

South Dakota State University

Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

2022

The Impact of Facebook Affordances on Doomscrolling Behaviors during the Relational Dissolution Process

Emma Williams

South Dakota State University, emmawedubbs@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/etd2>



Part of the [Communication Technology and New Media Commons](#), and the [Social Media Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Williams, Emma, "The Impact of Facebook Affordances on Doomscrolling Behaviors during the Relational Dissolution Process" (2022). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 369.

<https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/etd2/369>

This Thesis - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact michael.biondo@sdstate.edu.

THE IMPACT OF FACEBOOK AFFORDANCES ON DOOMSCROLLING
BEHAVIORS DURING THE RELATIONAL DISSOLUTION PROCESS

BY

EMMA WILLIAMS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Masters of Arts

Major in Communication and Media Studies

South Dakota State University

2022

THESIS ACCEPTANCE PAGE

Emma Williams

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the master's degree and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree.

Acceptance of this does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

Kathryn Coduto
Advisor

Date

Joshua Westwick
Department Head

Date

Nicole Lounsbery, PhD
Director, Graduate School

Date

This thesis is dedicated to my grandpa, Dr. Roger Sandness, for showing me the definition of hard work and perseverance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This achievement would not have been possible without the encouragement from my support system. First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, mentor, and confidant, Dr. Kathryn Coduto. Thank you for believing in me when I did not believe in myself. Thank you for pushing me to recognize what I can achieve. Finally, thank you for being the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* of academia and helping me slay my biggest vampires. Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Nathan Sterling and Dr. Karla Hunter, for being invaluable members of my thesis process. Thank you to Dr. Marina Hendrickson for the encouragement and mentorship. A big thank you to Jade Larson for all of the guidance and support!

A special thank you to my family for always believing in me and supporting me. To my mom, thank you for the long Facetimes filled with pep talks and reassurance. To my dad, thank you for the constant advice and accountability. To my sister, thank you for reminding me how bright I can shine and what I can achieve. Finally, to my grandparents, thank you for the wise words of wisdom, homecooked meals, and daily affirmations.

Next, I want to thank my Brookings family who served as my cheer squad through this entire process. To the Anderson Family: Brandon, Jess, Charlie, Hannah, Ranger, Casie, & Sprocket, thank you for the life chats, and for providing a place to escape. To the future Dion's: Edward, Kalea, & Audi, thank you for the long bike rides and evenings filled with laughter. To Mama Gullickson, thank you for the pep talks and cheesy potatoes. To D'Shaun, thank you for the late-night talks and gym sessions. To Condelli & Katelyn, thank you for always listening and providing great wine. To Bri & Mia, thank you for truly seeing me and my potential. A special thank you, my four-legged sidekick, Rey, for always being by my side.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	9
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....	28
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS.....	32
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION.....	34
REFERENCES.....	45
APPENDIX A.....	50
APPENDIX B.....	54
APPENDIX C.....	56
APPENDIX D.....	57
APPENDIX E.....	58
APPENDIX F.....	60

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Correlations Between Facebook Affordances & IES.....56

ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF FACEBOOK AFFORDANCES ON DOOMSCROLLING
BEHAVIORS DURING THE RELATIONAL DISSOLUTION PROCESS

EMMA WILLIAMS

2022

The affordances provided by social networking sites (SNSs) impact how different social media platforms are used. Facebook has unique affordances such as ease of use, community, information seeking, escapism, and common interests that impact Facebook use. Interpersonal electronic surveillance, categorized as doomscrolling for this study, is a behavior of continuous scrolling and consumption of negative content. Facebook affordances, paired with digital artifacts from terminated relationships, create an environment for doomscrolling (IES) behavior. Building off of the “grave-dressing” and “resurrection” stages of relational dissolution, I examined the relationships of these Facebook affordances with doomscrolling (IES) behaviors through an online survey ($N = 96$) conducted from a sample of college students. The results of the data set indicate several significant positive and negative relationships between different Facebook affordances and doomscrolling (IES).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 global pandemic fundamentally changed individuals' everyday lives. Millions of individuals were mandated to stay at home, as everyday activities such as school and work were shut down (McClain et al., 2021). The world was forced to shift to using communication on different technological platforms rather than face-to-face (FtF). Zoom meetings and online digital communication became the new norm. The internet has become so essential that a recent Pew Research study stated 90% of Americans indicated the internet had been critical to them during the pandemic (McClain et al., 2021). Although the internet has been imperative during the COVID-19 pandemic, there are still drawbacks. The same Pew Research study found that 40% of the 81% of American adults utilizing video calls have felt exhausted from the constant time spent on video calls (McClain et al., 2021). One fact appears certain: Communication as we know it has been altered by the global pandemic. Individuals found themselves constantly scrolling online and being unable to stop. Individuals also seek connection through video calls, in addition to social media (Vendemia & Coduto, 2022).

Background of the Problem

The shift in how individuals communicate and the communication channels that they utilized throughout the pandemic have led to new communication behaviors and with those, new slang. The term doomscrolling was introduced during the pandemic as slang for the behavior of continually scrolling for bad news. Throughout the pandemic, individuals have found they are constantly reading negative news about the pandemic and other important events, and not being able to stop scrolling ("On 'Doomsurfing' and

‘Doomscrolling,’” 2021). The word *doomscrolling* gained popularity and was named the word of the year by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Klein, 2021).

The increase in recognition of the behavior of doomscrolling has led to countless articles sharing tips and tricks to limit doomscrolling behavior and the negative impact of this behavior on an individual’s mental health. Kevin Roose stated in the *New York Times*:

I’ve been doing a lot of this kind of *doomsurfing* recently – falling into deep, morbid rabbit holes filled with coronavirus content, agitating myself to the point of physical discomfort, erasing any hope of a good night’s sleep. Maybe you have, too. (para. 5, 2020)

Roose is not alone in these behaviors, as countless other individuals have shared a similar narrative. These numerous self-revelations and cries for help have led mental health professionals to join the ever-growing doomscrolling conversation. Tips for mitigating doomscrolling behavior include having a timer for social media scrolling, remembering what information you are searching for, and focusing on building healthy and happy emotions in our everyday lives (Garcia-Navarro, 2020). Other health professionals recommend utilizing mantras, being honest with ourselves, and using wellness applications (Cleveland Clinic, 2020). These articles all assume that an individual is aware that they are doomscrolling.

While many mental health professionals are sharing the importance of not doomscrolling the pandemic and other critical events, little research or professional insight has considered the other variables that lead an individual to doomscroll. Although individuals may be being cognizant of not doomscrolling COVID-19 information, there is

the chance they are doomscrolling other aspects of their lives, such as past relationships or the relationships of friends and family. Understanding how doomscrolling behavior applies to other aspects of the internet, specifically social media, will encourage healthier media consumption and usage.

This research study addressed if the affordances of Facebook encourage doomscrolling behaviors and if these behaviors impact the relational dissolution model. To explain the importance of these variables, I will first briefly detail about the relational dissolution model, Facebook affordances, Facebook jealousy, and explain the difference between doomscrolling and interpersonal electronic surveillance.

Relational Dissolution Model

Romantic relationships progress through different stages as these relationships progress. Mark Knapp created a model to quantify the different stages of relationship development. The five stages are initiating, experimenting, intensifying, integrating, and bonding (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2009). While all relationships go through development stages, it is also common for relationships to go through a breakup process, known as relational dissolution. There are several primary stage models of relational dissolution, each sharing similarities yet also differing significantly. For this research study, the Duck (1982) relational dissolution model that takes a conceptual analysis approach was the primary applied model.

The original Duck (1982) relational dissolution model had four stages of dissolution: intrapsychic, dyadic, social, and grave-dressing. One reason for the selection of this model is because the emphasis is placed on recognizing that a romantic breakup affects an individual's everyday life (Rollie & Duck, 2006). This model also differs from

the other four primary models because of understanding that relational dissolution stems from a series of events, not a single situation (Duck, 1982). More recent research has adapted this model; however, the foundational aspects of Duck's (1982) model remain the same and solidify the justification of this model.

As the use of social networking sites (SNSs) has increased communication scholars have begun to connect SNSs and Duck's (1982) relational dissolution model. Previous research found through connecting the SNS Facebook and Duck's model that the most prevalent behavior during relational dissolution was little to no Facebook use at all (LeFebreve et al., 2015). However, another behavior reported in the study was the behavior of *interpersonal electronic surveillance* (IES). This behavior is classified as when an individual will monitor or observe the online actions of their ex-partner during the breakup process (LeFebreve et al., 2015). It is critical to understand the dominant and dynamic role SNSs have in communication and consider this an indicator that SNSs will continue to impact the relational dissolution process and the affordances sites such as Facebook provide.

