On Jedward. And Fandom.

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Abstract

John and Edward Grimes (artist name "Jedward") have been active for four and a half years and have a heterogeneous following of fans. This thesis aims to investigate how and why people become Jedward fans, how they view the fandom and what experiences they have of being round the twins. After respondents, independently of one another, began disclosing how the twins and fandom had fundamentally changed their lives, this area of investigation was also pursued. The conclusion is that while there are some negative aspects of fandom, for those taking part in the study, being a fan of Jedward has led to what I've chosen to term "Fandom-Induced Self-Efficacy".

Keywords: Autoethnography, Jedward, Group Psychology, Fandom-Induced Self-Efficacy, Transformational Leadership
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THANK YOU!!

Obviously, I’d like to give a big shoutout to my informants - without you, I wouldn’t have been able to spend the biggest part of three months immersed in a subject that I love! And I wouldn’t have got to have know you better and share more of the JedLove either.

My parents + Fluffy the Bear & Professor Wiggins.

Virginia and her magical doggy, Milou. You know why ;-) 

By believing that my anthropological abilities had not completely vanished after almost fifteen years outside academia, and conversing in English, Åsa has made me see that I am an authority on this subject, despite not previously realising it myself.

I’m going to thank my inner fangirl too, for providing me with the stamina to keep going when things got a bit tough.

And Nanan. Without realising it, you left me a legacy.

But most of all, I’d like to thank the raison d’être: John and Edward. I won’t be longwinded and reiterate the wonderful things you’ll already find written in these pages, other than add that although I never could have believed that those two boys I saw on tv all those years ago in the middle of my unhappiness would mean so very much to me, would ultimately save my life.

But you did. And I’ve never been happier or more content!

Living life on @PlanetJedward

All my love,
Your Beth x
Introduction:

“His name is John and my name’s Edward and together we are Jedward”

Irish singer/songwriters (among other things) and identical twins John and Edward Grimes (aka Jedward), 23, were born in Dublin and originally took part in The X Factor in 2009. Despite finishing 6th, and dividing both the nation(s) and judges themselves, they have gone on to have a successful career not only in music but also in TV. Jedward have released three albums, Planet Jedward, Victory and Young Love and their fourth, written and produced by themselves, will be released shortly. Jedward have also represented Ireland in the European Song Contest in both 2011 and 2012, as well as declaring that they are open to the idea of writing an entry not necessarily performed by themselves.

Their television work includes the BBC children’s series Jedward’s Big Adventure and RTÉs OMG! Jedward’s Dream Factory. They also took part in Celebrity Big Brother in 2011. Among other advertising campaigns in the UK and Ireland, they’ve promoted the Jedward mobile phone for 3 Ireland. Jedward have toured extensively in their native country as well the UK. They’ve had tours in Europe and one in Australia as well as visiting Canada, Japan and Singapore.

For the last four seasons (2009 - 2013) Jedward have starred in the Christmas pantomime* at the Olympic Theatre in Dublin, bringing in hundreds of fans from all over the world. Having previously been runners, they completed the Los Angeles Marathon in 2012 and in June the same year, they had the honour of running with the Olympic Torch through Dublin. Jedward are probably most popular in their native Ireland as well as the UK and most central and northern European countries. The fandom is solid with a lot of participation on social media platforms. It’s also quite a close-knit fandom compared to those of most international artists and Jedward fans are known for taking every opportunity to promote their idols, are loyal and would defend them to the last.

When planning this work, I initially chose to ask four open-ended questions in order to gain knowledge as to how and why those taking part are fans of Jedward, their views on fandom and also experiences of being round the twins. As is explained in turn, there were certain reasons as to why I wanted to ask these particular questions. However, already after the first interview, a pattern began to emerge telling me that there was more behind these women’s testimonies than a sheer love of pop music and two attractive young men.

After reviewing previous research conducted on fans of both football (admittedly predominantly male audiences) and popular music, there were several major categories of theory that could possibly explain what I later chose to call ”The Genius of John and Edward”: to begin with, there were a lot of similarities between what I already knew (or at least, suspected) to be true about fandom, which is reflected in the theoretical discussions accompanying every chapter. I’ve also tried to use different concepts to look more closely at the subject from several angles: on the part of the twins themselves, I’ve considered Transformational Leadership, on a group level, dynamics and group psychology and on the part of the female informants, what I choose to call “Fandom-Induced Self-Efficacy”.

