men and 189 women university students, with a median age of 19 years and the majority identified as Caucasian (63.6 %), we assessed relationship adjustment, feelings of deception, perception of the FWB relationship and friendship, social connectedness, psychological distress, and loneliness. Results demonstrated that the majority of FWB relationships continued as friendships after the sexual intimacy ceased and that about 50 % of the participants reported feeling as close or closer to their FWB partner. Those who did not remain friends were more likely to report that their FWB relationship was more sex- than friendship-based; they also reported higher levels of feeling deceived by their FWB partner and higher levels of loneliness and psychological distress, but lower levels of mutual social connectedness. Higher levels of feeling deceived were related to feeling less close to the post-FWB friend; also, more sex-based FWB relationships were likely to result in post-FWB friendships that were either more or less close (as opposed to unchanged). FWB relationships, especially those that include more attention to friendship based intimacy, do not appear to negatively impact the quality of the friendship after the "with benefits" ends.

Keywords Friends with benefits · Friendship attraction · Cross-sex friendships · College students

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Introduction

Friendship can provide emotional support, companionship, and shared activities (O'Meara, 1989; Sapadin, 1988; Werking, 1997). Given such connections, it is not surprising that sexual attraction among friends is a common experience. Researchers have found that 30–68 % of young adults (mainly university students in the U.S.) report some level of sexual attraction in their cross-sex friendships (Kaplan & Keys, 1997; Reeder, 2000; Sapadin, 1988). Acting on such attraction can lead to sexual intimacy and result in what has been referred to as friends with benefits (FWB) relationships (Bisson & Levine, 2009). FWB relationships differ from romantic relationships insofar that there is no explicit commitment of the kind that typifies exclusive romantic relationships (Bisson & Levine, 2009; Glenn & Marquardt, 2001). Among young adults, FWB relationships are fairly common for university students (in the U.S.) with prevalence rates ranging from 33 to 60 % over the past year (Hughes, Morrison, & Asada, 2005; Owen & Fincham, 2011a; Puentes, Knox, & Zusman, 2008).

Approximately 20 % of FWB relationships transition into committed romantic relationships (Eisenberg, Ackard, & Resnick, 2009; Owen & Fincham, 2011b). Thus, the vast majority of young adults who engage in FWB relationships may need to consider the question: What happens to our friendship after we stop being FWB? Individuals typically believe that engaging in sexual intimacy with a friend would

negatively impact the friendship (e.g., Rubin, 1985; Sapadin, 1988) and likewise Bisson and Levine (2009) found that one of the disadvantages of FWB relationships was that they complicated the friendship. However, other studies have shown that approximately 50–67 % of young adults continue with their friendship and some report that the sexual intimacy positively impacted their relationship (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000; Halatsis & Christakis, 2009). Yet, the factors that may strengthen or weaken the friendship after the FWB relationship ends were not clear.

Theories describing relationship transitions can be useful for understanding some of the factors that might influence the effect of FWB relationships on subsequent friendship after the termination of the physical intimacy. Guerrero and Mongeau (2008) noted that FWB relationships vary in the degree and type of intimacies (see O'Meara, 1989). Some FWB relationships may spend more time nurturing friendship-based intimacy (i.e., emotional connection and understanding) whereas other FWB relationships may be based more on sexual-based intimacy (i.e., sexual feelings and behaviors). For instance, Hughes et al. (2005) found young adults' motivation for engaging in FWB relationships mirrored these two forms of intimacy, with some young adults stating that they wanted physical intimacy while others wanted an emotional connection. Moreover, Hughes et al. found that some young adults maintained their FWB relationship by attending specifically to the friendship aspect of their relationship. Thus, it is likely that FWB relationships that focus more on physical intimacy will be associated with negative effects on the friendship when the physical intimacy ends.

