

FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS AND LOVE STYLES

AMIGOS CON BENEFICIOS Y ESTILOS DE AMOR

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study analyses the friendship with benefits and the different subtypes that compose it. It pretends to know the prevalence, the satisfaction, the future aspiration of the participants and the styles of love. **Method:** 400 people of Spanish nationality completed a questionnaire about relational links and love styles. **Results:** friendship with benefits is a common practice, although the romantic relationship is more prevalent and satisfactory. The styles of love are different depending on the gender and the relational link. **Conclusion:** this shows a changing relational universe, forms of polyamory that coexist with traditional relationships and gender roles that are transforming.

RESUMEN

Objetivos: Este estudio analiza las relaciones de amigos con beneficios y los diferentes subtipos que la componen. Pretende conocer el predominio, la satisfacción, la aspiración futura de los participantes y los estilos de amor. **Método:** 400 personas de nacionalidad española completaron un cuestionario sobre vínculos relacionales y estilos de amor. **Resultados:** los amigos con beneficios es una práctica común, aunque la relación romántica es más prevalente y satisfactoria. Los estilos de amor son diferentes según el género y el vínculo relacional. **Conclusión:** Se muestra un universo relacional cambiante, formas de poliamor que conviven con las relaciones tradicionales y roles de género que se están transformando.

Palabras clave

estilos de amor

relaciones

amigos con beneficios

citas

INTRODUCTION

Technology has revolutionised dating and today individuals enjoy multiple opportunities to meet new people in an effort to change the hegemonic cultural order (Hand et al, 2013). In this new, globalised relationships paradigm, traditional romantic encounters exist alongside casual sexual encounters, including those known as ‘friends with benefits’ (Jonason, 2013).

Committed or romantic relationships represent an exclusive monogamous sentimental union, with unconditional commitment and a high level of sacrifice (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Conversely, casual sexual relations occur between individuals who have just met and who have no intention of meeting again. These relations frequently occur at night, in clubs and bars or parties where alcohol is abundant (Paul et al., 2000; Epstein et al., 2009). Friendships with benefits, usually meaning two friends who occasionally have sex, are included in this framework of casual encounters. The intimacy of the friendship is maintained with the added benefit of having sex with no commitment (Bisson & Levine, 2009; Puentes et al., 2008; Hughes et al., 2005).

The amorous complexity of this sexual paradigm has been described by Williams et al. (2007), identifying 7 general types of friends with benefits:

True Friends: This is the purest form and the most often used in theoretical definitions. These are friendships with love, respect, trust, consideration and sex.

Just Sex: This is the most distant form of friendship with benefits; no deep friendship unites them, and the sexual benefits take precedence.

Network Opportunism: These are acquaintances that frequent situations with abundant alcohol. They are a ‘plan B’ when no better alternative is available.

Transition In: The goal is to transition to a romantic relationship, and sex is considered a compatibility test.

Transition Out: Characterised by sex with exes, following a period after the breakup.

Friends with benefits peaks the interest of the general public and academics, although it is not always depicted objectively, having become a stereotype for many romantic comedies portraying the transition towards a romantic relationship (Easton & Hardy, 2013). In fact, only 10-20% of friends with benefits establish permanent relationships (Bisson & Levine, 2009; Eisenberg et al., 2009; Owen & Fincham, 2011). There are several explanations for this: there are those who wish to take the relationship further, otherwise the friendship would come to an end, (Reeder, 2012), although between 18.5% and 26% end in rupture (Bisson y Levine, 2009; Owen et al., 2013), and 76% of these cases are strengthened by sex (Afifi &

[Faulkner, 2000](#)). Others argue the impossibility of friendship becoming a permanent romantic relationship because of the predisposition towards Othello syndrome ([Easton & Hardy, 2013](#); [Thalmann, 2008](#)).

Friends with benefits may be included in the definition of polyamory, a term opposed to the emotional and sexual dependency found in the heteropatriarchal model. Polyamory is having more than one intimate, loving and sexual long-term relationship at the same time, with the full knowledge and consent of all partners ([Easton & Hardy, 2013](#); [Thalmann, 2008](#)).