Facebook Affordances

The global SNS known as Facebook first originated as a site named Facemash, with the purpose of rating the attractiveness of Mark Zuckerberg's fellow female Harvard students (Greiner et al., 2019). Facebook quickly expanded from its original female-objectifying platform to be a place of community and connection. A unique feature of Facebook is the ability to grow and connect your network by friending fellow users. However, despite having the ability to friend anyone around the world with a Facebook profile, users tend to stick to friending people they are already connected to in real life

(boyd & Ellison, 2008). One key affordance of Facebook is the default setting for users to automatically see the profiles of others if they are not connected with but are in the same network as (boyd & Ellison, 2008).

An affordance is defined as “the quality or property of an object that defines its possible uses or makes clear how it can or should be used” (Merriam-Webster, 2021). SNSs have specific affordances, such as visibility and connectivity (Fox & McEwan, 2017). Another SNS affordance is network association, which affords users the ability to see the content created and shared by members in their social network group, with no impact by physical proximity to the specific connection (Fox et al., 2014). Facebook provides users a variety of affordances, which is one reason why Facebook is the most popular SNS (Fox & Moreland, 2015). The ability to share content about their personal life means users can share relationship details to a wider network (Fox et al., 2014). The ability to share relationship details has the potential to restructure relationship privacy and impact communication issues in both the couple’s relationship and their Facebook social network (Fox et al., 2014). This research indicates the probability that Facebook can and will impact relationships at every stage, including the stages of relational dissolution (Fox et al., 2014).

Facebook Jealousy

Relationships often experience different types of partner jealousy. Two types of jealousy common in relationships are retrospective and retroactive jealousy. Retrospective jealousy is when a partner is jealous of an individual deemed as romantic competition who has caused issues in the relationship previously (Frampton & Fox, 2017). Retroactive jealousy is directed at a partner’s former relationship experiences that

took place before the current relationship (Frampton & Fox, 2017). Jealousy is a frequent reaction related to the affordances Facebook creates in its environment. For instance, the ability to conveniently view a current or former partner's profile and posts can cause jealousy (Davis, 2015).

The ability to view an increase of information through Facebook can be a seed for jealousy to sprout since both the partner and their Facebook social network can view and interact with the content posted both within and outside of the relationship (Fox et al., 2014). Another Facebook behavior that can cause jealousy is the constant comparison of a partner's ex or friends (Fox & Moreland, 2015). Therefore, previous research supports the assumption that the affordances of visibility and accessibility of information about a partner increase jealousy and stalking of romantic partners, ultimately connecting to doomscrolling behaviors.

Interpersonal Electronic Surveillance

SNSs have been restructured to be a resource for social surveillance (Tokunaga, 2011). Not only are SNS users provided the affordance of being able to stalk other users, but they are also *expected* to participate in this behavior (Lampe et al., 2006). Using SNSs as a surveillance tool can cause jealousy and trust issues. One reason that a partner might participate in interpersonal electronic surveillance (IES) is suspicious jealousy, in which a romantic partner feels threatened by an external variable. A second reason for IES is if a partner has had issues of trust with past partners (Tokunaga, 2011).

An important IES component is that a partner may not realize they are participating in IES or realize they are utilizing IES behavior (Tokunaga, 2011). Comparing doomscrolling and IES reiterates the key difference that the main focus of

IES is to gain awareness of online actions, while the main drive behind of doomscrolling behavior is to search out and consume negative online content.

This research works to identify doomscrolling behaviors and the role social media affordances play in doomscrolling behaviors. This study also addresses whether the relational dissolution model is impacted by these doomscrolling behaviors. This research study also seeks to fill in critical research gaps. Although doomscrolling has begun to be heavily studied in the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has not been applied to online romantic relationship behaviors. In recent years, the relational dissolution model has been studied with social networks; this research will continue to add to this important area. A final important gap is that social media in connection to relationship research has been focused on relationships during the developmental period, not after relational termination.

To review, this chapter reiterated the critical importance of applying doomscrolling behaviors to romantic relationships and Facebook behaviors. This study aims to identify if specific Facebook affordances impact doomscrolling behaviors of past relationships and how the relational dissolution model might be impacted. This study fills existing research gaps of doomscrolling behaviors applied to other online content and focusing on past romantic relationships. In addition, by understanding how Facebook affordances impact online behavior, social media users will have a greater perspective of how social media platforms impact all aspects of their everyday life. To lay the theoretical foundation for this study, Chapter 2 reviews previous research about these topics and justifies the selection of this topic for this research study. Chapter 3 of this study explains the methodology selected for this study and justifies the implementation of

each instrument used. Chapter 4 shares the results of the study and Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the results of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Relationship Formation

Individuals in a relationship go through different stages or changes as the relationship develops. Mark Knapp first published and created a model to explain the stages a relationship goes through, including both coming together and separation in 1978 (Duran & Kelly, 2017). Knapp's model identifies five stages of relationship development: initiating, experimenting, intensifying, integrating, and bonding (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2009).

The initiation stage occurs when partners first meet. During this stage, first impressions and observations of the potential partner take place (Knapp, 1978). Following initiation is experimentation, the stage at which partners begin to explore through attempting to discover new things about each other (Knapp, 1978). As individuals learn more about one another, their relationships enter the intensifying stage. In this stage, personal disclosure enhances, and previously withheld information is exchanged (Knapp, 1978). The relationship then enters the integrating stage, where the relationship focuses on the partners becoming a unit. Less emphasis is placed on individual personality traits; instead, couples focus specifically on blending partner personalities into one (Knapp, 1978). Finally, partners enter the last stage of bonding: a public ritual that solidifies the promise and commitment the partners have made to one another (Knapp, 1978).

There is no guarantee that a relationship will complete all stages, as many relationships often terminate before the fifth stage. When relationships terminate, the go

through the separation stage, known as relational dissolution. Yet, before relationships end, many couples document these stages online.

Facebook and Stages of Relationships Formation

The use of Facebook throughout relationships has impacted the stages of relationship development. Utilizing Facebook allows for the ability to share the information of a user's relationship status quickly and to a bigger audience than face-to-face sharing (Fox et al., 2013). Facebook has caused a shift in how partners form relationships. Individuals meet offline and then utilize Facebook as their communication channel during the experimentation stage (Fox et al., 2013). Another study found that Facebook was the second most popular medium for communication in a romantic relationship, with texting being first (Duran & Kelly, 2017). The platform also plays a critical role in information seeking. Facebook provides easy access to a potential partner's information without notifying the partner their profile information is being viewed (Fox et al., 2013).

Research has found that Facebook is used more as a tool for information seeking in the intensifying and integrating stage as opposed to the initiating stage (Duran & Kelly, 2017). This behavior of information seeking can continue into the relationship. Facebook providing a platform for all social media content connected to the user makes it easy for a partner to observe the user (Fox et al., 2014). The Facebook behaviors deemed normative shift and change as the relationship moves through the different stages (Fox, 2014). In addition, though Facebook is used throughout each stage, partners use it differently in earlier stages than later relationship stages (Duran & Kelly, 2017). Passive strategies for seeking information include looking through a partner's information and

posts without any action or interactions (Fox, 2014). Active information strategies would be “adding a friend” from the potential partner’s network. A strategy that is not viewed as normative is adding an individual as a friend before meeting that individual in person (Fox, 2014). Ultimately, this research reiterates how information seeking behaviors change and are normalized as the relationship moves through the different development stages.

Facebook use in romantic relationships has also created a new stage in relationship formation: becoming *Facebook official*, a step classified as the next step beyond relationship exclusivity (Fox et al., 2013). There are several different types of *Facebook official*. In the first type, the couple is *Facebook official* their partner is featured often on their profile and in their posts (Robards & Lincoln, 2016). The second type is *shadowed relationship disclosure*. In this type, partners might post hints they are together but never outwardly state their relationship status to their Facebook network (Robards & Lincoln, 2016). The third type focuses on intended absence of personal information, including relationship status. Partners in this type of relationship often do not post personal information about themselves in general, let alone details about their relationship (Robards & Lincoln, 2016). The final type is after the termination of a relationship. In this type, partners erase and revise relationship information that they had shared on their profile (Robards & Lincoln, 2016). Understanding the important role Facebook plays in relationship formation reiterates that Facebook also plays a role in the relational dissolution process.

Relational Dissolution Model

Many couples find that their relationships often come to a definitive end through relationship termination. Couples who reach the end of their relationship go through the relational dissolution process. Prior to the introduction of relational stage models, researchers focused on conflict management styles and attributions connected to relationship termination. Stage models were introduced to provide a framework for the stages of relational dissolution (Rollie & Duck, 2006). Scholars have analyzed the dissolution process through two separate lenses: dissolution stages and behaviors (Vangelisti, 2006). Scholars who have focused on dissolution phases have developed several models to explain the phases that relationships go through as they come to an end over time (Vangelisti, 2006).

