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**Relational Maintenance Behaviors of Friends with Benefits:
Investigating Equity and Relational Characteristics.**

Alan K. Goodboy
Bloomsburg University

Scott A. Myers
West Virginia University

Alan K. Goodboy (Ph.D., West Virginia University, 2007) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Studies & Theatre Arts at Bloomsburg University, 1146 McCormick Center, Bloomsburg, PA, 17815. Scott A. Myers (Ph.D., Kent State University, 1995) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at West Virginia University, P. O. Box 6293, Morgantown, WV 26506-6293. The authors would like to thank Juan D'Brot and Kami Baker for their assistance in data entry. Direct all correspondence to the first author, agoodboy@bloomu.edu

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the use of relational maintenance behaviors in friend with benefits relationship and investigate these relationships in terms of relational characteristics. Participants were 343 (study 1) and 416 (study 2) individuals who reported on their relationship with either a friend with benefits or opposite sex friend. Results indicated that (a) friends with benefits used less relational maintenance behaviors than opposite sex friends, (b) these behaviors were positively associated with communication satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, liking, commitment, and control mutuality for both types of friendships, (c) the magnitude of these relationships frequently did not differ by friendship type, and (d) overbenefited friends with benefits use several maintenance behaviors less than underbenefited counterparts. Future research should explore how relational rules influence relational maintenance in friend with benefits relationships.

Introduction

Relational maintenance behaviors refer to actions that sustain a relationship in a desired state (Dindia, 2003). Stafford, Dainton, and Haas (2000) identified seven relational maintenance behaviors: assurances (i.e., assuring an individual of the nature of the relationship), openness (i.e., discussing feelings), conflict management (i.e., addressing and understanding conflict), tasks (i.e., jointly performing tasks), positivity (i.e., communicating in a positive manner), advice (i.e., giving counsel), and networks (i.e., spending time with individuals in social networks). The study of relational maintenance has increased in popularity over the past two decades and has focused almost exclusively on romantic relationships, primarily in the context of dating and marital relationships. One overlooked context is the friends with benefits relationship (FWBR). Although casual sex has received some empirical attention (Paul & Hayes, 2002; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000), this research has not focused on developed relationships but rather transient sexual experiences. Mongeau, Ramirez, and Vorrell (as cited in Hughes, Morrison, & Asada, 2005) noted that FWBRs may be more prevalent than previously thought. FWBRs are conceptualized as relationships between cross-sex friends in which the friends engage in sexual activity but do not define their relationship as romantic (Hughes et al.). Hughes et al. (2005) discovered several important findings involving FWBRs. First, maintenance rules (i.e. negotiation, sex, communication, secrecy, permanence, emotional, friendship) are particularly important in these friendships. Second, the details of FWBRs tend to be disclosed to same-sex friends. Third, the continuation of these relationships is influenced by the perceived support of others in an individual's social network. However, given the paucity of research on FWBRs and the ease in which these relationships develop, researchers should begin to investigate communication and relational characteristics of such relationships. Considering the importance of relational maintenance in any close relationship and the current lack of research conducted on FWBRs, the focus of this study is twofold. The purpose of this study is to examine the use of relational maintenance behaviors in FWBRs compared to opposite sex friends and investigate the relationships between these maintenance behaviors and relational characteristics.