The double standards derived from the heteropatriarchal model are applied to women who are severely judged for participating in friends with benefits relationships, while men are blameless and rewarded ([Sierra et al., 2007](#)). The majority of studies show that women are less involved ([Owen & Fincham, 2011](#); [Merriam-Pigg, 2012](#); [Jonason et al., 2015](#)), that they hope for the relationship to evolve into a stable union ([Lehmiller et al., 2011](#); [Williams & Adams, 2013](#); [Jonason, 2013](#)), and experience less psychological wellbeing ([Grello et al., 2006](#); [Merriam-Pigg, 2012](#); [Williams & Adams, 2013](#); [Furman & Collibee, 2014](#)). However, the latter is questionable since research by [Williams and Jovanovic \(2015\)](#) showed women felt greater emotional-sexual satisfaction. Furthermore, the greater number of women in friends with benefits relationships may augur a feminist transition in sexual behaviour, towards a transformation of traditional sexual roles, in rebellion against these double standards ([Green & Morman, 2008](#); [Soriano-Ayala & García-Serrán, 2019](#)).

The foremost studies on friends with benefits focus on several themes, the motivation for initiating such a relationship, associated benefits, type of commitment; the evolution of the relationship; sexual behaviour and risk; psychological wellbeing; disadvantages; the influence of gender; sexual roles; ethnic differences; personality patterns; gender violence and infidelity ([Afifi & Faulkner, 2000](#); [Paul et al., 2000](#); [Manning et al., 2005](#); [Grello et al., 2006](#); [Williams et al., 2007](#); [Emmet, 2008](#); [Goodboy & Myers, 2008](#); [Bisson & Levine, 2009](#); [Green & Morman, 2008](#); [Eisenberg et al., 2009](#); [VanderDrift et al., 2010](#); [Furman y Shaffer, 2011](#); [Wentland & Reissing, 2011](#); [Owen & Fincham, 2011](#); [Lehmiller et al., 2011](#); [Weaver et al., 2011](#); [Merriam-Pigg, 2012](#); [Jonason, 2013](#); [Owen et al., 2013](#); [Klipfel et al., 2013](#); [Giorgi, 2013](#); [Williams & Adams, 2013](#); [García et al., 2014](#); [Adams et al., 2014](#); [Furman & Collibee, 2014](#); [Williams & Jovanovic, 2015](#); [Braithwaite et al., 2015](#)). The majority of studies use university students as subjects, which presents problems when comparing and extrapolating results.

This study focuses on the love styles of the subjects, similar to [Paul and collaborators \(2000\)](#), [Grello et al. \(2006\)](#) and more recently [Jonason and colleagues \(2015\)](#). According to [Lee's colour wheel of love \(1973\)](#) there are 6 love styles with a characteristic colour: three primary; Eros, Ludus and Storge and three secondary; Manis, Agape and Pragma.

- Eros (red). Signifies physical and emotional love. It is based on love at first sight and sexual satisfaction is considered a basic need.
- Ludus (blue). Love is considered a game to amuse and divert, without emotional commitment, falling in love or obligation.
- Storge (yellow). Similar to brotherly or family love between spouses, cousins, parents and children. This is characterised by loyalty, commitment and based on similar interests.
- Mania (purple). Characterised by holding one's partner in high esteem and the anxious desire to love and be loved effusively, obsessively and dependently. Possessiveness and jealousy are common traits.
- Agape (orange). This is the purest, most altruistic and spiritual form of love. It is based on unbreakable commitment and selfless, compassionate and unconditional love.
- Pragma (green). This love is pragmatic, rational and realist, based on convenience. This is a relationship based on cooperation and symbiosis, thereby achieving the most durable relationships ([Chaudhuri, 2004](#)).

[Hendrick and Hendrick \(1986\)](#), developed Lee's theory and created a questionnaire of 42 items capable of measuring what they termed 'love styles', known as the Love Attitude Scale (LAS). Abbreviated versions of 18 and 24 items were later developed. ([Hendrick et al., 1998](#)).

OBJETIVES

This study aims to reflect the degree of prevalence, satisfaction and aspirations of people involved in a Friends with Benefits (FwB) relationship, according to the typology of [Williams et al. \(2007\)](#) and to identify the love styles associated with these relationships.

Given that the majority of people aspire to a romantic relationship and that this is a relationship that almost everyone has experienced at least once ([Easton & Hardy, 2013](#)), particular importance is given to those that have, or had, a romantic relationship when measuring the degree of satisfaction and future aspirations in a friendship with benefits relationship.