The primary stage models are Knapp's dual Staircase Model (1978), Duck (1982), Baxter (1984), and Lee (1984). Each of these models differ significantly, though they do have some similarities. For instance, Duck, Baxter, and Lee all agree that the relational dissolution process begins once the individuals in the relationship have acknowledged issues within the relationship. These four models recognize that the couple will discuss these issues at some point during the dissolution process (Vangelisti, 2006). The Staircase Model is the seminal relational dissolution model; however, the concentration is on communication patterns rather than the cognitive aspects that Duck, Baxter, and Lee center their models on (Vangelisti, 2006). Therefore, this study will focus on the Duck (1982) model that takes a conceptual analysis approach.

Duck (1982) Relational Dissolution Model

Originally, the Duck (1982) model comprised four dissolution stages: intrapsychic, dyadic, social, and grave-dressing. Each of these stages broke down relationship

dissolution (Vangelisti, 2006). Unique from other models, the Duck model reiterates the importance of understanding how a breakup impacts other everyday life aspects and processes (Rollie & Duck, 2006). Another difference in Duck's model is that relational dissolution is a series of situations that leads to relationship dissolution, not a single event (Duck, 1982). Rather than being a neat and orderly process, according to Duck, relationship dissolution is a disorganized and messy process (Duck, 1982). During relational dissolution, most relationships will go through the stages identified by Duck; however, these stages can look different depending on the relationship.

Intrapsychic, the start of the relationship dissolution process, is the stage at which a romantic partner identifies there are problems, shifts their focus to the behaviors of their partner, and begins to debate the pros and cons of terminating the relationship (Vangelisti, 2006). It is during the intrapsychic phase that a member of the relationship determines the relationship is breaking (Duck, 1982). The dyadic phase centers on confrontation and negotiation. In this stage, the partner confronts the other partner and must decide if they are going to terminate the relationship (Duck, 1982). During this stage, couples determine how the consequences of ending the relationship will impact them (Vangelisti, 2006). The third stage, social, involves partners in the relationship turning outward to their social community and beginning sharing their relationship situation, crafting a narrative to save face within their social network (Vangelisti, 2006). Partners notify their social network of the change in their relationship status (Duck, 1982). Although not considered one of the four stages, the decision and actions to terminate the relationship take place between the social stage and the grave-dressing stage (Vangelisti, 2006). The fourth and final stage, grave-dressing, is when it is decided

to end the relationship. In this stage, as Duck explains, an individual moves on from the relationship and partakes in actions to move past it, including sharing their relationship termination process with their social groups (Vangelisti, 2006). During this stage, each member of the dyad works to understand the events of the break-up and share their own account of the dissolution process (Duck, 1982). Duck viewed the relational stages through a more general lens, emphasizing that the stages could be applied to a wide spectrum of relationships, such as friendships. (Rollie & Duck, 2006). Although this model has been adapted in more recent research, the core stages remain the same, justifying this as the foundational relational dissolution model used in this research study.

The stage of the relational dissolution that can be impacted by social media is the social phase (Tong, 2013). For instance, in the social phase of relational dissolution a partner may use their social media to spread gossip within their online social network (Tong, 2013). For the grave-dressing phase, an ex-partner is working to piece together a version of their past relationship that supports the break-up (Tong, 2013). It is possible that social media can impact this phase as well.

Previous communication research conducted by LeFebvre et al. (2015) connects the use of social networking sites (SNSs) to the Duck (1982) relational dissolution model. The results of this study found that during relational dissolution, the most common behavior was little to no Facebook use at all (LeFebvre et al., 2015). However, another study found that an ex-partner would partake in information seeking behavior when they were not the ones who initiated the breakup (Tong, 2013). Other participants in the LeFebvre et al. (2015) study indicated they participated in *relational cleansing*: deleting and removing digital artifacts from the relationship from social media. In addition to

these behaviors, participants also reported the behavior of *interpersonal electronic surveillance*, in which they monitored the online activity and interactions of their partner during the breakup. Through the affordances provided by SNSs, an individual can monitor the actions of their ex-partner throughout the relational dissolution process (LeFebvre, et al., 2015). Also, when a partner sees Facebook as a tool for reducing uncertainty, they are more likely to use Facebook to find information about their ex-partner's activities and potential new romantic partners (Tong, 2013). In contrast to electronic surveillance, individuals reported participating in *self-regulation from partner* through not posting about the break-up and avoiding online interactions with anyone connected to their ex-partner (LeFebvre, et al., 2015). Partners who initiated the break-up or who had little to no uncertainty about the break-up are less likely to use Facebook to seek information (Tong, 2013). Many of the behavior's participants partook in during relational dissolution were also present after relationship dissolution.

Through the application of the Duck (1982) relational dissolution model in the LeFebvre et al. (2015) research, it is evident that SNSs can be connected to the dissolution process. The Facebook behaviors participants partook in fit within the different phases of relationship dissolution, the most common being the intrapsychic and dyadic (LeFebvre et al., 2015). Another study focused on Knapp's (1987) model of relationship development found that Facebook behaviors are used at different stages of relationship development (Duran & Kelly, 2017). Introducing SNSs to the relational dissolution model gives the ability to communicate behaviors differently. LeFebvre et al. (2015) explained the following:

SNSs enables a readily available exchange of new circumstances and updates, provided public announcements of relationship termination, and mirrored personal adjustment especially when social networks were extensive and overlapping. (pp. 92-93)

Finally, participants indicated utilizing Facebook behaviors that connected with grave-dressing, such as relational cleansing (LeFebreve, et al., 2015). Importantly, participants who reported electronic surveillance behaviors could reveal that they are still infatuated with their ex-partner and focused on the terminated relationship (LeFebreve, et al., 2015). Understanding the powerful role SNSs play in communication indicates that relational dissolution will continue to be impacted by the behaviors of individuals on SNSs and the affordances these sites provide.

Social Network Sites

The countless social network sites (SNSs) available to consumers share many of the same features but have their own unique culture (boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Understanding the different SNS cultures connects and impacts how individuals interact differently on specific platforms. These different SNS environments have been studied by numerous scholars (boyd & Ellison, 2008; Fox & McEwan, 2017). Although there are many definitions that capture the affordances of SNSs, boyd & Ellison (2008) state:

We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (p. 211)

This is the SNS definition that will be utilized in this study because of its breakdown of unique affordances SNSs offer the user, the focus on the publicness of the user profile, and connections made in real life and the SNS. These affordances fit well with the SNS platform Facebook, specifically the ability to connect with a large online network (Fox & Moreland, 2015). It is important to note that while SNS users can connect with any other user on SNSs, they are often mainly interacting with individuals they know outside of the SNS (Haythornthwaite, 2005). Therefore, individuals on Facebook spend majority of their time connecting with those they know, not friending strangers to expand their social network connections.

History of Facebook

Mark Zuckerberg originally created a site called Facemash to rate the physical attractiveness of fellow female Harvard students (Greiner et al., 2019). Facebook was then launched in 2004 as a Harvard-only network (Cassidy, 2006). Facebook eventually expanded to include other college networks as well as high schoolers (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, Greiner et al., 2019). However, Facebook kept these networks closed, meaning an individual had to have the right credentials or administrator approval to join (boyd & Ellison, 2008). In September of 2006, Facebook lowered the minimum age of users to 13, allowing for many more potential users (Greiner et al., 2019). Despite the ability to connect with strangers, Facebook users continue to “friend” people they know in real life (boyd & Ellison, 2008). Understanding the original differences in the social network structure of Facebook and other SNSs shows how the platform was originally for connecting with individuals in your same social network, not adding strangers, a trend that has continued. While a majority of SNSs allow for a user to control how public their

profile is, Facebook has a different default profile setting. Facebook automatically allows users connected in the same network to see the profiles of others, unless the setting is changed by the user (boyd & Ellison, 2008). Users are also encouraged to partake in network association despite different geographical locations (Fox & McEwan, 2017). These differences in network set-up are key reasons why Facebook is the SNS used in this study.

Social Networking Sites Affordances

As discussed earlier, there are specific affordances for SNSs. Examples of social media affordances are visibility and connectivity (Fox & McEwan, 2017). Previous research defined the affordance of network association as “connections between individuals, between individuals and content, or between an actor and a presentation” (Treem & Leonardi, 2012 p. 162). Essentially, this affordance allows users to view the content of members in their social network group, with no impact from the distance or proximity of the connection (Fox et al., 2014). The affordance of visibility “affords users the ability to make their behaviors, knowledge, preferences, and communication network connections that were once invisible (or at least very hard to see) visible to others in the organization” (Treem & Leonardi, 2012, p. 150). Understanding the affordances common across all SNSs emphasizes uniqueness of affordances provided by Facebook. This research will explicitly focus on Facebook affordances.