In truth, I would have loved someone to wave a magic wand and produce an all-inclusive theory of Fandom-Induced Self-Efficacy which would ultimately help me to make a neat and coherent bundle of both the information given by informants and the tacit knowledge...
held by myself (which will be looked at closer under the heading "Autoethnography") but as things are, the above theories are implemented in order to examine and analyse the collected data and form a basis on which to conduct further research towards a greater understanding and eventual theoretical basis for micro-level fan studies. While the matter of feminism pervades the entire subject of fandom and is indeed an important issue, I feel that it is not a primary aspect of this thesis per se other than the emphasis must remain on understanding the current data before setting it in a macro-perspective where patriarchality may be a more prudent line of questioning.

*Pantomime (colloquial = panto) is a seasonal production, rather like a musical, gathering inspiration from fairy stories or fables, often including a sensmoral message (such as Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Aladdin and the Magic Lamp, Beauty and the Beast etc) whereby a woman traditionally plays the lead boy/man and a man plays the next-lead woman (e.g. Widow Twanky). There is generally a certain level of adult humour involved even if the performances are aimed at families and the audience participate throughout, partly as the butt of heckling from said Widow Twanky, but also helping the characters find their way through the humorous and intricate dealings of solving problems (“he’s BEHIND you!”, “oh yes he DID!”), finding true love and “living happily ever after”. Nowadays, these have become more and more commercialised and professional productions including well-known figures from tv and the music industry. In the case of Jedward panto, the twins played the lead female’s twin brothers and music was a mixture of that which was popular at the time and Jedward’s own.
Aim/Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate fans’ experiences of Jedward. In order to fulfil this purpose, I have asked the following research questions:

How did you become a Jedward fan?
Why are you a fan of Jedward?
How do you see the fandom?
What’s your experience of being round the twins?
In what way has being a fan changed your life?

I wanted to investigate being part of a fandom as an opening to future research looking further into Fandom-Induced Self-Efficacy and how this affects fans’ lives on a micro-level. Do other people view and experience John and Edward in the same (or at least similar ways) as I do? My own background of fandom is included in appendices, where I’ve answered the same questions as I asked other fans (Appendix 1).
Disposition

As a fan myself, I have chosen to take a closer look at fandom, and as a backdrop to my own research, have included an introduction to one of the most central subject of this thesis, namely Jedward. While their career is much shorter than many other artists, they have worked within a lot of different areas under this four and a half year period and I feel that in order to understand what the fans have to say, background knowledge of who they are talking about is important. As much of my own experiences and tacit knowledge has been used throughout the entire process, from planning to execution and in putting pen to paper, the question of autoethnography, ethics and telling my story are touched upon. Here I discuss the issues of how much one should reveal about oneself when being a non-anonymous informant and while I have tried to be personal, there are certain things that I had to make a decision about whether to actually include.

The historical perspectives of fandom are important here, as hardly anyone can (at least on an unconscious level) have escaped the negative labelling of fans stemming from both academia and media alike. Although there has been a great deal more research conducted on fandom since “The Adoring Audience” (Lewis, 1992) first came out, there also seems to have been more academic focus on the pathological aspects of fandom, rather than concentrating on the (possibly more mundane) aspects of fandom in everyday life.

In the section on Methodology, I’ve charted the development concerning my role of anthropologist in the field from beginning to end, giving a clear picture of my expectations and trepidations before, during and after data collection, how it proceeded as well as noting the change in the course of the research after undertaking the first interviews.

In the results section, I look further into the individual questions, using relevant literature to explain my findings as well as highlighting what has been said by interspersing my own experiences and knowledge from fandom life. I discuss the main two ways that my informants have become fans of Jedward and also looked further into why they are Jedward fans, as opposed to any other artist.

We see already in the first section that one of the properties that John and Edward possess is their ability to beguile as artists and be personal when meeting and interacting with fans, something I look further into when discussing the different aspects of fandom.

Which brings us round to the final two questions: how fans experience being around the twins. At the risk of sounding like I’m discussing more of the same, we can see that the fans only have positive things to say about spending time with John and Edward, speaking both of their personal experiences as well as how the twins themselves are when interacting with their fans. I found the theory of Transformational Leadership very apt in describing how the twins interact and coach their fans into setting and achieving goals, much like they themselves constantly do.