This study has the following objectives:

- Define what type of FwB relationship is considered the most satisfactory according to the Williams et al., typology.
- Compare the degree of satisfaction derived from romantic relationships with that of FwB.

- Determine whether those with no intention of initiating or continuing a romantic relationship have the intention of starting or continuing to have FwB relationships.
- Using the love styles determined by [Lee \(1973\)](#), followed by the conclusions reached by [Hendrick & Hendrick \(1986\)](#), to distinguish and understand what love styles men and women hope.
- Determine and evaluate the predominant love style in each type of relationship (romantic or FwB).

METHOD

Participants

The total sample was 400 subjects: 267 females (66.8%), 132 males (33%) with one subject (0.3%) who did not consider themselves male nor female. Requirements for participation were to have had at least one romantic relationship (RR) and/or one FwB relationship.

The majority of the sample declared themselves to be heterosexual (78%); followed by bisexual (14.3%); homosexual (5.5%); pansexual (0.8%) and asexual (0.3%). Five subjects preferred not to declare their sexual orientation (1.3%).

Ages ranged from 18 to 58 years ($M = 25.84$, $SD = 7.48$). Subjects originated from all of the Spanish Regional Autonomies, 77.5% from urban areas and 22.5% from rural areas.

Religious beliefs were 51% atheist, (23.3%); agnostic, (20%); Christian, (1.5%); non-denominational with a personal spiritual life (1.3%); pagans represented (1%); muslims (0.5%) the remainder were Buddhist; Deist; Pantheist; believers in reincarnation; Rastafarianism and B'há'í represented 0.3% each. 65.3% did not grant any importance to religion in their lives, followed by 15.3% who gave it little importance and 13.3% who gave it some importance. Only 5.5% gave religion quite a lot of importance and 1% gave it a lot of importance.

41.3% of the subjects held a bachelor's or university graduate degree; 29% held the Baccalaureate or vocational training degree; 21.5% a master's or post graduate; 4.8% had completed secondary education; 2.5% held Doctorates and just 1%, had only completed primary education.

At the time of completing the questionnaire, 91 of the subjects had no relationship although they had previously had one; 174 were in a romantic relationship (46.3%); 101 were in a FwB relationship of the True Friends type (49%); 61 in the Just Sex type (33.3%); 60 in Transition In (31.7%); 39 in Transition Out; and 35 in Network Opportunism (35.4%). The fact that participants may have different types of FwB relationships at the same time and even a romantic relationship at the same time as FwB relationships, must be taken into account. This

explains the fact that of 174 participants with romantic relationships, 19 simultaneously held FwB Transition In relationships (10.9%); 18 held True Friends (10.3%); 11, Just Sex (6.3%); 6, Network Opportunism (3.4%); and 6, Transition Out (3.4%).

Table 1
Summary of relationships held by subjects in the sample

No current relationship	In a single relationship						In valrious, simultaneous relationships	
	RR	TF	JS	NO	TI	TO	Several FwB	RR and one FwB
91	114	34	11	7	13	3	67	60

Note. RR= Romantic Relationship; TF=True Friends; JS=Just Sex; NO=Network Opportunism; TI=Transition In; TO= Transition Out; FwB=Friends with Benefits

Instruments

A 3-part questionnaire was elaborated.

1. *Personal details and demographics.* Included questions on gender, age, address, level of education, sexual orientation, religion and its importance. The response to this last question was on a 5-point scale: 0 - None / 5 - Very important.

2. *Type of current or past relationship*

2.1 The aim of this section was to determine whether subjects were in, or had had a romantic relationship. The questions were: Have you had any type of romantic relationship? (Yes/No). Total number of romantic relationships. Are you currently in a romantic relationship (Yes/No). How satisfied are you with the kind of relationship (on an oscillating scale from 0 to 5 points, with 0 - Not very / 5 - Very satisfied); the intention of maintaining the relationship or of seeking one in future (Yes/No/Not sure).

2.2 This section presents a definition of each type of FwB, according to [Williams et al. \(2007\)](#) with similar questions to those asked about romantic relationships but taking non-exclusivity into account. The first part of the questionnaire concludes with questions regarding the type of FwB subjects consider most satisfactory: True Friends/Just Sex/Network Opportunism/Transition In/Transition Out/NS-NC).

Not all of the variables from this section were used, leaving a large collection of data for future research.