Facebook Affordances

Users of Facebook are provided the opportunity to share different parts of their lives through pictures, posts, and status updates (Fox et al., 2014). The variety of affordances provided by Facebook to the user is one reason Facebook is the most popular

SNS (Fox & Moreland, 2015). The ability to share anything and everything about a user's personal life to their network on Facebook also means they can share their relationship and details about their relationship on a broader spectrum (Fox et al., 2014). The continued use of SNSs has impacted how partners communicate within their relationship. Partners are using different SNS channels for communication instead of face-to-face (Duckworth, conference paper). The sharing of more relationship details could have the power to restructure relationship privacy and impact communication issues both between the couple in the relationship and their Facebook social network (Fox et al., 2014). Understanding the impact that Facebook has on relationship communication and privacy illustrates both the positive and negative impact Facebook affordances can have. Ultimately, the results of the Fox et al. (2014) implied that Facebook is probably impacting relationships at every stage, including relational dissolution.

Three Facebook affordances—visibility, connectivity, and persistence—are often used to observe a partner or former partner (Frampton & Fox, 2018). The social media platform affords the ability to link a user's partner and relationship status on their profile, making it highly visible. When a user creates a relationship status with another user, their partner's profile becomes linked on their homepage (Fox et al., 2013). Having a direct link to a partner's Facebook available for a user's network provides easy and quick access for surveillance and stalking. As Muise et al. (2013) reiterate, Facebook creates an environment to observe their partner or ex-partners under the radar, meaning, a partner can passively observe their behaviors without notifying their ex or current partner they are being watched. The article also explained that due to the commonality of this activity, the terms "creeping" and "facestalking" have been introduced to describe the behavior

(Muisse et al., 2013). Because of the affordance of visibility on Facebook, users often fall victim to social comparison (Fox & Moreland, 2015). The Muise et al. (2013) study also measured jealousy and Facebook behaviors, finding that anxiety in women is connected to an increase in partner observation on Facebook.

Relationship Jealousy

Partner jealousy is common in romantic relationships. Retrospective jealousy is a type of jealousy in which a current partner is jealous of romantic competition who has previously interfered in the relationship (Frampton & Fox, 2017). In contrast, retroactive jealousy is when a partner experiences jealousy towards a partner's past romantic interactions prior to the relationship. With this type of jealousy, there has been noninterference from previous partners or romantic competitors (Frampton & Fox, 2017). There are several factors that can lead to retroactive jealousy through social media. One of these factors, digital remnants, can generate retroactive jealousy through serving as a reminder of a partner's previous relationships (Frampton & Fox, 2018). Another factor that can lead to retroactive jealousy is social comparison. SNSs allow for partners to compare themselves to both the ex-partner and entire past relationship (Frampton & Fox, 2018). Finally, the ability to gather a large quantity of information on the past relationships of a partner can cause uncertainty and jealousy in the current relationship. Partners may begin to worry that their relationship will not meet the standards set by previous relationships (Frampton & Fox, 2018).

Jealousy is a common response often connected to the specific affordances of Facebook, such as visibility. Having access to a partner or ex-partner's Facebook profile and content can lead to jealousy (Davis, 2015). Facebook allows for social networks to

have a more active role in a couple's relationship through the sharing of information. This influx of information provided to Facebook can be a root for jealousy, as the partners and social network can see content shared between the relationship and outside of the relationship as well (Fox et al., 2014). Previous research has found that the Facebook affordance of social comparison can cause jealousy (Fox & Moreland, 2015). Specifically, romantic partners compared themselves to their partner's exes or close friends (Fox & Moreland, 2015). Thus, Facebook creates an environment for jealousy because of the absence of importance on the privacy settings for the social media platform (Davis, 2015). It can be assumed from previous research that visibility and accessibility of information leads to jealousy and increased stalking of current and ex-partners, a behavior that can be connected to doomscrolling.

Doomscrolling

Introduced during 2020, doomscrolling is "slang for an excessive amount of screen time devoted to the absorption of dystopian news" (Barabak, 2020, para. 21). This term quickly gained popularity in April 2020 when it was used in an article by the *Los Angeles Times* (Leskin, 2020). The *LA Times* article explains how the COVID-19 pandemic altered and changed the vocabulary used every day (Barabak, 2020). This term also works to explain why individuals perpetually scroll on social media, constantly consuming negative news or posts. One reason for doomscrolling might be that our brains are programmed to survive and therefore pay attention to news that is negative or threatening (Artavia, 2020). Consuming and seeking out negative content on social media can help a user feel as if they are surviving the chaos of the world. The inability to

regulate the content posted on social media allows for false information to be shared and adds to the spread of fear and bad news (Artavia, 2020).

Parallels can be drawn between the news affordances that encourage doomscrolling behaviors and Facebook affordances that provide easy access to information, ultimately promoting stalking. For instance, the news has similar affordances to SNSs such as immediacy and extended retrievability (Teneboim-Weinbaltt & Neiger, 2018). Like Facebook, the news on social media provides the affordance of visibility. Consumers of the news have unfiltered access to new news content at their fingertips at all times, promoting continuous and constant scrolling. Social media enables doomscrolling by constantly refreshing new content and promoting the strongest voices (Klein, 2012). Facebook users also have access to information in an easily accessible location on different user profiles (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Therefore, it is possible that Facebook users will partake in doomscrolling behaviors when scrolling through the profile of their current or ex-partner.

Another affordance shared by both the news and Facebook is persistence. News posts are constantly seen on every social media platform and the content is encouraged to be shared and quoted by users. Constantly seeing this content makes it hard for users to avoid; it is easily accessible for users looking for the content or information. Similarly, Facebook content is also able to be reposted or reshared to different user timelines. Understanding these shared affordances justifies the possibility that Facebook users will partake in doomscrolling behaviors when scrolling through the profile of their current or ex-partner. Although Facebook surveillance behaviors have been researched, it is important to explain the difference between this behavior and doomscrolling.

Doomscrolling vs. Interpersonal Electronic Surveillance

SNSs have been remade to serve as a resource for social surveillance (Tokunaga, 2011). Users of SNSs are not only permitted but expected to participate in stalking of other users within their network (Lampe et al., 2006). This assumed expectation could explain why surveillance on SNSs is extremely common. Another reason for partners to use IES is relational uncertainty (Duckworth, conference paper). A study from Stern and Taylor (2007) found that more than 60% of college students utilize Facebook as a tool to monitor their partners and check on what others are doing as well. Tokunaga (2011) explains interpersonal electronic surveillance as a set of strategies individuals utilize on communication platforms to learn more about others' actions and behaviors, both on and offline. This behavior is goal-oriented and used on friends, partners, coworkers, and even family members (Tokunaga, 2011). Related to romantic relationships, Tokunaga also explains that utilizing SNSs is a critical way to stay an important part of a partner's everyday life (2011). However, utilizing SNSs to surveil a partner can cause jealousy and trust issues. The partner under surveillance could feel their privacy has been breached by their romantic partner (Duckworth, conference paper). There are many reasons for a partner to use IES on their partner. One of these reasons is suspicious jealousy, when a romantic partner feels threatened by an external variable (Tokunaga, 2011). The second reason is if a partner had trust issues with a partner in the past (Tokunaga, 2011).

In addition to IES, there are other ways for ex-partners to stay in contact via SNSs (Van Ouytsel et al., 2016). One way for an ex-partner to agitate their ex through social media is covert provocation, a behavior such as posting a quote or song lyric with a status

update that connects to the user's ex (Van Ouytsel et al., 2016). Another method is public harassment. A partner often participates in these behaviors less frequently. An example of this type of behavior would be posting embarrassing screenshots of messages sent by the user's ex (Van Ouytsel et al., 2016). Finally, venting, such as writing rude comments about an ex, is a common method used by younger adults (Van Ouytsel et al., 2016).

Ultimately, SNSs can lead to surveillance behaviors and impact a partner's trust and jealousy (Duckworth, conference paper). Previous research indicates that a relationship a higher level of commitment leads to more distress from the breakup and can then predict more IES behavior directly after the separation (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015).