Baxter and Bullis (1986) noted that significant moments, or turning points in relationships, can influence the trajectory of the relationship. For instance, a young adult who learns that his or her FWB partner does not want an exclusive romantic relationship to develop may stop the FWB relationship and feel uncertain about his or her feelings towards the other person. FWB relationships typically do not have set ground rules for how to proceed during the FWB relationship or thereafter. Bisson and Levine (2009) found that about half of young adults in FWB relationships were uncertain about how the physical intimacy would affect their relationship with their partner; potentially complicating matters, nearly 85 % of these young adults did not initiate discussions to gain clarity. The lack of clear ground rules might lead to more confusion about how to proceed throughout the FWB relationship as well as lead to misperceptions. Quirk, Owen, and Fincham (2013) found that some young adults perceived their FWB partner as deceitful and these perceptions were related to more negative reactions to the FWB relationship. Given the role of trust in a friendship, it is likely that the perception of deceitful actions by a FWB partner may violate common expectations of what a friend is supposed to do and could be a turning point that influences the friendship after the physical intimacy ceases (see Afifi & Mett, 1998).

Social networks have been of key interest in relationship development theories and the FWB literature. For many young adults, group dating or "hanging out" among friends can be a way to foster friendships and to enter into FWB relationships or exclusive relationships (Glenn & Marquardt, 2001). Indeed, integration of a romantic partner into a social network can be a significant step in relationship development (Guerrero & Chavez, 2005) and it is a typical component of FWB relationships (Hughes et al., 2005). Social networks can influence, positively or negatively, the nature of young adults' relationships (e.g., Guerrero & Mongeau, 2008; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2011). For instance, FWB partners may be more apt to focus on friendship-intimacy when they have more mutual friends. Moreover, they may be more committed to working on continuing the friendship after the termination of physical intimacy to avoid complicating the dynamics of the social network.

Broadly speaking, the quality of romantic and friendship relationships have been associated with individuals' psychological well-being (e.g., Nangle, Erdley, Newman, Mason, & Carpenter, 2003; Waite et al., 2002). Accordingly, young adults who are no longer friends with their former FWB partner may experience the loss or deterioration of the friendship as distressing as they may have lost an important interpersonal connection in their life. Bisson and Levine (2009) found three of the top five disadvantages that can result from FWB relationships were developing romantic feelings, negative emotional reactions, and negative consequences from sexual intimacy. One potential reason for negative reactions could be due to how the partners treat each other during the FWB relationship. For instance, Quirk et al. (2013) found young adults who perceived more deception also reported lower relationship adjustment with their FWB partner and more depressive symptoms.

We will add to this existing research by examining factors that may strengthen or weaken the friendship after the FWB relationship ends as well as the association between friendship status after a FWB relationship and depressive symptoms and feelings of loneliness. In particular, we hypothesized a positive association between young adults' perceptions of their friendship status with their most recent FWB partner and their rating of the quality of the FWB relationship (Hypothesis 1). Next, we posited that young adults' who rated their friendship status as no longer friends would be more likely to report: (1) higher levels of perceived deception from their FWB partner (Hypothesis 2), (2) that their FWB relationship was based more on physically intimacy versus friendship-intimacy (Hypothesis 3), and (3) fewer mutual friends with their FWB partner (Hypothesis 4) as compared to young adults who were still friends with their FWB partner.

Lastly, we posited that young adults who were no longer friends with their most recent FWB partner would report higher levels of depressive symptoms and greater feelings of loneliness as compared to young adults who were still friends with their FWB partner (Hypothesis 5).

Method

Participants

A total of 979 undergraduates at a large university in the south east of the United States were recruited to participate in a study on relationships. Because we were interested in young adults' FWB relationships *after the intimacy ended*, we established the following exclusion criteria: (1) were in a committed romantic relationship over the past 12 months or were currently in a romantic relationship, (2) did not report engaging in a FWB relationship over the past 12 months, (3) were currently in a FWB relationship, and (4) were over 25 years old (as the study was focused on young adults).[1] To identify participants who engaged in a FWB relationship, we used the following definition: "Some people say that FWB is a friendship in which there are also physical encounters, but no ongoing committed relationship (e.g., not boyfriend/girlfriend). Based on this definition, how many "FWB" relationships did you have over the past 12 months?" This definition was adapted from previous studies (cf. Bisson & Levine, 2009; Owen & Fincham, 2011a). Based on these criteria, 671 participants were excluded from the final sample. The final sample included 308 participants, 119 men and 189 women, with a median age of 19 years ($M = 19.32$, $SD = 1.30$). The majority of the participants identified as Caucasian (63.6 %), 14.9 % identified as African American, 13.6 % identified as Latino/a, 3.2 % identified as Asian American, 0.3 % identified as Native American, and 4.2 % indicated "other" or did not report their race/ethnicity.