3. *The third part of the questionnaire consisted of a Love Attitudes Scale: Short Form* ([Hendrick et al., 1998](#)), in a translation by the research team, since the only available format was English and did not take into consideration non-exclusivity. Double translation is carried out. A native English teacher and a Spanish teacher with a high knowledge of English and knowledge of the subject, carry out the translation of the English version into Spanish. An

English teacher translates the Spanish version into English. It is verified that the content of the scale has not changed. The Spanish version is adapted to the non-exclusivity of the couple.

The pilot study revealed the necessity of changing the initial response scales therefore the scales are translated and adapted: 1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree. The scale has 24 items of different phrases that reflect different attitudes towards love. The reliability of the Scale reached Cronbach .70.

Of the 24 items, 6 different scores were obtained. Items 1 to 4 produced scores for the loving style or archetype EROS; scores 5 to 8 for LUDUS; scores 9 to 12 for STORGE; scores 13 to 16 PRAGMA; scores 17 to 20 for MANIA and 21 to 24 for AGAPE.

Procedure

The final questionnaire was uploaded to SurveyMonkey®, which restricts one survey per IP address, thereby limiting the chances of bias. Consisting of 52 items on 16 pages with the omission of pages lacking the necessary conditions for response, the survey was available for two months. At closure, a total of 476 responses had been recorded, of which 400 were valid. The others were rejected due to incompleteness.

The welcoming page of the survey informed users of the complete anonymity of the responses and the duration, approximately 10 minutes, with the only limitation for participation being the age of 18. They were informed that data would be used in research.

Participants were drawn through social media such as LinkedIn®, Facebook®, WhatsApp® and public and private Facebook® groups. Ultimately, the most effective format was through a public, open Facebook event which garnered new participants.

No reward or payment was offered for participation.

Ethical considerations

The University of Almería Bioethics committee approved the study. Participants were anonymous and informed of the use of the data gathered for research purposes.

Data analysis

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine whether the data distribution adjusted to a normal curve and to determine the statistical tests to apply. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to answer the first requirement, followed by the Wilcoxon test to find the possible differences between “Romantic Relationship Satisfaction” and “Satisfaction with the various types of FwB relationships”. This non-parametric test was chosen due to the non-normal compliance of these variables.

The relationship between the variables “Intention of continuing” or “intention to initiate future romantic relationships” was calculated using percentages and chi-squared tests.

For the fourth and fifth objectives a multivariate analysis of variance was used (MANOVA). The size of the effect was indicated by eta partial squared (η^2_p), using the value limits reference proposed by Richardson (2011): .0099, .0588 y .1379, indicating the small, medium and large size of effect. SPSS 25 was used to analyse data.

RESULTS

Most satisfactory type of fwb relationship

Of a total 330 subjects with experience in FwB relationships (82.5%), 206 (62.4%) had experienced True Friends type; 189 Transition In (57.3%); 183 Just Sex (55.5%); 143 Transition Out (43.3%); and 99 Network Opportunism (30%).

A total of 151 (45.8%) rated True Friends as the most satisfactory; followed by 75 Transition In (22.7%); 36 Just Sex (10.9%); 35 unsure and unable to choose (10.6%); 19 Transition Out (5.8%) and 14 Network Opportunism (4.2%).

Romantic Relationship satisfaction vs. Friends with Benefits

The Wilcoxon test showed statistically significant differences in the comparison between satisfaction with romantic relationships with the variables; satisfaction with FwB relationships of type Just Sex ($Z = -3.74$; $p = .000$), Network Opportunism ($Z = -4.59$; $p = .000$), Transition In ($Z = -4.19$; $p = .000$) and Transition Out ($Z = -6.67$; $p = .000$).

Specifically, it can be observed that satisfaction with romantic relationships is greater when compared to FwB relationships types: Transition In ($M = 3.64$; $SD = .90$ VS $M = 3.29$; $SD = 1.05$), Just Sex ($M = 3.61$; $SD = 1.01$ VS $M = 3.18$; $SD = 1.14$), Network Opportunism ($M = 3.71$; $SD = .93$ VS $M = 2.95$; $SD = 1.20$) and above all Transition Out ($M = 3.71$; $SD = .90$ VS $M = 2.75$; $SD = 1.30$). The only FwB relationship that was rated more satisfactory than romantic relationships was True Friends ($M = 3.66$; $SD = 1.00$ VS $M = 3.77$; $SD = 1.03$), however, this relationship was not statistically significant ($Z = -.86$; $p = .392$).