According to Hughes et al. (2003), FWBRs avoid the responsibilities and commitment of romantic sexual relationships, despite the inclusion of sexual activity. FWBRs are more stable than one-night stands and are not concerned with romantic love. Accordingly, Hughes et al.'s (2005) research suggested that attitudes towards love did not influence maintenance rules. Although some characteristics of FWBRs appear to be similar to the characteristics of friendships (Hughes et al., 2005), the inclusion of sexual activity may alter the maintenance behaviors employed among individuals in FWBRs. The possible differences between FWBRs and friendships may affect the relational maintenance strategies used. Individuals in FWBRs may use different relational maintenance strategies because they engage in more intimate activities than do opposite-sex friends, possibly appear more attractive than would opposite-sex friends, and allow sexuality to characterize the relationship. Moreover, individuals in FWBRs may attach more value to the sexual activity than the friendship itself. Thus, the quality of communication may suffer because of sexual activity. Although researchers have ascertained the relational maintenance behaviors used in romantic and non-romantic relationships (Ayers, 1983; Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Dainton, Zelle, & Langan, 2003; Hess, 2003; Stafford & Canary, 1991; Vogl-Bauer, 2003), little research has examined relational maintenance behaviors used in FWBRs. Most noteworthy, Guerrero and Chavez (2005) discovered that cross-sex friends who mutually desire a romantic relationship use more relational maintenance

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behaviors than strictly platonic friends. To gain a more complete understanding of the relational maintenance behaviors used between individuals in FWBRs, the following research question was presented:

RQ1: Do friends with benefits and opposite sex friendships differ in the frequency in which they use relational maintenance behaviors?

Research has suggested that the relational characteristics of any given relationship are particularly important in terms of maintenance. For example, Stafford and Canary (1991) discovered that control mutuality, commitment, liking, and satisfaction were moderately to strongly correlated with relational maintenance behaviors. Additional studies have found similar results with these relational characteristics (see Canary & Stafford, 1992; Dainton, Stafford, & Canary, 1994). Based on the work of Stafford and Canary (1991), this study attempts to extend the literature on relational maintenance by examining these same variables in respect to FWBRs. Control mutually involves how much relational partners agree about who has the right to exert influence and power in the relationship (see Stafford and Canary, 1991); commitment refers to a psychological attachment in which a partner intends to continue in a relationship indefinitely (Canary & Stafford, 1994); liking is considered the degree of positive evaluation and respect toward another person (Rubin, 1973); and relational satisfaction involves the evaluation of the “goodness of relationship gestalt” (Norton, 1983, p. 143). All of these relational characteristics are centered around goals and expectations. Additionally, another variable that was of interest and involves expectations is communication satisfaction. Communication satisfaction is an affective response to the accomplishment of communication goals and expectations (Hecht, 1978). Generally, the more two individuals become intimate, the more they report being satisfied with communication (Hecht & Martson, 1987). According to Hecht (1978) reinforcement must be present for communication satisfaction to occur and results from the fulfillment of positive expectations. Based on extant research (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Dainton, Stafford & Canary, 1991; Stafford, & Canary, 1994) concerning these characteristics, the following hypothesis is posited:

H1: A positive relationship will exist between the seven maintenance behaviors and communication satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, liking, commitment, and control mutuality for both friend with benefits and opposite sex friend relationships.

However, it is possible that the magnitude of these proposed relationships are different for friends with benefits and opposite sex friends. Although both relationships are voluntary and share some commonalities, the relational maintenance behaviors may not be as important for FWBRs because of the sexual focus of the relationship. Therefore, the following research question is presented:

RQ2: Is there a difference in magnitude of relational maintenance behaviors in the relationships proposed in H1?

Another important relational characteristic is equity. Walster, Walster, and Berscheid (1978) proposed that equity includes feeling either benefited or deprived in a relationship.

Partners are considered overbenefited when they receive more rewards than they give and underbenefited when they give more than they receive. Thus, an equitable relationship involves a perception of balance (Walster et al., 1978). Canary and Stafford (1992) examined maintenance strategies based on equity theory. The researchers discovered that the level of equity in a relationship was important to wives but not to husbands. Relational maintenance strategies also predicted control mutuality, liking, and commitment better than (in)equity. Moreover, Dainton (2003) discovered that inequity was negatively related to maintenance strategies. Equity has been considered a salient feature in the use and perception of relational maintenance strategies (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Canary & Stafford, 2007) However, equity may be less important for the relationships studied because they do not revolve around romance. Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

RQ3: How is equity related to relational maintenance behaviors for both friends with benefits and opposite sex friends?