It is also important to note that partners may not realize they are participating in IES as partner surveillance can be as easy as looking through an ex's profile (Tokunaga, 2011). Prior to social media, partners would often to hear from or contact each other after a breakup. Now, SNSs make it easier for partners to stay connected, also providing accessibility for partners to surveillance the behaviors of their ex (Duckworth, conference paper). In comparison to doomscrolling, the focus of IES focus is to gain awareness. In contrast, the motivation behind doomscrolling is to find negative content.

Virtual Possession Management

At each stage of relationship development and dissolution, partners manage digital artifacts and interactions. Digital artifacts can be defined in many ways. For the purpose of this study, digital artifacts will be categorized as text messages, photos, social media posts, and voicemails. An interaction will be when an individual either looks at these photos, social media posts, or texts, or listens to voicemails.

Previous work has demonstrated how Facebook is utilized at each stage of a relationship. Several of these frequent Facebook behaviors that were revealed included no activity, purification of online presence, and surveillance like observation (LeFebvre, Blackburn, & Brody, 2015). For this study, each of the following Facebook behaviors have been defined. The behavior *no activity* is defined as an individual not logging onto Facebook at all. *Purification behavior* is deleting and eliminating all digital artifacts and online connection. Lastly, *surveillance* is defined as a lurking behavior. Individuals lurk online or stalk their partner/ex-partner's profile activity to see what they are doing. In the same study, the prevalence of the behavioral action of no activity prompted a second research question focused on different levels of post-dissolution adjustment in connection to participants partaking in Facebook behaviors. The Facebook behaviors participants reported revealed that individuals are "engaging in social, grave-dressing, or resurrection processes" (LeFebvre et al., 2015, p. 92).

Another study that utilized the relational dissolution model introduced relational curation, a new process where an individual must determine the navigation of their virtual possessions from the terminated relationship (LeFebvre, 2020). A different study found that social network actions of an individual navigating relational change, such as a breakup, depend on several variables, such as the closeness of the connection and size of their social media following. Results of the same study indicated that participants choose not to act on their social media sites (Pennington, 2020). Knowing that each stage of a relationship can impact how social media is utilized helps to understand the potential process of relationship doomscrolling.

Another variable that impacts the management of virtual possessions, or digital artifacts, are partner concerns. A previous study found, through utilization of the relational dissolution model, that the deletion or preservation of these possessions depended on their relationship partner focus. If a partner bases their decisions on their former relationship or partner, there is a greater chance of them preserving their digital possessions. In contrast, when the individual is primarily focused on a potential future relationship or partner, there is a greater chance of them deleting or getting rid of their digital possessions (LeFebvre, 2020). Focusing on either a past or present partner might also impact if an individual doomscrolls their previous relationship.

The focus of neither the former nor potential relational partner helps to explain the management of digital possessions. This is not the only variable that can be applied to analyze virtual possession management. A previous study analyzed if specific behaviors predict the adaptability after a breakup and found that those who were more nostalgic were more likely to keep virtual possessions after the conclusion of the relationship (Brody, LeFebvre, & Blackburn, 2020). Past research has also compared deletion to dying a second time. Stokes (2015) attempted to answer the question of if social media artifacts of the dead should be preserved, arguing that ensuring the preservation of remains keeps the individual present in the experiences of the living and eliminates insignificance. Although both individuals are alive in a breakup, it can be argued that the breakup is almost like the death of the ex-partner in one's life. At the very least, the role each partner played has been erased and either deleted completely or rewritten. Connecting both the idea of death through online deletion and the nostalgic personality

trait can potentially connect to behaviors of doomscrolling utilized by an individual after a relationship ends. The following research questions were proposed for this study:

1. Is an individual more likely to doomscroll if they have preserved digital artifacts from the past relationship?
2. Does doomscrolling impact the stages of relational dissolution?
3. Do Facebook affordances perpetuate doomscrolling?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The fundamental purpose of this study is to understand if doomscrolling behaviors are utilized by individuals on their past romantic partners and identify if these behaviors impact the relational dissolution process. This chapter overviews the research design of the study, instruments used, study sample, and procedures used in the study. Ultimately, the function of this chapter is to (1) explain study design; (2) break down the selection of the study sample; (3) describe the procedures utilized for data collection; and (4) explain the quantitative analysis of the study. The research questions that will be researched are as follows:

RQ1: Is an individual more likely to doomscroll if they have preserved digital artifacts from the past relationship?

RQ2: Does doomscrolling impact the stages of relational dissolution?

RQ3: Do Facebook affordances perpetuate doomscrolling?

Study Design

The cross-sectional study design used an online survey to collect data from the sample population. Survey participants completed a survey administered online made up of Likert based questions, multiple choice questions, and one short answer. Participants were told they were participating in a survey about previous relationships and Facebook. Participants were also provided the definition of doomscrolling in the survey. The subjects began the survey by answering questions about their demographics. Examples of the information collected in the demographic questions includes age, race, biological sex,

education and income level, and relationship status. To start this study, I received approval from the South Dakota State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Sample

This study sought to understand if doomscrolling behaviors are perpetuated by Facebook affordances and impact the relational dissolution process. Once I received IRB approval, I used the online survey software QuestionPro to create my survey. For this study, participants were part of a convenience sample. Participants had to be 18 years old or older to participate in the study and were automatically unable to complete the survey if they indicated they were under 18. Student participants were collected from a research pool at a midsize Midwestern university. They received course credit for their participation in the survey.

In total, $N = 252$ people started the survey. Subjects who had not been in a relationship or did not use Facebook were terminated from the survey. Incomplete survey responses were also removed from the final study population. Of the initial respondents, 156 were terminated. In total, a final sample $N = 96$ people completed the survey and met the qualifications of the study.

Of the final sample, the majority identified as female (87.5%) and male (12.5%). The average age of participants were 19.49 years old ($SD = 2.303$). The average length of participant's longest relationship was 22.30 months long ($SD = 16.81$). Finally, the sample's average frequency for posting about their relationship was 1.72 ($SD = 0.50$).

Procedure

Subjects of the convenience sample participated in an online survey. Participants started the survey by answering demographic questions about themselves. Next, subjects

answered a mixture of Likert-based and multiple-choice questions. Likert-based questions asked participants to rate their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale while the multiple-choice questions asked for specific answer related to the participant's relationship history. The Likert-based questions each used a 5-point scale with different response options. The final portion of the survey consisted of a short answer question, allowing participants to share any additional information they desired related to the topic. Each question of the survey was voluntary, and participants were able to opt out of the survey at any time.

Measures

Facebook affordances. Participants answered questions that measure their Facebook affordances use through answering the 27-item Facebook Jealousy Scale (Muisse et al., 2009), answers provided by participants were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (Appendix A). This scale was broken down into five factors: ease of use, community, information seeking, escape, and common interest. The scale was reliable, ease of use: $\alpha = .82$ ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 0.57$), community: $\alpha = .85$ ($M = 3.13$, $SD = .85$), info. seeking: $\alpha = .82$ ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .69$), escape: $\alpha = .76$ ($M = 2.47$, $SD = .92$), and common interest: $\alpha = .68$ ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .78$).

Doomscrolling behaviors. The Interpersonal Electronic Surveillance Scale for SNSs (Tokunaga, 2011) was used to measure doomscrolling behaviors (Appendix B). The scale was reliable, $\alpha = .96$ ($M = 2.07$, $SD = .86446$). The rating for IES scale questions were on a scale of (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Digital artifact preservation. The instrument used to measure digital artifact perseveration was a 5-point Likert scale adapted from (LeFebvre et al., 2020), who based

their indices from Sas and Whittaker (2013; Sas et al., 2016) (Appendix C). The scale was reliable, $\alpha = .86$ ($M = 2.923$, $SD = .87$). The rating for the digital artifact preservation scale were on a scale of (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Relational dissolution. Participants were asked specific questions about how they have adjusted to their breakup by answering 5-point Likert-type items. These items were from (Brody et al., 2016) who adapted the items originally from (Koenig Kellas et al., 2008) (Appendix D). The scale was reliable, $\alpha = .89$ ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.19$). The rating for the relational adjustment scale were on a scale of (1) not difficult at all to (5) very difficult.

Facebook jealousy. A 57-item instrument created by Dhir (2017) was adapted and utilized to gather data on the uses and gratifications of Facebook affordances used by the study participants (Appendix E). The scale was reliable, $\alpha = .95$ ($M = 2.37$, $SD = .63$).

This scale's rating ranged from (1) very unlikely to (5) very likely.

Ethical Considerations

The personal nature of the content of this study survey could have caused an emotional response from participants. Participants were not required to complete the survey and had the option to opt out of the survey at any point. Counseling services and information were be provided in the informed consent section at the start of the survey. Participants were also given the option to remove their data at a later date if they chose. Study participants received partial course credit as compensation for completing the survey.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The results from the 96 participants who completed the survey will be shared and explained in this chapter. Participants were recruited through SONA; an online research database run by the Psychology Department at South Dakota State University. All participants of the sample were over the age of 18; personal identifiers such as individual IP addresses were removed from the final data set. OLS regressions were used to test all three research questions of the study. Correlations for key variables are presented in Table 1.