Measures

Post-FWB Friendship Status (Friendship Status)

Participants' perception of their friendship status with their former FWB partner was assessed by the following item: "How would you describe your relationship with your most recent FWB partner?" The response options were: (1) "We are no longer friends," (2) "We are still friends, but not as close as we were prior to becoming physically intimate," (3) "We are still friends, and just as close as we were prior to becoming physically intimate," and (4) "We are still friends, and even closer than prior to becoming physically intimate."

FWB-Relationship Adjustment (FWB-Rel. Adjustment)

The FWB-Rel. Adjustment measure was adapted from the Dyadic Adjustment Scale-4 (Sabourin, Valois, & Lussier, 2005). Items used included "How much do you trust this person?" (1 = *Not at All* to 5 = *A lot*), "Do you confide in this person?" (1 = *Not at All* to 5 = *A lot*), "In general, how often do you think that things between you and your most recent FWB partner are going well?" (1 = *Never* to 5 = *Always*), and "Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship" (1 = *Extremely Unhappy* to 7 = *Perfect*). Although this measure was adapted from an exclusive romantic relationship measure, the items have high face validity across relationships. Further, other studies have adapted similar exclusive romantic relationship measures for FWB relationships (e.g., Bisson & Levine, 2009). Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .76.

Friends with Benefits: Partner Deception Scale (Deception) (Quirk et al., 2013)

The Deception Scale was utilized to assess whether young adults' perceived deception by their most recent FWB partner. An example item is: "I expected my FWB relationship to continue when it was suddenly cut off without explanation." The four items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*Not At All*) to 5 (*Very Much*). Quirk et al. found young adults who reported more perceived deception also reported lower relationship adjustment with their FWB partner and more depressive symptoms. Further, the construct validity was supported through a factor analysis and the alpha estimate was .80. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was .79.

FWB-Mutual Social Connectedness (Mutual Social)

We developed an item to assess whether participants were socially connected with their FWB partner. This item was informed by commitment theory, specifically the concept of social pressure, wherein social connectedness may increase the pressure on an individual to sustain the relationship (in some form) (Owen et al., 2011). The item was: "We have a lot of mutual friends." This item was rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*A lot*).

FWB-Experience

We assessed whether participants perceived their FWB relationship as being more friends or more physically intimate. Specifically, the item was "Were you more friends or more

[1] There were 14 participants who were in a relationship in the prior 12 months, who also reported a FWB in the prior 12 months, and where there was no infidelity in the relationship and they were not dating their former FWB partner.

physically intimate?" which was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*More friends*) to 5 (*More physically intimate*).

Loneliness

The UCLA Loneliness Scale is a commonly used measure to assess individuals' perceptions of how lonely they feel (Russell, 1996). The eight item version used required participants to make ratings on a 4-point scale, with the anchors 1 (*Never*) to 4 (*Often*). The UCLA Loneliness scale has demonstrated adequate reliability across samples and is commonly related to numerous indicators of psychological distress (e.g., depression, low self-esteem; see Vassar & Crosby, 2008). Cronbach's alpha in this sample was .85.

Depressive Symptoms

We utilized the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D) (Radloff, 1977) to assess psychological distress in the past week. The CES-D has 10 items that are rated on a four-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Rarely or none of the time, less than 1 day*) to 4 (*Most of all of the time, 5–7 days*) with higher scores indicating more distress. The CES-D is a commonly used measure of depressive symptoms and has demonstrated adequate reliability and validity estimates in numerous studies (see Cole, Rabin, Smith, & Kaufman, 2004). Cronbach's alpha for our sample was .80.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through an introductory course on families across the lifespan that fulfills a social studies requirement and therefore attracts students from across the university. In the spring semester of 2011, students were offered multiple options to obtain extra credit for the class, one of which comprised the survey used in this study. Ninety-eight percent of the class decided to participate in the study. They completed informed consent and were told how to access the online survey. They were given a 5-day window in which to complete the survey. All procedures were approved by the university IRB. In the completion of the measures about their FWB relationship, the participants were instructed to respond about their most recent FWB relationship.