Intention of continuing/initiating a romantic relationship vs. FwB

Statistical analysis revealed differences when it came to a desire to maintain the FwB relationship of any type in the future, relative to whether or not there was an intention to aspire to romantic relationship or not: $\chi^2 (4, N = 196) = 20.591$, ($p = .000$) for True Friends; $\chi^2 (4, N = 173) = 23.493$, ($p = .000$) for Just Sex; $\chi^2 (4, N = 93) = 11.356$, ($p = .023$) for Network Opportunism; $\chi^2 (4, N = 182) = 9.774$, ($p = .044$) for Transition In and $\chi^2 (4, N = 139) = 14.287$, ($p = .006$) for Transition Out.

It was observed that with the exception Transition Out, where subjects were more hesitant, the majority of those that did not intend to maintain or return to a romantic relationship, did aspire to have, or continue to have, Friends with Benefits in future, particularly True Friends (81.3%) and Just Sex (72.4%).

In subjects who were uncertain whether or not they wanted to maintain or initiate a stable relationship, there was a greater aspiration to have or maintain Friends with Benefits of type True Friends (60%) and Just Sex (55.6%). Although this was less than those subjects who were certain they did not want this kind of relationship. Concerning the remaining types of FwB relationships, subjects were as undecisive at the prospect of this type of relationship as of romantic relationships

In those subjects who aspired to have a romantic relationship, Transition Out was the least sought after or willing to maintain (4.6%); as opposed to True Friends (39.5%), which was the only type the majority of subjects were certain of.

Different loving styles according to gender and FwB relationships

To contrast the nul hypothesis that observed covariant matrixes of the dependent variables (the six loving attitudes) are equal in all groups, the Ljung-Box test was performed for gender and each type of relationship studied.

Of the total sample, the Ljung-Box test according to gender was not significant. Therefore, the H_0 in all groups could not be ruled out (M Ljung-Box = 17.835; F = .833; p = .681). The same occurred when the sample was limited to those subjects who had friends with benefits (M Ljung-Box = 20.998; F = .976; p = .490) or who had never had FwB (M Ljung-Box = 22.475; F = .955; p = .518).

The test was not significant according to whether subjects had FwB in general (M Ljung-Box = 20.273; F = .934; p = .546); Transition Out (M Ljung-Box = 17.287; F = .808; p = .713); Transition In (M Ljung-Box = 22.808; F = 1.068; p = .375); Network Oportunism (M Ljung-Box = 14.078; F = .654; p = .881); Just Sex (M Ljung-Box = 20.121; F = .942; p = .535); or True Friends (M Ljung-Box = 29.734; F = 1.393; p = .108).

Covariance observed in all groups were equal, therefore, multivariant analysis was carried out.

The MANOVA displayed statistically significant differences according to gender in the total simple (Pillai trace = .120; $F(12, 392) = 4.084$; $p = .000$). Table 2 represents the average points for love styles according to gender in addition to the significance and estimates of the effects.

Women have greater scores in Mania love style ($M=2.94$), while men have greater scores in Agape ($M=2.65$). No differences were found between genders in the remaining love styles. The effect was small for Mania and medium for Agape.

Table 2
Global love style differences according to gender

	Man		Woman		Other		P	η^2 partial
	M	DT	M	DT	M	F		
Eros	3.51	.58	3.57	.56	3.25	.50	.608	.003
Ludus	2.79	.75	2.76	.70	4	1.56	.212	.008
Storge	3.19	.88	3.07	.88	2.75	.97	.382	.005
Pragma	2.05	.71	2.15	.78	1	1.95	.143	.010
Mania	2.81	.85	2.94	.81	1	3.73	.025*	.019
Agape	2.65	.91	2.25	.79	1	11.48	.000**	.056

N.B. * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.000$

When the sample was restricted to subjects with FwB relationships, statistically significant differences were observed in general (Pillai trace = .114; $F(12, 322) = 3.184$; $p = .000$).

Women obtained higher scores than men in Pragma ($M=2.19$ and $M=2.01$, respectively), while men obtained higher scores in Agape ($M=2.63$ and $M=2.23$, respectively). For the remaining love styles, no differences between men and women were observed (Table 3). The effect on Pragma was small, and medium on Agape.