Method

Study 1

Participants

Two studies were conducted. In study 1, participants were 343 individuals (198 men, 142 women, 3 unreported) enrolled in various introductory communication studies courses who were attending a large northeastern university. Ages ranged from 18 to 52 years ($M = 20.25$, $SD = 3.28$).

Procedures

Participants were asked to reference a either a friend with benefits or an opposite sex friend. They were informed that a friend with benefits relationship involved a platonic friendship where sexual activity took place, but the relationship was not defined as romantic or monogamous. They were also given the opportunity to ask any questions and were informed that the survey was completely confidential. Participants were instructed to complete a survey in reference to either type of friendship and provide the friend's initials. Three participants did not indicate a type of friendship while 167 reported on a friend with benefits relationship and 174 reported on an opposite sex friend. The average length of these friendships was 23.76 months ($SD = 27.24$). The ages of the referenced friend ranged from 16 to 50 years ($M = 20.27$, $SD = 2.87$).

Measurement

The survey included the Relational Maintenance Behaviors scale (Stafford et al., 2000), the Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory (Hecht, 1978), the Quality Marriage Index (Norton, 1983), the Measure of Control Mutuality scale (Canary & Cupach, 1988), the Liking scale (Rubin, 1970), and the Measure of Commitment scale (Stafford & Canary, 1991). Participants also provided demographic data.

The Relational Maintenance Behaviors scale is 31 items and measures routine and strategic maintenance behaviors employed in relationships. It consists of 7 subscales measuring following maintenance behaviors: assurances, openness, conflict management, shared tasks, positivity, advice, and social networks. Previous reliability coefficients for the subscales have been .92, .87, .81, .83, .76, .70, and .72 respectively (Stafford et al., 2000). In this study, obtained Cronbach alphas for each subscale were: *assurances* ($M = 28.50, SD = 12.86, \alpha = .93$), *openness* ($M = 28.23, SD = 10.07, \alpha = .86$), *conflict management* ($M = 25.74, SD = 7.02, \alpha = .89$), *shared tasks* ($M = 26.60, SD = 6.70, \alpha = .88$), *positivity* ($M = 11.13, SD = 2.55, \alpha = .85$), *advice* ($M = 10.73, SD = 2.92, \alpha = .89$), and *networks* ($M = 10.84, SD = 2.65, \alpha = .68$).

The Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory is 16 items and measures the amount of communication satisfaction an individual experienced when referring to a previous conversation. It uses a 7-point Likert response format ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Previous reliability coefficients have been .84 (Neuliep & Grohskopf, 2000) and .93 (Duran & Zakahi, 1988). This scale was modified to measure individual global perceptions of communication satisfaction with a specific friend. In this study, a Cronbach alpha of .88 ($M = 82.12, SD = 15.73$) was obtained.

The *Quality Marriage Index* includes 6 items and measures the degree to which a spouse experiences marital satisfaction. The first 5 items utilize a Likert response format ranging from *very strongly disagree* (1) to *very strongly agree* (7). The last item measures the overall degree of happiness in the marriage from a scale that ranges from *very unhappy* (1) to *perfectly happy* (10). This scale was slightly modified to reflect platonic friendships instead of marital relationships. Previous reliability coefficients have been .95 (Baxter, 1990) and .96 (Perse, Pavitt, & Burggraf, 1990). In this study, the obtained Cronbach alpha was .93 ($M = 31.94, SD = 8.92$) for the summed scale.

The Measure of Control Mutuality scale is 6 items and measures the degree to which an agreement is made about who will have more influence in a relationship. Five items were included for analysis (Stafford et al., 2000). Responses were solicited using a 5-point Likert response format ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Previous reliability coefficients have been .87 (Canary & Stafford, 1992) and .91 (Stafford et al., 2000). In this study, a Cronbach alpha of .85 ($M = 18.81, SD = 4.35$) was obtained for the summed scale.