RQ1 asked if an individual is more likely to doomscroll if they have preserved digital artifacts from their past relationship. The relationship being tested by RQ1 was found to be significant. A strong correlation was found between IES and virtual possession management (.737). Testing the relationship with a regression, the more an individual preserved digital artifact from their previous relationship correlated to an increase in IES, $b = .74$, $SE = .07$, $p = .73$. The regression model is $R^2 = 0.54$, $F(1, 91) = 108.38$, $p < .000$.

RQ2 asked if doomscrolling would impact the stages of relational dissolution. The relationship being investigated by RQ2 was found to be significant, as surveillance increased with relationship adjustment. IES variables had a significant relationship with relational adjustment, $b = .40$, $SE = .139$, $p = .005$. The regression model is $R^2 = 0.09$, $F(1, 91) = 8.40$, $p = .005$. To further probe RQ2, another regression was used testing the relationship IES and Facebook jealousy. This relationship was also significant, $b = .34$, $SE = .071$, $p = .000$. The regression model is $R^2 = 0.21$, $F(1, 86) = 22.21$, $p = .000$.

RQ3 asked if Facebook affordances perpetuate doomscrolling. Part of the relationship being tested by RQ3 was found to be significant. Multiple regressions were run and found that IES impacts both jealousy and relational adjustment. IES variables had a significant relationship with community ($b = 0.31, SE = 0.12, p = 0.008$), escapism ($b = 0.25, SE = 0.10, p = 0.012$), common interests ($b = 0.17, SE = 0.12, p = 0.150$), ease ($b = 0.23, SE = 0.13, p = 0.075$), info ($b = 0.24, SE = 0.14, p = 0.080$). The regression model is $R^2 = 0.17, F(5, 84) = 3.46, p = .007$.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 further explains the results of the study, analyses the study's research questions, provides theoretical and practical implications from the results, shares study limitations, and considers areas for future research.

Analysis Interpretations

The purpose of this study was to understand if doomscrolling behaviors are utilized by individuals on their past romantic partners and to identify if these behaviors impact the relational dissolution process. This thesis asked questions in connection with doomscrolling behaviors and different variables: preserved digital artifacts, the stages of the relational dissolution process, and perceptions of Facebook affordances. The specific affordances provided by Facebook help to explain the doomscrolling behaviors reported by survey participants.

RQ1 asked if an individual is more likely to doomscroll if they have preserved digital artifacts from the past relationship. Analysis for RQ1 showed a correlation between survey participants' IES behaviors and preservation of digital artifacts. Findings show that, as IES increases, so too does digital artifact preservation from the previous relationship increase. This means that not deleting online content from a previous relationship leads to more doomscrolling (in this study, operationalized as IES). This correlation found in this study trends with what has been found in previous research regarding relationship focus. If an individual is focused on a future relationship, there is greater probability that they will delete digital possessions from a previous relationship (LeFebvre, 2020). This study shows that the opposite is true if an individual is focused on

the previous relationship. Instead of deleting digital artifacts, an individual will increase their doomscrolling (IES) of the artifacts.

This study also supports that social media is used at different stages of the relational dissolution process. Participating in doomscrolling (IES) of digital artifacts after a relationship has ended supports the Facebook behaviors of “engaging in social, grave-dressing, or resurrection processes” that has been researched in previous studies (LeFebvre et al., 2015, p. 92). The “grave-dressing” stage is explained as an individual seeking to move on from the relationship through partaking in actions such as sharing the ending of the relationship with those in their network (Vangelisti, 2006). Although it is explained as a stage used to get over the relationship, doomscrolling (IES) tendencies could be present due to an individual going through digital artifacts. Instead of deleting digital artifacts from the past relationship as intended, one could instead easily doomscroll a past partner. The result of this study supports both grave-dressing and a resurrection process depending on the affordance provided from doomscrolling (IES) digital artifacts. If an individual is doomscrolling (IES) digital artifacts with the intention to identify flaws and issues in the relationship, this would align more with the “grave-dressing” process.

In contrast, doomscrolling (IES) digital artifacts with the intention of finding a way to get back together or not let go of the relationship fits within the “resurrection process.” The resurrection process could be prompted from a failed “grave-dressing” stage. Once an individual has begun doomscrolling (IES) it becomes harder for them to stop. If they are doomscrolling (IES) to remind themselves how terrible the relationship was, they probably will not participate in the “resurrection process.” However, if they are

doomscrolling and connecting the digital artifacts to negative aspects of the relationship being terminated, it potentially prompts a “resurrection” attempt of the relationship.

Future studies should focus on the motive behind why individuals participate in doomscrolling (IES) of digital artifacts from the relationship.

RQ2 asked if doomscrolling would impact the stages of relational dissolution. The relationship being investigated by RQ2 was found to be significant, as surveillance increased with relationship adjustment. However, the smaller effect size meant that there are other factors. Essentially, the results indicate that the more an individual participates in doomscrolling (IES) the harder it is to adjust to their current relationship. Although participating in doomscrolling (IES) behaviors can make their current relationship harder, previous research indicates level of commitment of the relationship might impact these behaviors. A relationship with a higher commitment leads to more distress from a breakup, in turn predicting IES behavior directly after the breakup (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015). This study did not test the significance of an individual’s previous relationship. This factor could also impact doomscrolling (IES) of a previous partner and adjustment to current relationship. If a partner was highly committed to their previous partner there is the possibility that they had more digital artifacts from their previous relationship, allowing for more content to be easily doomscrolled. An individual also might doomscroll (IES) their ex-partner if their ex is a new relationship. Constantly doomscrolling (IES) may cause insecurities in their current relationship and cause more difficulty adapting to and focusing on their new partner. To continue to grow in this area, future research should look at relationship significance and doomscrolling,

The results from RQ2 also indicate that an increase in doomscrolling (IES) also increases Facebook jealousy. As demonstrated by previous research, Facebook affords partners the ability to compare themselves to both the ex-partner and entire past relationship (Frampton & Fox, 2018). Finally, the ability to gather a large quantity of information on the past relationships of a partner can cause uncertainty and jealousy in the current relationship. Having the ability to doomscroll not only a previous partner, but also a partner's history and interactions can inevitably cause jealousy. An increase in information that is easily accessible can potentially increase Facebook jealousy in romantic relationships. More information is not always helpful or beneficial and could be a factor impacting jealous and doomscrolling (IES) behaviors.

RQ3 asked if Facebook affordances perpetuate doomscrolling. Part of the relationship being tested by RQ3 was found to be significant. The first relationship of RQ3 tested was that the Facebook affordance ease of use negatively impacted IES. It is important to note that this relationship only trended towards significance. However, this relationship makes sense because individuals who focused on how easy Facebook is to use probably use it to connect with other users and share content.

In contrast, the affordance of community had a positive relationship with IES that was significant. A sense of community increased IES behaviors, meaning individuals who felt as if they had a stronger community on Facebook were more likely to participate in IES behaviors. Although this positive relationship may be surprising, it is supported by other research studies. First, individuals with a strong sense of community may not realize that they are participating in IES since IES can be as easy as going through an ex's profile (Tokunaga, 2011). Connecting with the community affordance provided by

Facebook, partners are often still connected via SNSs, which provides easier accessibility for a partner to stalk their ex (Duckworth, conference paper).

IES and info seeking had a negative relationship that trended towards significance. Potential reasoning for this relationship not being significant could be because participants did not want to say they were stalking. These results also ask the question of whether surveillance is information. Previous studies indicate that IES is a strategy individuals use on different communication platforms to learn more about an individual's online actions and behaviors and that this behavior is goal-oriented (Tokunaga, 2011). While IES might be used as a strategic tool to gain information, doomscrolling serves a different purpose. It is important to note that doomscrolling is not used for information gathering, but to find negative content. In the case of this study IES was replaced with doomscrolling. This means that participants in the study potentially did not view doomscrolling (IES) as an information gathering tool, but rather as way to observe and seek out negative content. Future research should continue to strive to identify the difference between surveillance and information.

The final two affordances tested with IES both had significant relationships. First, the affordance of escapism had a positive relationship with IES that was highly significant. Individuals who are focused on escaping probably use IES behaviors to escape their own reality and become part of another users. In contrast, the common interest affordance had a negative relationship with IES that was also highly significant. If an individual is a part of Facebook to join groups that have shared common interests, they probably are not worried about what people are doing or stalking their ex. In the future, research should be expanded to include additional Facebook affordances.

