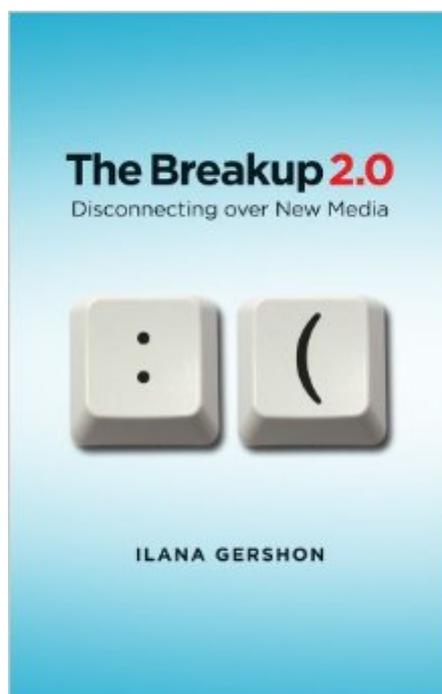


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The Breakup 2.0: Disconnecting Over New Media



Synopsis

A few generations ago, college students showed their romantic commitments by exchanging special objects: rings, pins, varsity letter jackets. Pins and rings were handy, telling everyone in local communities that you were spoken for, and when you broke up, the absence of a ring let everyone know you were available again. Is being Facebook official really more complicated, or are status updates just a new version of these old tokens? Many people are now fascinated by how new media has affected the intricacies of relationships and their dissolution. People often talk about Facebook and Twitter as platforms that have led to a seismic shift in transparency and (over)sharing. What are the new rules for breaking up? These rules are argued over and mocked in venues from the New York Times to lamebook.com, but well-thought-out and informed considerations of the topic are rare. Ilana Gershon was intrigued by the degree to which her students used new media to communicate important romantic information—such as "it's over." She decided to get to the bottom of the matter by interviewing seventy-two people about how they use Skype, texting, voice mail, instant messaging, Facebook, and cream stationery to end relationships. She opens up the world of romance as it is conducted in a digital milieu, offering insights into the ways in which different media influence behavior, beliefs, and social mores. Above all, this full-fledged ethnography of Facebook and other new tools is about technology and communication, but it also tells the reader a great deal about what college students expect from each other when breaking up—and from their friends who are the spectators or witnesses to the ebb and flow of their relationships. *The Breakup 2.0* is accessible and riveting.

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Customer Reviews

Breakup 2.0 is based on a brilliant insight: if you want to look at how the form of the message matters, look at the one situation where the content can't matter at all. What, after all, is the satisfactory answer to, "Why are you breaking up with me?" Gershon manages to take a scholarly and thought-provoking approach to the problems involved with using new technologies, and, at the same time, provide a fun, hip, and humorous look at the processes of connection and disconnection. Having been unpleasantly dumped (hopefully) more than my fair share of times, I was reluctant to pick up this book. But it is so funny and compassionate that you will find yourself laughing and taking comfort much more than you will find yourself cringing. In fact, off hand, I don't think I found a single cringe-worthy moment. What I did find was charming writing (facebook stalking provides little "potato chips" of information--small, bad for you, AND unsatisfying), and interesting insights into the changing face of technology. Did you know that there was once a debate over whether to answer the telephone with "Hello" or "Ahoy!?" Or that young people think that only old people write personal emails? That you are not the only one who has terrible spelling in emails and why? That people are creating fake facebook profiles to stalk each other and how to spot them? What I loved most about this book, however, were the excerpts from interviews with college students, who are much kinder, more thoughtful, and more ethical than I would have given them credit for. Because, after all, I'm old, send personal emails, and don't know how to text. You won't know what it all means once you've read Breakup 2.0, but you'll have a wonderful time trying to figure it out. And you'll have a better-examined life as you interact with new technologies, which you will have to do more and more. And more. UR. Sorry.

It's fascinating how profoundly social media is altering our society and how society is reacting to the new forms of interaction brought about by technological change. In Break Up 2.0, Ilana Gershon, a lecturer in the Department of Communication and culture at Indiana University, examines the use of new technological media in the context of relationship break ups. Whether it's breaking up via text message, a change of Facebook status or an email, Gershon explores dating in the digital age. Despite only working with a small sample of students who volunteered to participate, Gershon uncovered a variety of ways in which her students both use and interpret newer forms of communication. She discovered, essentially, that the social rules and conventions around media are still evolving and there is not yet a unified view on what is and isn't appropriate in regards to

interpersonal communication. The vignettes from the students she interviews are an interesting window into the social negotiations taking place especially in regards to the increasingly public nature of relationships. The issue with books that examine social media is that the landscape is changing so rapidly that by the time the book is published the relevance of its findings has to be considered. When this study took place in 2007-2008, Facebook was a social platform primarily the domain of American college students, it has become much more mainstream in 2012, and its usage has continued to evolve. However *Break Up 2.0* still has relevance in today's negotiation of relationships through digital media and it is an interesting examination of popular culture. The conclusions tend to be repetitive though so the book begins to drag and the language is more academic than accessible. It is a University Press title so its intended audience, I assume, is sociology students but it could have easily been something with wider appeal, with a slightly different tone.

If you're interested in media ethnographic or linguistic anthropology this book is perfect for you. A little repetitive and a little outdated but the study and theories seem solid and the data and analysis was extremely interesting and enlightening.

I had to purchase this for school. It was a fast read and wonderful. I enjoyed the story telling and the overall data that the author presents. It was an ethnography about the use of Facebook and how we use it in the modern age. I recommend to anyone taking a language and culture class or linguistics.

Through a series of entertaining and revealing interviews, mostly with college students, *The Breakup 2.0* examines how new technologies are changing not only romantic relationships but the ways people end those relationships. At a moment when not everyone uses the same media and understands the media they use in different ways, Gershon explores the various ethical dilemmas which arise when people break-up over a medium rather than face-to-face. In the process Gershon makes a number of fascinating points, including the fact that people are beginning to reimagine what counts as a medium--she notes that some of interviewees are starting to describe face-to-face interaction as a medium--and that public speech is becoming less about anonymity and more about accessibility.

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