The *Liking scale* is a 13-item scale that asks respondents to indicate their general feelings of liking toward a targeted partner. Responses were solicited using a 5-point Likert response format ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). This scale was shortened to 5 items (Stafford & Canary, 1991, p. 229). Previous reliability coefficients have been .92 (Myers & Johnson, 2003) and .93 (Myers & Goodboy, 2006). Canary and Stafford (1991) reported a reliability coefficient of .85 for the 5 item adaptation. In this study, a Cronbach alpha of .86 ($M = 18.13, SD = 4.78$) was obtained for the summed scale.

The *Measure of Commitment scale* is a 6 items and asks respondents to indicate their level of commitment toward the targeted partner. Responses were solicited using a 5-point Likert response format ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). This scale was shortened to 5 items (Stafford & Canary, 1991). Previous reliability coefficients of .83 and .88 have been reported for the scale (Canary & Stafford, 1991; Myers & Weber, 2004). In this study, the obtained Cronbach alpha was .77 ($M = 15.41, SD = 4.67$).

Study 2

Participants

In study 2, participants were 416 individuals (219 men, 187 women, 10 unreported) enrolled in various introductory communication studies courses who were attending a large northeastern university. Ages ranged from 17 to 48 years ($M = 20.05$, $SD = 2.30$). Participants were given the same procedures as in study 1. Three participants did not indicate a type of friendship while 167 reported on a friend with benefits relationship and 174 reported on an opposite sex friend. The average length of these friendships was 23.76 months ($SD = 27.24$). The ages of the referenced friend ranged from 16 to 50 years ($M = 20.27$, $SD = 2.87$). The survey included the Relational Maintenance Behaviors scale (Stafford et al., 2000) and a measure of equity (Hatfield, Utne, & Traupmann, 1979; Sprecher, 1986).

Measurement

The same *Relational Maintenance Behaviors scale* was administered as in study 1. The obtained Cronbach alphas for each subscale were: *assurances* ($M = 26.78$, $SD = 12.97$, $\alpha = .93$), *openness* ($M = 26.77$, $SD = 10.02$, $\alpha = .86$), *conflict management* ($M = 22.49$, $SD = 6.64$, $\alpha = .88$), *shared tasks* ($M = 23.50$, $SD = 6.91$, $\alpha = .90$), *positivity* ($M = 11.22$, $SD = 2.28$, $\alpha = .82$), *advice* ($M = 10.720$, $SD = 2.76$, $\alpha = .82$), and *social networks* ($M = 10.69$, $SD = 2.46$, $\alpha = .55$).

A measure of equity was created by combining Hatfield et al.'s (1979) global equity measure and Sprecher's equity measure (1986). These items asked participants to indicate how much they agree with the following statements: "I am getting a much better deal than this person" and "This person is much more likely to be the one to contribute more." Responses were solicited using a 7-point semantic differential response format. Previous reliability coefficients have been .70 (Dainton, 2003). In this study, the obtained Cronbach alpha was .73 ($M = 8.23$, $SD = 2.38$) for the summed scale. Scores from this scale were transformed into nominal data. Scores above 8 were categorized as overbenefited and below 8 as underbenefited. Scores of 8 were labeled equitable.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1 was explored using MANOVA. Significant findings were explored using ANOVA. Hypothesis 1 was explored using a series of Pearson Product-Moment correlations. Research Question 2 was explored using a series of Fisher's z-tests. Research Question 3 was explored using MANOVA. Significant findings were explored using ANOVA and Sheffe post hoc tests when appropriate.