In the final section entitled ”how being a Jedward fan has changed my life”, I first take a look at how mass media have tended to treat John and Edward – as a novelty act, the fact that they are twins being a gimmick rather than the usual interest, for wants of a better word, shown to other brothers working together in the music industry. I take a look at Self-Efficacy theory and in which way levels of this in fans have been increased due to
the positivity and guidance of John and Edward and how the lyrics they are now producing are in line with the messages of empowerment we’ve become accustomed to via twitter and other social media platforms.

Last, but not least, I discuss what I’ve found and how this could be used as a basis for future research into what it entails to lead a fandom lifestyle, and in the development of what I choose to call "Fandom-Induced Self-Efficacy".
A Brief Introduction to Jedward

As can be seen in the introductory section, Jedward have had a successful career since 2009, involving different kinds of media production, including music and tv. They have also worked as models and are well known for their charity work. The fandom has also developed over the years and today Jedward have over 700K followers on twitter. They are not only appreciated for their artistry, however, but also for their personal qualities.

John and Edward have spoken out about the fact that they were bullied at school for being different, a subject they are very passionate about, both when it comes to supporting fans who are going through the same thing as well as actively taking part in campaigns against bullying and child abuse (e.g. ISPCC, ChildLine, Children in Need). They also are big animal lovers, having several dogs themselves, two of which, Blaze and FijiMouse, have their own twitter accounts; as animal cruelty and abandonment are also issues they take a strong stand on, it's not surprising that they have also been involved in campaigns for ISPCA as well as a Dublin shelter being visible at the yearly pantomimes in order to try and find homes for their unwanted dogs. The twins’ best friend is American actress Tara Reid, who they met and connected with while they were in the Big Brother house. Ed Sheeran also “gets them” and insisted they be allowed into the Green Room with him at the 2014 Much Music Awards in Canada.

One area which is not in itself the main focus of this thesis (but is to many, including myself, at the very heart of fandom communication and interaction) is social media and the internet as a whole. John and Edward became actively involved with social media at a very early stage in their careers; Jedward (@PlanetJedward) have been active on Twitter since November 2009 and also have a popular Youtube channel named JedwardTV. Live Twitcams (Tweetcams as the twins refer to them, even called Twincams by fans) have now been replaced by the occasional hangout on Google+. These three formats have formed the basis of social media interactions between fans and Jedward from the beginning of their career in 2009. The twins previously followed fans on Twitter until “The Unfollowing” on 6th July 2012 which John and Edward explained was to make the fandom more equal.

Whilst Twitter interaction may have somewhat decreased, the twins are now active on a large number of social platforms around the world and still send direct messages to fans via twitter as well as Snapchats and replies to comments on YT videos, although it’s difficult to gauge how many and how often due to the fact that some would have others believe they receive them on a regular basis whereas people like myself tend to see them as personal and don’t paste the information on social media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook etc).

See Appendix 2 for a full list of social media platforms that Jedward are active on.
Autoethnography, Ethics and Telling My Story

There have been several changes preceding, or at least leading up to, the development of the area known as auto ethnography and Jenkins was one of the first well-known so-called AcaFans. This was part of a general shift from studying audiences purely ethnographically in conjunction with anthropological studies, a move towards the acknowledgement of the inbuilt subjectivity of social science and the value of interaction between researcher and subject. But just as importantly, academics of fan studies themselves (Jenkins obviously being an often cited example) "coming out" as scholar fans (Anderson, 2012, p. 19).

Once considered as two diametrically opposed concepts, auto + ethnography is a qualitative research method which combines the life stories of the researcher with the study of them as social beings in a cultural setting and thus, playing the part of both researchers and participants in the study of the self. However, analysis is of the utmost importance here, as without this essential element, one could argue that the ethnographic effort is merely reduced to autobiographical material (Chang, Fair, & Fernandez, 2012, p. 18).

There are two major ways in which we are given a glimpse into the analysis of the auto (self), ethno (cultural) and graphy (research) process. Pioneers of autoethnography, Ellis & Bochner (2000, p. 740 in Chang, Fair, & Fernandez, 2012, p. 18) describe these as interpretive narration (also known as evocative stories) or narrative interpretation, the latter being more often, but not always, favoured within academia (Ellis & Bochner 2000, p. 740 in Chang, Fair, & Fernandez, 2014, p. 19). Obviously, self-reflexivity is inherent to this method (Anderson, 2012, p. 92). Chang, Fair, & Fernandez (2012, p. 22) conclude that autoethnography is "self-focused, researcher-visible, context-conscious and critically dialogic".