Relational Dissolution

As SNSs have begun playing a pivotal part in our everyday lives, it has become apparent that SNSs also impact relationships and the relational dissolution process. This study has further supported the impact that social media can have on relational dissolutions, specifically, the new relational dissolution model that includes the step relational curation (LeFebvre, 2020). The strong correlations from this study indicate need to continue to adapt the relational dissolution model to reflect the influence of social media. New SNSs, such as TikTok, have continued to impact how social media influence relationships. The affordances of TikTok now allow for an ex-partner to narrate digital artifacts from their previous relationship and alter how the artifacts are perceived. This can impact if the perspective on the terminated relationship is positive or negative.

The important contribution from this study is understanding how Facebook affordances directly impact doomscrolling behaviors. While it is still a relatively new topic, this is one of the first studies to apply doomscrolling to personal relationships and with it the relational dissolution model. Applying the relational dissolution model to different SNS platforms such as TikTok will continue to allow for understanding of how different affordances directly impact doomscrolling behaviors.

Facebook Affordances

This study has also furthered the research on Facebook affordances. Although considerable research has been done on the impact of affordances on social media behaviors, this study combined doomscrolling and digital artifact preservation with Facebook affordances. The behavior used on social media depends on the Facebook affordance. Different Facebook affordances have both positive and negative significant

relationships with doomscrolling. Depending on the way in which an individual is using Facebook impacts the probability of them doomscrolling. Facebook has been heavily researched; however, connecting these factors and receiving statistically significant results is an important accomplishment for this study and indicative of future areas for research.

Limitations

There are several limitations to consider when analyzing the results of this study. The demographics of the sample population for this study may have impacts some of the results. This study was based on survey responses of undergraduate students at a midsize Midwestern university. A majority of the participants were first-year students who participated in the study to fulfill a class assignment credit, resulting in a young study population. Many of the individuals in the study had only been in one serious relationship or were still dating the only person they had ever dated. It is possible that if the age of the sample for this study had been older with participants who had more romantic history the results may have trended differently. However, previous research supports the trends reported in this study.

Participants in this study were also primarily heterosexual. Individuals who identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community often have different dating experiences from their straight counterparts. Many often are not as open about their relationship on social media and therefore do not post about their significant other. The stigma associated with being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community in a relationship causes couples to not post about their relationship for fear of safety and judgement. Facebook is also a platform with an older demographic that has been criticized as a place

for alt right values and politics to be shared and promoted heavily. The older demographic affordance could impact if an LGBTQIA+ couple felt comfortable to share. It would be interesting to see if digital artifacts from an LGBTQIA+ relationship are shared on platforms that have a younger demographic and are more liberal leaning. Had more members of the LGBTQIA+ community participated in this study, I believe they would not have had digital artifacts to doomscroll through or delete. Instead, they would have probably focused their behaviors on observing their ex's platform.

The audience of Facebook also proved to be a limitation of this study. The older demographic of Facebook could impact why younger users do not post as much on Facebook due to the audience their posts would be reaching. Younger Facebook users may not want to share specific details about their relationship for worry of older relatives becoming involved in their relationship or criticizing their relationship choices. Often the audiences on Facebook expect to see posts about accomplishments, life updates, or viewpoints of important issues. This connects to the participants of this study stating they only post on Facebook to share accomplishments and life updates. Had a different SNS been used, participants may have shared more personal artifacts about their relationships.

Another limitation was only using Facebook as the social media platform for this study. Although its unique affordances offered new insight and considerations, it is also a platform many younger individuals do not use as much. Several participants shared in the study they did not post on Facebook like they posted on Instagram. Limiting this study to only Facebook impacted the answers shared by the study's participants.

A final limitation of the study was the geographical location of the study. In the Midwest, especially South Dakota, it is not uncommon for individuals to only date

seriously and for marriage. This cultural norm is reflected in the high average for relationship length. Although the average age of participants was 19, many had been in serious relationships for at least two years. Combining young age with the expectation of dating to marry probably caused many individuals to not have the ability to participate in doomscrolling of an ex-partner.

Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study support several future directions for this research. First, future research should apply doomscrolling ex-partners to different social media platforms. Every SNS has unique affordances specific to the platform. Expanding this study to different platforms would provide a better understanding of how doomscrolling behaviors are impacted on different platforms based on affordances specific to SNS. Future research should also continue to identify and define the difference between IES and doomscrolling. In addition to contrasting the two behaviors, comparing IES and doomscrolling in a future study would provide a better understanding of how affordances impact each behavior type. Future research should also study different platforms individuals use to doomscroll, specifically, younger social media users. While a 19-year-old might not have a history using Facebook, they could be extremely active on TikTok or Instagram. Twitter itself would be unique to study because of the ability to be anonymous when posting. This affordance alone would potentially impact doomscrolling behavior.

Future research should also focus on incorporating different outcomes of relational dissolution to doomscrolling. A Facebook user who is divorced with several children probably has more digital artifacts than two high schoolers who dated for three

months. Studying relationships based on the level of seriousness or commitment would provide more insight into doomscrolling digital artifacts. Finally, future research should use different Facebook affordances to understand if there are also significant relationships between these and stalking behaviors. Other affordances such as accessibility allows for an individual to have access to a user's information, providing an excellent platform for stalking. While I selected five primary affordances, there are many more affordances that would be beneficial to study.

Conclusion

This research study strived to identify if doomscrolling behaviors were impacted by Facebook affordances and the role doomscrolling had on digital artifact preservation and the relational dissolution model. The results of this study indicate that two Facebook affordances have a positive relationship with doomscrolling (IES): community and escapism. The Facebook affordances common interests had a negative relationship with doomscrolling (IES). Further, the results of this study also indicate that the more you participate in doomscrolling (IES) the harder it is to adjust to your current relationship and the more Facebook jealousy you will experience. The final results of this study indicate that if an individual has preserved digital artifacts, they are more likely to participate in doomscrolling (IES).

The purpose of this research study was to seek to address if the affordances of Facebook encourage doomscrolling behaviors and if these behaviors impact the relational dissolution model. This study supports the updated relational dissolution model that incorporates social media into the relational dissolution process. Through connecting doomscrolling and romantic relationships, this study has provided an opportunity for the

doomscrolling phenomenon to continue to be built upon and applied to different social media scenarios. Ultimately, doomscrolling behaviors can be connected to several of the stages in the relational dissolution model.

REFERENCES

- Brody, N., LeFebvre, L., & Blackburn, K. (2016). Social networking site behaviors across the relational lifespan: Measurement and association with relationship escalation and de-escalation. *Social Media + Society*, 2(4), 1-16.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116680004>
- Brody, N., LeFebvre, L., & Blackburn, K. (2020). Holding on and letting go: Memory, nostalgia, and effects of virtual possession management practices on post-breakup adjustment. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 37(7), 2229–2249.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407520921460>
- boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2008). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210-230.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x>
- Duckworth, L. E. Social networking site Facebook’s negative impact on romantic relationships through encouraging interpersonal electronic surveillance.
- Duran, R. L., & Kelly, L. (2017). Knapp’s model of relational development in the digital age. *Iowa Journal of Communication*, 49(1), 22-45.
<https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=ddf0fdfa-fa04-42c3-b4ef-6a262b9af731%40redis>
- Garcia-Navarro, L. (2020, July 19). *Your ‘doomscrolling’ breeds anxiety. Here’s how to stop the cycle.* NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/19/892728595/your-doomscrolling-breeds-anxiety-here-s-how-to-stop-the-cycle>
- Fox, J., & Anderegg, C. (2014). Romantic relationship stages and social networking sites: Uncertainty reduction strategies and perceived relational norms on Facebook.

Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 17(11), 685-691.

https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1025&context=comm_fac

Fox, J., & McEwan, B. (2017). Distinguishing technologies for social interaction: The perceived social affordances of communication channels scale. *Communication Monographs*, 84(3), 298-318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2017.1332418>

Fox, J., & Moreland, J. J. (2015). The dark side of social networking sites: An exploration of the relational and psychological stressors associated with Facebook use and affordances. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 45, 168-176. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.11.083>

Fox, J., Osborn, J. L., & Warber, K. M. (2014). Relational dialectics and social networking sites: The role of Facebook in romantic relationship escalation, maintenance, conflict, and dissolution. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 35, 527–534. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.02.031>

Fox, J., & Tokunaga, R. S. (2015). Romantic partner monitoring after breakups: Attachment, dependence, distress, and post-dissolution online surveillance via social networking sites. *Cyberpsychology, behavior, and social networking*, 18(9), 491-498. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2015.0123>

Fox, J., Warber, K. M., & Makstaller, D. C. (2013). The role of Facebook in romantic relationship development: An exploration of Knapp's relational stage model. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 30(6), 771-794. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407512468370>

- Fox, J., & Warber, K. M. (2014). Social networking sites in romantic relationships: Attachment uncertainty, and partner surveillance on Facebook. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *17*(1), 3-7.
<https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0667>
- Frampton, J. R., & Fox, J. (2018). Social media's role in romantic partners' retroactive jealousy: Social comparison, uncertainty, and information seeking. *Social Media + Society*, *4*(3), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118800317>
- Hocutt, M. A. (1998). Relationship dissolution model: Antecedents of relationship commitment and the likelihood of dissolving a relationship. *Journal of Service Industry Management*, *9*(2), 189-200.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/09564239810210541>
- Klein, J. (2021, March 3). *Why does endlessly looking for bad news feel so strangely gratifying – and can we break the habit?* BBC.
<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210226-the-darkly-soothing-compulsion-of-doomscrolling>
- Koenig Kellas, J., Bean, D., Cunningham, C., & Cheng K. Y. (2008). The ex-files: Trajectories, turning points, and adjustment in the development of post-dissolutional relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *25*(1), 23-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407507086804>
- LeFebvre, L. E. (2020). How concerns about former or future partners influence virtual possession management: Examining relational curation in the relational dissolution model. *Communication Research Reports: CRR.*, *37*(4), 161–171.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2020.1796617>

- McClain, C., Vogels, E. A., Perrin, A., Sechopoulos, S., & Rainie, L. (2021, September 1). *The internet and the pandemic*. Pew Research Center.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/09/01/the-internet-and-the-pandemic/>
- LeFebvre, L., Blackburn, K., & Brody, N. (2015). Navigating romantic relationships on Facebook. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *32*(1), 78–98.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407514524848>
- Muise, A., Christofides, E., & Desmarais, S. (2009). More information than you ever wanted: Does Facebook bring out the green-eyed monster of jealousy? *Cyber Psychology & Behavior*, *12*(4). <https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2008.0263>
- Muise, A., Christofides, E., & Desmarais, S. (2014). “Creeping” or just information seeking? Gender differences in partner monitoring in response to jealousy on Facebook. *Personal Relationships*, *21*(1), 35-50.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/pere.12014>
- On ‘doomsurfing’ and doomscrolling’ Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/doomsurfing-doomscrolling-words-were-watching>
- Paulsen, P., & Fuller, D. (2020). Scrolling for data or doom during COVID-19? *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, *111*(4), 490-491.
<https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-020-00376-5>
- Pennington, N. (2020). An examination of relational maintenance and dissolution through social networking sites. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *105*, 161-171.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2020.1796617>

- Robards, B., & Lincoln, S. (2016). Making it “Facebook official”: Reflecting on romantic relationships through sustained Facebook use. *Social Media + Society*, 2(4), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116672890>
- Rollie, S. S., & Duck, S. (2006). Divorce and dissolution of romantic relationships: Stage models and their limitations. *Handbook of divorce and relationship dissolution*, 223-240.
- Rose, K. (2020, March 20). This week in tech: How to stop coronavirus doomsurfing.’ *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/20/technology/coronavirus-doomsurfing.html>
- Tokunaga, R. S. (2011). Social networking site or social surveillance site? Understanding the use of interpersonal electronic surveillance in romantic relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(2), 705-713. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2010.08.014>
- Tong, S. T. (2013). Facebook use during relationship termination: Uncertainty reduction and surveillance. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 16(11), 788-793. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0549>
- Vangelisti, A. (2006). Relationship dissolution: Antecedents, processes, and consequences. In M. A. Fine & J. H. Harvey. *Close relationships: Functions, forms, and processes*, 353-374.
- (2020, September 1). *Everything you need to know about doomscrolling and how to avoid it*. Cleveland Clinic. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/everything-you-need-to-know-about-doomscrolling-and-how-to-avoid-it/>

Appendix A

Facebook Jealousy Scale (Muise, et al., 2009)

Response scale 1 = Very unlikely, 5 = Very likely

1. Become jealous after seeing that your partner has added an unknown member of the opposite sex to Facebook.

1	2	3	4	5
Very unlikely				Very likely

2. Be upset if your partner does not post an accurate relationship status on Facebook.

1	2	3	4	5
Very unlikely				Very likely

3. Feel threatened if your partner added a previous romantic or sexual partner to his or her Facebook friends.

1	2	3	4	5
Very unlikely				Very likely

4. Monitor your partner's activities on Facebook

1	2	3	4	5
Very unlikely				Very likely

5. Become jealous after seeing that your partner has posted a message on the wall of someone of the opposite sex.

1	2	3	4	5
Very unlikely				Very likely

6. Question your partner about his or her Facebook friends.

1	2	3	4	5
Very unlikely				Very likely

7. Feel uneasy with your partner receiving a personal gift from someone of the opposite sex.

1	2	3	4	5
Very unlikely				Very likely

9. I am aware of my past partner's interactions with others using the internet.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree
10. I check up on online to see who my past partner is maintaining relationships with.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree
11. I use the internet to keep informed about my past partner's activities outside our relationship.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree
12. I use the internet to gather information about my past partner's online relationships
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree
13. I monitor the online activity between my past partner and new people I don't know who are connected to him or her.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree
14. I keep close tabs on what my past partner is doing through the internet.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree
15. I look online for information about my past partner's relationship outside our own.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree
16. I supervise my past partner through the internet.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Appendix C

Digital Artifact Preservation Scale (LeFebvre et al., 2020)

1. When managing virtual items following my breakup, I tend to base my decisions on whether to keep and/or delete items on the connection I had with my former partner?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
2. When managing virtual items following my breakup, I tend to base my decisions on whether to keep and/or delete items on my relationship with a potential future partner?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
3. When managing virtual items following my breakup, I tend to base my decisions on whether to keep and/or delete items based on the time spent with my former partner?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
4. When managing virtual items following my breakup, I tend to base my decisions on whether to keep and/or delete items on the closeness I had with my former partner?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
5. When managing virtual items following a breakup, I tend to find myself being unable to stop scrolling through old posts connected to my former partner?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
6. When managing virtual items following a breakup, I tend to find myself going to my partners page and being unable to stop scrolling through their current posts and social media interactions?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
7. When managing virtual items following a breakup, I tend to find myself being unable to stop looking at profiles and interactions of individuals connected to my former partner?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree

Appendix D

Relational Adjustment Scale (Brody et al., 2016)

Response scale 1 = least, 5 = most

Think of a past romantic relationship that impacted your life. It can be a negative or positive, or even both.

8. How difficult has it been for you to make an emotional adjustment to this break-up?

1	2	3	4	5
Not difficult at all				Very difficult

9. Since the break-up, how much has your typical everyday functioning and routine been disrupted?

1	2	3	4	5
Not difficult at all				Very difficult

10. How upset were you immediately after the break-up?

1	2	3	4	5
Not difficult at all				Very difficult

11. Overall, how upset are you about the break-up now?

1	2	3	4	5
Not difficult at all				Very difficult

12. To what extent do you feel like you have adjusted to the end of the relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Not difficult at all				Very difficult

13. To what extent do you feel you are “over” the relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Not difficult at all				Very difficult

Appendix E

Facebook Affordances Scale adapted from Dhir (2017), Sundar & Limperos (2013)**Escape:**

1. I use Facebook to play roles different from those played in real life.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

2. I use Facebook to put off something I should be doing.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

3. I use Facebook to get away from what I am doing.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Ease of Use:

1. The first time, joining (signing-up for) Facebook was easy for me
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

2. Facebook features are easy to learn.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

3. I am using Facebook without any difficulties.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

4. I find it easy to use Facebook.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Information Seeking:

1. Through Facebook, I can get information.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

2. Through Facebook, I can provide others with information.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

3. Through Facebook, I can learn how to do new things.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Social Influence

1. Everyone uses Facebook so I also do the same.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

2. I use Facebook to look stylish as it matches my lifestyle.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

3. My friends use Facebook so I also use Facebook.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

4. People around me are on Facebook so I am also on Facebook.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Social Relationship

1. I am using Facebook to create my own friend list.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

2. Facebook allows me to “find people” with common interests.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

3. Facebook allows me to find “Facebook groups” with common interests.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Appendix F

Table 1
Correlations Between Facebook Affordances & IES

Variables	b	SE	p
Community	0.31	0.12	0.008
Escapism	-0.23	0.10	0,012
Common Interests	-0.17	0.12	0.150
Ease		0.13	0.075
Info		0.14	0.080