Results

Research Question 1 inquired if friends with benefits and opposite sex friends differ in the type of relational maintenance behaviors they use. A MANOVA was computed to test this inquiry with the type of relationship (i.e., friend with benefits vs. opposite sex friend) serving as the independent variable and scores on the subscales of the Relational Maintenance Behaviors scale serving as the dependent variables. The results of the MANOVA yielded a statistically

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significant model, Wilks' $\lambda = .81$, $F(7, 328) = 10.91$, $p < .001$. Univariate effects were significant for assurances, $F(1, 334) = 34.90$, $p < .001$; conflict management, $F(1, 334) = 18.03$; $p < .001$; tasks $F(1, 334) = 13.54$, $p < .001$; positivity $F(1, 334) = 6.48$, $p < .05$; advice, $F(1, 334) = 9.218$, $p < .01$; and networks, $F(1, 334) = 14.84$, $p < .001$. No univariate effect was observed for openness, $F(1, 334) = .18$, $p > .05$. Accordingly, friends with benefits used less relational maintenance behaviors (besides openness) than opposite sex friends

Table 1: Results of ANOVA's between relational type and relational maintenance behaviors

Behavior	Relational Type	Mean	SD	<i>F</i>
Assurances	Friend w/ Benefits	24.53	12.38	34.90***
	Opposite Sex Friend	32.42	12.09	
Openness	Friend w/ Benefits	28.09	10.41	.18
	Opposite Sex Friend	28.56	9.61	
Conflict Management	Friend w/ Benefits	24.13	7.55	18.03***
	Opposite Sex Friend	27.32	6.11	
Shared Tasks	Friend w/ Benefits	23.26	7.19	13.54***
	Opposite Sex Friend	25.90	5.93	
Positivity	Friend w/ Benefits	10.76	2.88	6.48*
	Opposite Sex Friend	11.47	2.14	
Advice	Friend w/ Benefits	10.23	3.18	9.21**
	Opposite Sex Friend	11.19	2.57	
Shared Networks	Friend w/ Benefits	10.26	2.95	14.84***
	Opposite Sex Friend	11.35	2.19	

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 1 predicted a positive relationship between the seven relational maintenance behaviors and communication satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, liking, commitment, and control mutuality for each relational type. For friends with benefits, positive correlations were discovered between each relational maintenance behavior and the five dependent variables, except between advice and control mutuality ($r = .13$, $p > .05$). For opposite sex friends, each maintenance behavior was positively correlated with all 5 dependent variables.

Research Question 2 asked if there was a difference in the magnitude of the relationships discovered from H1 between friend with benefits and opposite sex friends. Three significant differences between correlation coefficients were discovered. First, the correlation between managing conflict and commitment was significantly greater for friends with benefits ($z = 2.46$,

$p < .05$). Second, the correlations between social networks and liking ($z = 2.21, p < .05$) as well as commitment ($z = 2.68, p < .01$) were significantly greater for friends with benefits.

Table 2: Correlations and z-tests for assurances

	FWB	OSF	z value
Communication Satisfaction	.45**	.33**	1.30
Relationship Satisfaction	.53**	.50**	.37
Liking	.49**	.39**	1.14
Commitment	.62**	.48**	1.85
Control Mutuality	.28**	.28**	0.0

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

Table 3: Correlations and z-tests for openness

	FWB	OSF	z value
Communication Satisfaction	.44**	.37**	.77
Relationship Satisfaction	.39**	.45**	-.67
Liking	.41**	.35**	.64
Commitment	.50**	.39**	1.26
Control Mutuality	.25**	.39**	-1.43

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

Table 4: Correlations and z-tests for conflict management

	FWB	OSF	z value
Communication Satisfaction	.56**	.56**	.00
Relationship Satisfaction	.51**	.47**	.48
Liking	.54**	.44**	1.20
Commitment	.53**	.31**	2.46*
Control Mutuality	.48**	.48**	.00

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

Table 5: Correlations and z-tests for shared tasks

	FWB	OSF	z value
Communication Satisfaction	.42**	.50**	-.92
Relationship Satisfaction	.38**	.37**	.11
Liking	.39**	.37**	.24
Commitment	.43**	.39**	.44
Control Mutuality	.27**	.44**	-1.77

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

Table 6: Correlations and z-tests for positivity

	FWB	OSF	z value
Communication Satisfaction	.48**	.48**	.00
Relationship Satisfaction	.44**	.51**	-.82
Liking	.42**	.43**	-.11
Commitment	.45**	.34**	1.19
Control Mutuality	.36**	.41**	-.53