Results

We initially tested whether current friendship status varied according to biological sex; men and women did not significantly differ in their friendship status, $\chi^2(3, N = 308) = 1.45$ (see Table 1). In this sample, 18.5 % of young adults reported that they were no longer friends with their most recent FWB partner (referred to as "no longer friends" hereafter) and 31.5 % of young adults reported continuing the friendship; however, they were not as close as they were prior to being physically intimate (referred to as "not as close"). In contrast, 35.4 % of young adults reported being just as close with their most recent FWB partner as they were prior to becoming physically intimate (referred to as "just as close") and 14.6 % of young adults reported that their relationship with their most recent FWB partner was even closer than prior to becoming more physically intimate (referred to as "even closer").

Next, we tested whether FWB-Rel. Adjustment, Deception, Mutual Social, and FWB-Experience varied based on young adults' friendship status with their most recent FWB partner. We conducted a 2 (gender) × 4 (friendship status) MANCOVA, with time since their FWB relationship ended as a covariate. The main effect for Friendship Status was statistically significant, $F(12, 285) = 11.46, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$. Table 2 shows the means, SDs, univariate *F*-tests, and the pairwise comparisons. For the pairwise comparisons, we opted for a more conservative alpha level ($p < .01$) to control for family wise error.

For FWB-Rel. Adjustment, young adults reported incrementally better relationship adjustment as their friendship status increased. That is, young adults who were no longer friends reported the lowest levels of relationship adjustment whereas young adults who reported being even closer reported the highest levels of relationship adjustment (*ds* ranged from 1.14 to 2.09). Young adults who were no longer friends reported perceiving more deception from their most recent FWB partner as compared to the other groups (*ds* ranged from 0.56 to 1.06). Additionally, young adults who reported being not as close also reported more deception from their FWB partner as compared to young adults who were still friends and even closer ($d = 0.57$). Young adults who reported no longer being friends reported that they had fewer mutual friends with their FWB partner as compared to young adults in the not as close ($d = 0.50$), just as close ($d = 0.45$) groups, and the even closer group ($d = 0.36$). Young adults who were no longer friends reported being more physically intimate (than friends) as compared to the other groups (*ds* ranged from 0.50 to 0.96) with the exception of the even closer group ($p = .03$).

Next, we tested whether young adults' depressive symptoms and feelings of loneliness varied by friendship status. We conducted a 2 (Gender) × 4 (Friendship Status) MANCOVA with depressive symptoms and loneliness as the dependent variables and time since the FWB relationship ended as the covariate. There were significant main effects for Friendship Status, $F(6, 291) = 2.14$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$, and Gender, $F(2, 291) = 3.51, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$.

Table 3 shows the means, SDs, univariate *F*-test, and the pairwise comparisons. Young adults who were no longer friends reported greater feelings of loneliness as compared to the

Table 1 Friendship status after a FWB relationship by gender

Friendship status	Men *n* (%)	Women *n* (%)
No longer friends	21 (17.6)	36 (19.0)
Not as close	35 (29.4)	62 (32.8)
Just as close	47 (39.5)	62 (32.8)
Even closer	16 (13.4)	29 (15.3)

other groups (*ds* ranged from 0.45 to 0.59). However, there were no significant differences between the other groups in regards to their feelings of loneliness. A similar pattern emerged for depressive symptoms; however, the difference between young adults who were no longer friends and just as close was marginally significant at $p = .06$ (*ds* ranged from 0.29 to 0.51). Collectively, these results suggest that young adults who were no longer friends with their FWB partner generally reported more psychological distress than young adults who maintained some level of friendship with their former FWB partner.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine young adults' quality of friendship with their most recent FWB partner, after the physical intimacy ended. All study participants were involved in a FWB relationship in the past 12 months that, at the time of the survey, no longer included a sexual component. We found that the majority of friendships (81.5 %) continued after the FWB relationship ended. Notably, 53 % of men and 48 % of women reported that their friendship was unaffected (i.e., just as close) or improved, despite terminating the sexual component of the FWB relationship. In accordance with this finding, relationship adjustment was incrementally progressive—the closer the friendship young adults reported after the sexual component of the relationship with the FWB partner ended, the higher their reported relationship adjustment. As relationship adjustment is generally reflective of the health of a relationship, this finding was consistent with our expectations. In contrast, only 18 % of men and 19 % of women reported no longer being friends with their former FWB partner. However, we do not know how close young adults were with their former FWB partner prior to the initiation of the FWB relationship. Thus, it could be that these friendships were not very close initially and the termination of the friendship may have occurred regardless of the engagement in a FWB relationship.