Anderson (2006, in Chang, Fair, & Fernandez, 2012, p. 20) is just one researcher who urges that others be included in autoethnography because while we as individuals (hopefully) know what goes on in our heads, there is the irrefutable possibility of being blinded by one's own "insight" (or rather, lack of it). On the other hand, data from oneself is presumed to be less fragmented, thereby sparing time in creating a multi-faceted, rich analysis and interpretation. The role of the autoethnographer is, in the words of Anderson (2006, p. 378 in Chang, Fair, & Fernandez, 2012, p. 22) that of a "complete member researcher" as opposed to an actor studying objects of investigation, not daring to interfere or become too involved less s/he somehow change the events taking part in "the field", this traditionally being a foreign or exotic environment.

How does the above pertain to me directly? Well, despite telling people on a regular basis that I'm one of the most unpsychological people you'll ever meet, at least in private, I've become increasingly aware that this is not entirely true. And while I don't go round constantly reminding myself that I have a degree in the subject, I sometimes stand back astonished at the things I do manage to achieve by using, well, a fair amount of psychology. In fact, when it comes down to it, I'm constantly noting, analysing and interpreting (or at least wondering about) the behaviour of both myself and others to a degree that certainly surpasses what one could class "everyday psychology", which brings me round to what I ultimately wanted to say: I thought the idea of this thesis through long and hard before choosing to conduct my interviews and write about a
subject that normally already takes up much of my time.

I decided that while I’m an inherent part of the fandom, at least in Sweden, I frequently find myself stepping back and assessing/philosophising situations taking place on Planet Jedward: I may have repeatedly claimed that John and Edward Grimes are indeed the best thing since sliced bread, but I also have the advantage of being a lot older than them and while I don’t necessarily agree with everything they do, mistakes belong to the learning process. One fundamental reason that I respect them so much is because they don’t drink alcohol (or smoke for that matter) and this has played a major part in my recovery. My age is also an advantage when it comes to interpreting John and Edward’s respective behaviour: while I’m busy listening to the latest music and hearing/seeing things that have gone viral, I still have enough distance to view them as young (Irish, Catholic) men with their mother (two years my senior) as a manager and Tara Reid as their best friend. I can also rest in the fact that my life will not end if I don’t end up dating/marrying/becoming pregnant by one of them. An event in the fandom has brought home the fact that such ideas are not completely down to stereotypes that are pinned on younger fans as I previously presumed they were is that there was an almighty uproar since it was rumoured that John had a girlfriend.

At the same time, I’ve been forced to think through issues that wouldn’t normally be part of fandom for me: protecting the identity of my informants, when and where to write exactly what I think and feel about certain topics, initially, where and when I’d get physical access to my interviewees, what John and Edward themselves will have to say about the thesis etc etc. I think the one subject I thought most about was how much I wished to disclose about my own experiences, something Chatham-Carpenter (2010 in Chang, Fair, & Fernandez, 2012, p. 35) raises a cautionary finger about. I mean, I have on occasion referred to them as "my little cubs" and habitually call them "Twinklings" (because they shine and bring light to the darkness). However, I was struck by the following; I’ve been told by several people completely independently of each other that I’m seen as being a very private person, with a high level of integrity (to which my immediate comment was "you’ve never read my twitter right?"). So maybe the problem might be the other way round – what if I went all analytical and hid behind the theory and what others have said without allowing my own voice to be heard? Again, my resident, all-analysing "shadow", for wants of a better word, has picked up on things John and Edward have said that others would have spread all over and made a complete drama out of but this is what made me realise that I respect not only my own integrity, but other people’s too.

Anderson (2012, p. 91) found herself making such decisions when conducting her research on the Duran Duran fandom and at one point questions whether she, as a scholar fan, would be any more able to articulate certain aspects of fandom that other (non-aca) fans simply cannot describe due to the high level of affect involved (more about this later). On the other hand, many a rich point is to be had as an insider. Though in this case, the task is not so much that of eliciting information on a subject which may just prove to be extremely significant, but that of realising that one already possesses the knowledge but may not recognise its importance.