Table 3
Differences according to gender for love styles in subjects with FwB

	Man		Woman		Other		P	η^2 partial
	M	DT	M	DT	M	F		
Eros	3.58	.51	3.60	.55	3.25	.266	.767	.002
Ludus	2.87	.74	2.81	.70	4	1.582	.207	.010
Storge	3.16	.91	3.09	.88	2.75	.277	.758	.002
Pragma	2.01	.70	2.19	.78	1	3.053	.049*	.019
Mania	2.86	.84	2.93	.83	1	2.863	.059	.018
Agape	2.63	.91	2.23	.77	1	9.694	.000**	.057

N.B. * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.000$

Statistically significant differences were also observed according to gender when the sample was limited to those who had never had any kind of FwB relationship (Pillai trace = .246; $F(6, 70) = 3.418$; $p = .006$).

In this instance, women once again obtained higher median scores than men for Mania ($M=2.59$) although the effect was small (Table 4).

Table 4

Differences according to gender for love styles in subjects who had never had FwB

	Man		Woman		F	P	η ² partial
	M	DT	M	DT			
Eros	3.27	.77	3.42	.62	.756	.388	.011
Ludus	2.49	.71	2.52	.68	.024	.870	.000
Storge	3.34	.74	2.95	.89	3.450	.068	.048
Pragma	2.21	.70	2	.77	1.270	.264	.018
Mania	2.59	.91	3.01	.77	4.121	.046*	.057
Agape	2.73	.91	2.34	.84	3.207	.078	.045

N.B. *p ≤ 0.05

The MANOVA showed statistically significant differences according to gender for those with FwB in general (Pillai trace = .058; $F(6, 392) = 3.954$; $p = .001$).

Those who have or who have had FwB, obtain greater scores in the Eros love style ($M=3.59$) and Ludus ($M= 2.83$), with statistically significant differences, with a small effect. There were no differences in the remaining love styles (Table 5).

Table 5

Differences according to having FwB in general for love styles

	FWB		No FWB		F	P	η ² partial
	M	DT	M	DT			
Eros	3.59	.54	3.36	.67	9.405	.002*	.024
Ludus	2.83	.72	2.51	.69	11.911	.001*	.030
Storge	3.11	.89	3.09	.86	.032	.857	.000
Pragma	2.13	.76	2.07	.75	.257	.612	.001
Mania	2.90	.83	2.86	.84	.151	.698	.000
Agape	2.35	.84	2.48	.88	1.309	.253	.003

N.B. *p ≤ 0.05

The MANOVA according to having had True Friends type of FwB demonstrated statistically significant differences (Pillai trace = .058; $F(6, 392) = 3.954$; $p = .001$).

Subjects who have, or have had True Friends type of FwB obtained better average scores in Ludus ($M=2.90$) and Storge ($M=3.23$), with significant differences but with a small effect. The remaining love styles had no differences (Table 6).

Table 6

Differences for love styles according to having FwB of True Friend type

	FWB		No FWB		F	P	η ² partial
	M	DT	M	DT			
Eros	3.57	.51	3.53	.63	.602	.438	.002
Ludus	2.90	.64	2.65	.77	12.334	.000**	.031

	FWB		No FWB		F	P	η ² partial
	M	DT	M	DT			
Storge	3.23	.88	2.98	.87	7.623	.006*	.019
Pragma	2.12	.77	2.11	.75	.034	.853	.000
Mania	2.83	.81	2.95	.85	1.918	.167	.005
Agape	2.40	.87	2.35	.83	.301	.583	.001

N.B. *p ≤ 0.05; **p ≤ 0.000

The MANOVA according to having had Network Opportunism FwB showed statistically significant differences (Pillai trace = .040; $F(6, 392) = 2.679$; $p = .015$).

Participants who currently had or had once had Network Opportunism type FwB also obtained greater average scores in Ludus (3.02), although the effect was small. No differences were found in the remaining love styles (Table 7).