To put these figures in context, previous research has shown that approximately 20 % of young adults report that their FWB relationship transitioned into a committed romantic relationship (Eisenberg et al., 2009; Owen & Fincham, 2012). Thus, it appears that FWB relationships can result in several outcomes ranging

Table 2 Means, SDs, univariate *F*-tests, and planned comparisons for FWB Friendship status

Variables	1 No longer friends ($n = 57$) *M* (SD)	2 Not as close ($n = 97$) *M* (SD)	3 Just as close ($n = 109$) *M* (SD)	4 Even closer ($n = 45$) *M* (SD)	*F* ($df = 3, 291$)	Comparisons ($p < .01$)
FWB-mutual social	3.13 (1.56)	3.79 (1.18)	3.76 (1.34)	3.66 (1.31)	3.01*	1 < 2, 3, 4
FWB-rel. adjust	2.55 (0.94)	3.45 (0.70)	3.84 (0.69)	4.31 (0.72)	47.25**	1 < 2 < 3 < 4
Deception	2.51 (1.12)	1.98 (0.84)	1.81 (0.87)	1.55 (0.54)	10.37**	1 > 2, 3, 4 2 > 4
FWB-exp	3.55 (1.14)	2.81 (1.18)	2.44 (1.18)	2.99 (1.11)	10.31**	1 > 2, 3

Time since the FWB relationship ended was the covariate

FWB-mutual social friends with benefits-mutual social connection, *FWB-rel. adjust* friends with benefits-relationship adjustment, *Deception* Perceived Deception Scale, *FWB-Exp* friends with benefits-experience

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Table 3 Means, SDs, univariate *F*-tests, and planned comparisons for FWB Friendship status

Variables	1 No longer friends ($n = 57$) *M* (SD)	2 Not as close ($n = 97$) *M* (SD)	3 Just as close ($n = 109$) *M* (SD)	4 Even closer ($n = 45$) *M* (SD)	*F* ($df = 3, 292$)	Comparisons ($p < .01$)
Loneliness	2.11 (0.58)	1.81 (0.55)	1.83 (0.64)	1.76 (0.62)	3.55*	1 > 2,3,4
Depressive	1.97 (0.54)	1.75 (0.46)	1.82 (0.51)	1.71 (0.47)	2.90*	1 > 2,4

For depressive symptoms, the comparison between no longer friends and just as close resulted in a $p = .06$

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

from starting an exclusive relationship to the termination of the friendship. Yet, our results suggest that FWB relationships can transition back to friendship and, for the majority of young adults, this friendship was not negatively affected.

Compared to participants who maintained at least some level of friendship with their former FWB partner, those who stopped being friends reported higher levels of sexual intimacy and greater perceptions that they were deceived by their former FWB partner during the FWB relationship. Potentially, these relationships focused on sexual interaction and it appears that the friendship components of the relationship were unable to withstand the potentially detrimental effects of the termination of the sexual relationship. The sexual-based nature of these FWB interactions may not have included the friendship-nurturing element used by some young adults to maintain their FWB relationship (Guerrero & Mongeau, 2008; Hughes et al., 2005). These relationships were typified by greater feelings of being deceived, which suggest that there was either intentional deception or a misunderstanding between the two partners about the nature of the relationship. In the absence of clear expectations for the progression of the relationship, it seems either could be possible. In either case, perception of deception within a relationship may lend itself to a more acrimonious end to the FWB relationship (see Quirk et al., 2013).

In addition, young adults who were no longer friends with their former FWB partner reported greater feelings of loneliness and more depressive symptoms as compared to young adults who remained friends. The loss of both a friend and sexual partner can be a distressing experience and one that may result in depressive symptoms and feelings of loneliness. Given the cross-sectional nature of our data, it is also plausible that young adults who were no longer friends were more lonely or depressed prior to the initiation of the sexual component of the friendship, which may reflect a desire for increased connectedness and/or intimacy. If true, then the end of the FWB relationship coupled with the loss of the friend did not assist them with social connectedness or feeling less distressed.