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

Table 7: Correlations and z-tests for advice

	FWB	OSF	z value
Communication Satisfaction	.40**	.48**	-.90
Relationship Satisfaction	.36**	.50**	-1.57
Liking	.27**	.25**	.20
Commitment	.32**	.22**	.98
Control Mutuality	.13	.32**	---

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

Table 8: Correlations and z-tests for social networks

	FWB	OSF	z value
Communication Satisfaction	.61**	.57**	.56
Relationship Satisfaction	.52**	.56**	-.51
Liking	.57**	.38**	2.21*
Commitment	.54**	.30**	2.68**
Control Mutuality	.43**	.47**	-.46

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

Research Question 3 inquired about the relationship between equity and the relational maintenance behaviors for friend with benefits and opposite sex friend relationships. Two MANOVAs were computed to test this inquiry with equity (i.e., underbenefited, equitable, overbenefited) serving as the independent variable and scores on the subscales of the Relational Maintenance Behaviors scale serving as the dependent variables. A MANOVA was computed for each relational type. The results of MANOVA for FWBRs yielded a statistically significant model, Wilks' $\lambda = .85$, $F(14, 382) = 2.37$, $p < .01$. Univariate effects were significant for assurances, $F(2, 197) = 8.79$, $p < .001$; openness, $F(2, 197) = 3.46$, $p < .05$; conflict management, $F(2, 197) = 3.67$, $p < .05$; tasks, $F(2, 197) = 7.75$, $p < .01$; and networks, $F(2, 197) = 5.88$, $p < .01$. No univariate effects were observed for positivity, $F(2, 197) = 4.41$, $p > .05$; and advice, $F(2, 197) = 1.81$, $p > .05$. An examination of the mean scores using Scheffe

post-hoc tests revealed that overbenefited friends with benefits used less maintenance behaviors in all five significant ANOVAs. Also, friends with benefits in overbenefited relationships used significantly less assurances, shared tasks, and social networks than those in equitable relationships. The results of MANOVA for opposite sex friends did not yield a statistically significant model, Wilks' $\lambda = .89$, $F(14, 218) = .90$, $p = .56$.

Table 9: Results of ANOVA's between equity and relational maintenance behaviors

Behavior	Mean Score			<i>F</i>
	1	2	3	
Assurances	25.67 _a	25.73 _b	18.50 _{ab}	8.79 [†]
Openness	27.60 _a	26.88	23.69 _a	3.46*
Conflict Management	25.10 _a	24.66	22.20 _a	3.68*
Tasks	23.37 _a	23.37 _b	19.41 _{ab}	7.75**
Networks	10.63 _a	10.67 _b	9.35 _{ab}	5.88**

Note. 1= underbenefited, 67 participants. 2 = equitable, 59 participants. 3 = overbenefited, 74 participants. Means sharing subscripts across each row are significantly different from each other. *Note.* * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. [†] $p < .001$.

Discussion

The main ambition of this research was to examine the use of relational maintenance behaviors in FWBRs compared to opposite sex friends and explore the relationships in respect to relational characteristics. The first research question examined if friends with benefits and opposite sex friends differed in the types of relational maintenance behaviors enacted. Findings revealed that overall, friends with benefits used less relational maintenance behaviors than opposite sex friends. Considering that FWBRs are centered around sexual activity, these results are not surprising. Hughes et al. (2005) discovered that emotional rules were the most common type of established rules in FWBRs which is consistent with the conceptualization of these relationships. Emotional rules include “avoiding falling in love or minimizing jealousy” (Hughes et al., p. 55). Considering a key feature of FWBRs involves a lack of romance, sexual activity may be an actual maintenance behavior in itself for these types of relationships. As Paul and Hayes (2002) noted, sexual partners are quite capable of being emotionally ambivalent. Accordingly, results suggested that maintaining the relationship may not involve as much supportive communication (e.g., assurances, advice). It is possible that merely having continued sexual activity is more important than actual communication and relational maintenance. Interestingly, friends with benefits did not significantly differ from opposite sex friends in using the openness behavior. This is probably a function of the topics of direct discussions. Friends with benefits need to engage in open and direct communication if they are discussing sexual