Table 7

Differences for love styles according to having had Network Opportunism style FwB

	FWB		No FWB		F	P	η ² partial
	M	DT	M	DT			
Eros	3.55	.61	3.55	.56	.011	.915	.000
Ludus	3.02	.69	2.69	.71	15.594	.000**	.038
Storge	3.19	.90	3.08	.88	1.214	.271	.003
Pragma	2.13	.74	2.11	.77	.057	.811	.000
Mania	2.88	.83	2.89	.84	.008	.927	.000
Agape	2.37	.87	2.38	.84	.017	.897	.000

N.B. *p ≤ 0.05; **p ≤ 0.000

The MANOVA according to having had Transition Out showed statistically significant differences (Pillai trace = .041; $F(6, 392) = 2.751$; $p = .012$).

Subjects who currently had or once had Transition Out FwB obtained greater scores in Eros (M=3.68), although with a small effect. The remaining love styles showed no differences between men and women (Table 8).

Table 8

Differences for love styles according to having had Transition Out FwB

	FWB		No FWB		F	P	η ² partial
	M	DT	M	DT			
Eros	3.68	.54	3.48	.58	10.357	.001*	.026
Ludus	2.85	.71	2.73	.72	2.756	.098	.007
Storge	3.09	.90	3.11	.87	.046	.829	.000
Pragma	2.10	.74	2.13	.77	.143	.705	.000
Mania	2.95	.81	2.86	.85	.959	.328	.002
Agape	2.41	.90	2.36	.82	.364	.547	.001

N.B. *p ≤ 0.05



Lastly, the MANOVA according to having had Transition In style FwB showed no statistically significant differences (Pillai trace = .019; $F(6, 392) = 1.263$; $p = .273$). Similarly, the MANOVA according to having had Just Sex FwB showed no statistically significant differences (Pillai trace = .025; $F(6, 392) = 1.632$; $p = .137$).

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to clarify the nature of Friends with Benefits relationships by analysing the different sub-types that exist according to the relationship's context, in the same way as [Williams et al. \(2007\)](#). This was the only study to have described the universe of Friends with Benefits, clarifying its various forms and therefore guiding the present research, with the limitations this implies.

Our research found that 82.5% of the sample had experienced this kind of relationship at least once. This was congruent with other studies, where it is the predominant sexual interaction among university students ([Bisson and Levine, 2009](#); [Bradshaw et al., 2010](#)). Nevertheless, this sample was not university students and is quite heterogeneous. In this sense, the results are similar to those of [Lehmiller and colleagues \(2011\)](#) which amplified the non-university population, using the internet to capture subjects involved in such relationships.

The most prevalent style of FwB relationship in this sample was True Friends, as it was in research by [Williams et al. \(2007\)](#). This may be due to the fact that it is the purest FwB relationship and the one that most resembles the generic definition put forward both in theory and popular culture ([Hughes et al., 2005](#); [Puentes et al., 2008](#); [Bisson and Levine, 2009](#)). This may also explain how this style of FwB was considered the most satisfactory.

Despite the fact that FwB was a common practice in our sample, 94% of respondents were inclined towards a romantic relationship. This confirms that this style of relationship continues to be the most extended socially, despite changes to sexual guidelines ([Easton and Hardy, 2013](#); [Siebenbruner, 2013](#)).

Furthermore, relative to the second objective of this study, romantic relationships were considered to be the most satisfactory above all other sub-types of FwB, with the exception of True Friends, where no significant differences were found. Consistent with studies relating to polyamory ([Thalman, 2008](#); [Easton and Hardy, 2013](#)), the socially desirable norm is a monogamous stable relationship. Models of polyamory based on initiating a FwB relationship are non-existent, therefore the strategies are the same as for a romantic relationship, since this is what has been socially learned ([Taormino, 2015](#)). It must also be taken into account that becoming involved in this kind of relationship is contrary to social norms, since the social majority believes sexual exclusivity and jealousy are natural human traits; therefore a

relationship without commitment is a guarantee of suffering. This constant questioning and social acceptability of romantic relationships may be the reason for the various dissatisfactions ([Thalmann, 2008](#); [Easton and Hardy, 2013](#); [Taormino, 2015](#)). This may also explain the fact that True Friends is considered equal to romantic relationships. It is also the most prevalent, best-known and visible type of FwB and comes closest to the popular definition, while the remaining sub-types are harder to label. Furthermore, in this type of relationship, people obtain emotional and social benefits such as trust and affection, satisfaction and comfort, in addition to sexual benefits ([McGynti et al., 2007](#), [Puentes et al., 2008](#), [Green and Morman, 2008](#); [Bisson and Levine, 2009](#), [Lehmiller et al., 2011](#), [Weaver et al., 2011](#)).