Young adults who are no longer friends with their former FWB partner also reported less mutual social connectedness compared to the "not as close" and "just as close" groups. A similar pattern (albeit not a statistically significant effect and small-sized effect) was found for comparison between young adults who were no longer friends and those who were even closer on their level of mutual social connectedness. Less mutual social connectedness may be related to the status of the friendship—losing mutual friends may be a natural part of the process of friendship dissolution as one or both members of the friendship move away from their preexisting social group. It could also be that lower levels of mutual social connectedness preceded the friendship and remained unchanged following its end. When taken together, young adults who do not remain friends with their former FWB partner have a FWB relationship that is characterized by a greater focus on sexual interactions, more perceived deception or lack of clarity in expectations, and limited mutual social networks. These elements seem to describe FWB relationships that may have been misguided in terms of expectations (potentially due to increased sexual interactions) and subsequently the friendship aspect of the relationship did not withstand the termination of the FWB relationship, which may have resulted in higher levels of personal distress.

Of those participants who remained friends, no significant differences were found for level of mutual social connectedness, loneliness, or depressive symptoms. However, those young adults who were "not as close" with their former FWB partner reported higher levels of feeling deceived than did those who were "even closer" with their former FWB partner, supporting the idea that friendship may be negatively impacted by the presence or perception of deception. Yet, those effects may not always lead to the dissolution of a friendship.

Limitations

The results of the current study should be interpreted in light of its methodological limitations. First, we utilized a cross-sectional design, which limits our ability to determine direction of effects. The participants were also reporting on their current friendship status which does not speak to transitions that may occur later on. To help address this issue, we controlled for length of time since the FWB relationship ended. However, it is possible that revitalizing a friendship post FWB relationship may take time. The chronology of these effects can only be determined with the addition of a longitudinal element to the study design, a factor we recommend for future research. Second, we utilized three measures that consisted of single items (e.g., friendship status, mutual social connectedness, level of physical vs. sexual intimacy). Although they have high face validity, more nuanced understanding of the effects of the current study may be better suited through other measures of friendship and social connectedness. Third, the sample came from one class focused on family development. This class draws students from across the university; however, there may be self-selection bias in the sample. Thus, the degree to which our findings will generalize to other college samples or non-college students is unknown. Lastly, we only assessed one partner in the FWB relationship. Notwithstanding these limitations, this is the first known study to examine friendship status after the end of a FWB relationship.

Implications

Notwithstanding these limitations, there are a few implications that may be notable for those working with university

students. First, despite a general expectation that sex with a friend is likely to negatively impact the friendship (e.g., Rubin, 1985; Sapadin, 1988), this study suggests that the impact of FWB relationships may depend somewhat on other relational variables relevant to the friendship. Thus, it may be useful for educators, advisors, and counselors to note the diversity of outcomes that can arise from FWB and explore which factors may assist young adults navigating these decisions. As friends navigate the added complexity of their relationship introduced by being sexually intimate, the existing components of their friendship may play a role in whether or not the friendship continues to be successful following termination of the sexual relationship. Conversely (or simultaneously), elements of the sexual relationship may impact whether or not the friendship survives post-FWB. Consequently, young adults open to entering FWB relationships may want to consider the necessary conditions needed to increase the likelihood of maintaining a healthy relationship. Advisors, counselors, and educators can assist young adults navigate this decision making process, by encouraging more reflection on short and long term relational goals.

Additionally, the ability to make thoughtful decisions about the nature of the relationship may reduce feelings of deceptions between partners (Owen & Fincham, 2011a; Quirk et al., 2013). Nurturing the friendship aspect (e.g., engaging with peers, confiding in one another) of the FWB relationship may be an important balance to ensure a continual connection if and when the FWB relationship ends. Ultimately, the end of FWB relationships does not mean the loss of the friendship between partners, yet the ways in which young adults navigate this process is likely a key determinant in the outcome—one that should be given some thought prior to and throughout the FWB relationship.

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