activity. Additionally, the openness behavior is not necessarily prosocial. As Stafford et al. (2000) noted, “openness may not be indicative of positive relational characteristics” (p. 319). Friends with benefits may need to directly discuss the current state of the relationship if one partner begins communicating romance messages (e.g., “no we aren’t dating so don’t get jealous”) or inducing sexual activity (e.g., “do you want to have sex tonight?”). These topics of discussion would require openness. The other maintenance behaviors in Stafford et al.’s (2000) typology are much more prosocial and more important in maintaining opposite sex friendships.

The first hypothesis posited a positive relationship between the seven maintenance behaviors and communication satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, liking, commitment, and control mutuality for both relational types while the second research question investigated the magnitude of these relationships. This hypothesis was supported. As discovered in earlier studies of other relational types (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Dainton, et al., 1994; Stafford & Canary, 1991; Stafford et al., 2000), these relational characteristics were positively correlated with all of the maintenance strategies. Friends with benefits and opposite sex friends used more relational maintenance strategies when they had positive perceptions about the relationship and friend. These findings bolster support for the predictive capability of these behaviors with relational characteristics. Except for three cases, the magnitude of these relationships were similar. For FWBRs, managing conflict was more predictive of commitment. Communicating understanding and patience may be more necessary for maintaining the desire to continue the relationship because of the plethora of prescribed rules in FWBRs. Hughes et al. (2005) suggested that friends with benefits constantly engage in a negotiation process where the relationship is talked about for clarity purposes. FWBRs do not only involve sexual activities but a mutual friendship. The sexual activity is often times kept secret (Hughes et al.). Consequently, commitment and continuation of the relationship may be more important for FWBRs because of this constant negotiation and secrecy. These types of friends have to work harder at additional rules that opposite sex friends are not concerned with. Additionally, the social networks behavior was more predictive of commitment and liking for friends with benefits. This may be due in part to the friendship rules established. Hughes et al. (2005) discovered that some friends with benefits are particularly concerned with placing higher importance on the actual friendship and not sexual activity (i.e., friendship rules). One strategy for addressing this importance is through spending time with mutual friends instead of spending time alone. Opposite sex friends may not need to share networks as much because the sexual activity does not complicate their platonic nonsexual friendships.

The third research question examined the role of equity in the use of relational maintenance behaviors for both relational types. Collectively, the results suggested that equity is more important in FWBRs. Specifically overbenefited friends with benefits used less maintenance behaviors (except for positive and advice) than underbenefited counterparts. No differences with equity and relational maintenance were found with opposite sex friends. As Hatfield et al. (1979) argued, underbenefited partners tend to make more demands and more negative emotions are experienced. In terms of rewards and equity, underbenefited friends with benefits may not be receiving as much reciprocal sexual activity. An overbenefited partner does not have to engage in relational maintenance as much because he/she may be getting more sexual rewards. Working at maintaining the relationship would not be as necessary because desired sexual expectations are more than fulfilled. However, equity was not related to maintenance behaviors in opposite sex friends. As discovered in this study, these sorts of friends engage in more maintenance to begin with. Since the desire for sexual activity is not a focal point of the

relationship and considering that ascribed rules may not mediate the friendship as much, these friendships may be perceived as more unconditional, while a FWBR may be conditional and could terminate if sexual activity ceases.

One limitation of this study is that only one friendship perspective was obtained. It would be advantageous if future researchers obtained data from both members of the relationship. There is the possibility that one member could perceive the relationship differently (e.g., as romantic). Considering that scant research has been conducted on communication patterns of friends with benefits, future research could focus on a plethora topics. One avenue of research involves investigating how ascribed rules for FWBRs influence relational maintenance behaviors.

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