Concerning future aspirations relative to the bond, the majority of subjects with no romantic interest wished for any type of FwB relationship, with the exception of Transition Out. This means they desired security, sex and closeness, but want to avoid the emotional complexities and potential pain a committed romantic relationship might cause. FwB may be the result of a pondered decision and not exclusively to satisfy a stimulus ([Bisson y Levine, 2009](#); [Weaver et al. 2011](#)). Subjects were doubtful of having a Transition Out relationship, which may be explained by persistent negative emotions such as longing, emptiness, and different degrees of anxiety depending on the duration and stability of the previous bond ([Márquez, 2005](#)). In fact, 51.7% of subjects who had experienced such a relationship reported having gone through an unpleasant or traumatic break up, justifying their reluctance to return to sexual encounters.

Concerning love styles ([Lee, 1973](#)) and their relationship with gender, women stand out in Mania, while men stand out in Agape. The initial findings are in line with the hypothesis that women are more emotionally dependent and possessive than men ([Russianoff, 1981](#); [Alonso-Arbiol et al., 2002](#); [Valor-Segura, Expósito and Moya, 2014](#); [Valor-Segura, Expósito, Moya and Kluwer, 2014](#)). [Gonzalez-Jimenez and Hernández-Romera \(2014\)](#) conclude that although emotional dependency exists among today's younger generation, there are no significant differences between genders. In fact, men displaying an altruistic love style was a unique finding. Studies such as those by [Paul and collaborators \(2000\)](#) concluded that in situations of sex without commitment, women were more Agapic in love. This may be explained by the traditional heteropatriarchal paradigm of sexual expectations, whereby women are expected to provide the man with satisfaction and pleasure. This may indicate a change in paradigm; male dominance is weakening, and women are more aware of their own pleasure and less submissive to men.

In cases of having had a FwB relationship, men once again stand out in Agapic style while women stand out in Pragma. This result coincides with that of [Hendrick and Hendrick \(1986\)](#) and may be explained by the fact that we live in a world where sex is a commodity ([Lucas-](#)

[Matheu, 2009](#)), a misogynistic society, where women are considered products, and should they choose to have a FwB relationship they should be practical and realistic in their socio-sexual choice, since they may be hurt ([Easton and Hardy, 2013](#)). Furthermore, the equality between men and women in Mania style, unlike when there is no experience of FwB relationships, may be explained by the [Williams and Jovanovic \(2015\)](#) theory which announces a feminist transition concerning sexual practices, challenging the sexual morality double standard. According to this theory, women who have engaged in such open relationships are more ideologically feminist and less emotionally dependent, since this aspect is negatively related to feminist attitudes.

Those subjects who once had or who currently have a FwB relationship stood out for their love styles of Eros and Ludus, compared to those subjects who had never had a FwB relationship. These styles are consistent with casual relationships, playing games and entertainment, a lack of commitment and characterized by sexual attraction ([Grello et al., 2006](#); [Paul et al., 2000](#)).

In the category of sub-types, True Friends and Network Opportunism stood out for Ludus and Storge love styles. In addition to sharing similar interests, loyalty and responsibility in friendship, those in these kinds of relationships see sex as a game to play, an entertainment-in the same way as those subjects who seek an opportunity or sex without commitment-without loving or emotional investment, in line with the hypothesis developed by [VanderDrift et al., 2010](#).

Lastly, subjects who had experienced a Transition Out relationship stood out in Eros love style, with strong physical and emotional attraction with sexual satisfaction ([Márquez, 2005](#)).

This study also had some limitations, such as the data collection: it would have been desirable to extend the period the questionnaire was available in order to increase the sample size and publish it on other social media and use university emails.

In conclusion, Friends with Benefits relationships are not socially accepted and do not carry the satisfaction of a romantic relationship, although we are experiencing important changes which are reflected in the love styles of men and women. Women are beginning to experiment with sex with friends and show pragmatism, empowerment and attention to their own desires, while those who have not initiated casual sexual relationships are more possessive and emotionally dependent. Furthermore, men appear to be reformed, being more altruistic in their spiritual and loving styles. All of this reveals a metamorphosis emerging from the context of polyamory, where gender roles appear to be converging and love styles are being transformed.

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