At the end of the day, Anderson was able to adopt a so called "suspensionist" approach as introduced by Hills (2002, p. 182 in Anderson, 2012, p. 213). Hills (2003, pp. 144-145) himself claims "suspensionist approaches, which I favour...a more sensitive approach to fandom within the academy, would continue to tease out the many ways in which fan attachments, affects and passions permeate "academic" work, institutions and the
embodied, rather than imagined subjectivities of academia”. I think what he means is that we should probably stop being so uptight and instead of labelling all things fannish in order to squabble about their validity within a hierarchy, see things for what they are and not what we would like them to be (that is, suspend). Though I may be wrong.

During her research, Anderson (2012) found that there were four groups which fellow fans fell into based on their degree of willingness to collaborate or comment on her work. There were those who were already fan friends who ultimately changed the direction of her research (for the better, at least according to Anderson) by not doing as they were told during the focus group stage of data collection, then there were new fan friends who she got to know through participation in her research, those who were indifferent and then those who were completely silent about the whole thing, these being in a majority (Anderson, 2012, pp. 221 – 223). Monaco (2010, p. 127 in Anderson, 2012, p. 222) states that such silence is actually conveying a message of some sorts and that it should be afforded an equal amount of thought as that which is expressed.

While the scope of my research is obviously not as broad and deep-digging as Anderson's (2012) doctoral thesis, I have stated on twitter that I'm writing a thesis about Jedward and the fandom and surprisingly (or maybe not) only one person has spontaneously wished me well and the person in question is also a post-graduate.
Historical Perspectives of Fandom

Ehrenreich, Hess & Jacobs (in Lewis, 1992, pp. 84-106) take us on a historical journey coupling Beatlemania with the beginning of the sexual liberation of women. In the backdrop of conservative USA, this was an era where women were expected to hold out for a proposal of marriage rather than giving in to sex and losing the chance to ensure a normal life in financial security. And while the notion of sexual repression is regarded as being central to the sudden affect now shown by these young fans, it wasn’t a subject openly discussed due to the fact that women, and most certainly not teens, weren’t deemed to have any sexual feelings to speak of. However, Heinrich et al. (in Lewis, 1992, p. 97) points out that the post-war period brought with it several effects, not least affluence and the slow development of the teens as a specific part of life with its own status and consumer products levelled at this specific demographic group.

McRobbie (1991, in Anderson, 2012, p. 5) introduces us to the concept of “bedroom culture” whereby girls have traditionally spent time in their bedrooms, either alone or with friends and siblings (these in turn being instrumental participants in the spread of pop music culture (Anderson, 2012, pp. 65-66)), whilst listening to music, putting on make-up, reading magazines filled with posters of their idols and last, but not least, day dreaming. Anderson (2012) notes that similar activities take place even nowadays, albeit aided and abetted by online communication. Ali (2002, p. 163) when looking into power relations in the micro-friendships of those between eight and 11, observed how this knowledge (of popular culture) is used by the children as expertise and furthermore, as a means of exerting influence. She did, however, note differences pertaining to gender in how this social capital was used: while girls formed relationships based which popular culture artists they liked “loving girls (p.159), there was a tendency for the “loathing boys” (p. 160) to base their friendship choices on who they did not. This was in turn influenced by ethnicity.

Kidder (2006, p. 83, in Anderson, 2012, p. 125) adds that the pop concert in itself is akin to a rite of passage in the teen years and so we can see that already from an early age, pop music plays a major role in identity formation and should not be underestimated.

Although the term boy band would appear to be a 1990’s invention (Anderson, 2012, p. 156), neither the concept of, nor lack of respect for fans of the genre, are a modern invention. Jensen (in Lewis, 1992, p. 9) points out that the fan has been surrounded by two conflicting myths: on the one hand we have the fanatic, consumed with mass hysteria, de-individuated, on the other, the shy loner, obsessed with their idol, unafraid of pursuing ever-more deviant behaviour to still their delusional mind, creations of both media and academia. Jensen, explains in her essay entitled “Fandom as Pathology: The The Consequences of Characterization” (in Lewis, pp. 9-29) that these ideas are not only based on a lack of understanding of fandom in everyday life, but also have their roots in elitism and systematic bias on the behalf of academics. There is seemingly no end of explanations as to why these dangerous individuals become "fans turned bad", but they are often rooted in ideas of loss of morals and place in modern society. Whilst the 20th Century is obviously the focus of Jensen’s discussion, Porat (2010), in his article about football fandom introduces the idea that in a time where globalisation and modern-postmodern <sic> society is in a state of upheaval, the only part of one's identity which is bounded is that of football fandom, which is deemed by Porat to be "stable and effective” (p. 277).
As has been said of many things, fandom is a feminist issue. While sports studies are mentioned where relevant in this thesis, and kept to a minimum, suffice to say, Schimmel, Harrington, & Bielby (2007 p. 581) have looked into the history of sports fandom and other popular culture (here "pop" music) respectively, and conclude that these have been clouded by the typical gender distinctions associated with them, to use two stereotypes (own examples), the "one of the lads, full of testosterone and beer, supporting his team through thick and thin" vs the "hysterical teenage girl fan(atic), her screams and actions a preparation for childbirth". No, I didn't make that up, someone went a bit over the top on the Psychoanalytic theory, I quote:

"The girls are subconsciously preparing for motherhood. Their frenzied screams are a rehearsal for that moment. Even the jelly babies are symbolic" (quoted in Norman, p. 200, in Lewis, 1992, p. 95)

Despite similarities in themes and utilisation of methods of research, Schimmel, Harrington, & Bielby (2007 p. 581) note that the psychology of sport has tended to concentrate on micro-level traits of the (usually male) fan whereas pop fan culture has lumped the individuals involved into groups with "mass traits" applied accordingly. They state that current pop culture research stems from that which was began in the 1980's with the study of audience reception (Schimmel, Harrington, & Bielby, 2007, p. 582).

Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, they also note that pop fan culture studies are more usual within the area of cultural studies while sports fan studies belong to the social science and business/management side of things.

Many of the issues discussed in Lewis (1992) are just as relevant now, 23 years later. Cline's articles were originally published in Rolling Stone magazine in 1986, but apart from the name of the artists who are mentioned, could to a greater extent have been written yesterday. Among other things, she states that "for an adult woman to admit, in mixed company, to a crush on a rock star, is to overstep the bounds of proper feminine behaviour" (p. 70). A scathing, but nonetheless very astute observation can be found in the following: "men learn to jerk off over anonymous tits and ass---they just don't know what shit goes on in women's minds even (or maybe especially)---until recently, women weren't believed to have sexual fantasies" (p. 71). She continues on page 75 with "it's strange that women should have to apologise for being attracted to men who wear clothes that show off chest, biceps and arms to good advantage (skinny jeans), who do a credible bump and grind (twerk) and who sing things like "jump on my pop rocket, it's about to blow" (own parentheses and lyrics example).

In 2003, Maltby, Houran, and McCutcheon (in Strage, 2005, p. 186) presented their study in The Journal of Nervous and Mental Health promoting the disorder "Celebrity Worship Syndrome" (CWS). They identified three levels of the disorder: "entertainment-social" which entails being interested in celebrities purely for the entertainment value or social contact with friends that it can give. The next level "intense-personal" includes the occasional compulsion such as "I see my idol as my soul mate". The most extreme form, they labelled "borderline - pathological". The fan with this kind of CWS is prepared to pay a fortune for an inexpensive object if their idol has used it and would even be willing to hurt other people if their idol asked them to.

The study was conducted in the UK and 607 people were interviewed, and out of these, almost 10% were deemed to be "borderline-pathological" and 27% "intense-personal". Maltby, Houran, & McCutcheon stated that while it was difficult to generalise from such a small sample, they had hit upon a pathological element in attitudes and behaviour
associated with CWS. However, they still took this one step further and stated that the intense-personal types were neurotic and borderline-pathological psychotic. They also stated that celebrity worshippers had a lower level of psychological functioning (Maltby, Houran, and McCutcheon, 2003, in Strage, 2005, p. 187).

Strage does make a valid point regarding the findings (and conclusions) of Malty, Houran, & McCutcheon (2003 in Strage, 2005, p. 1887). Here, he asks the question of whether worshipping religious leaders could in turn be seen in the same light, bearing in mind the lengths some people are prepared to go in the name of their faith. He also suggests that one reason people may have an intense-personal relationship to their idol is because the private lives of celebrities are public domain, an illusion of intimacy which the entertainment industry has created, irrespective of whether the information given is actually true or not. And, once again, due to this, fans feel that the person in question owes them something in return.

However, one possible improvement is the change in attitudes to women in the music industry, these no longer simply being seen and dismissed as groupies other than competent enough to forge a musical career and become millionaires in their own right (Cline, p. 79, in Anderson, 20012). Another valid subject from the fan’s point of view, then as now, is the fact that simply having sexual fantasies about one’s idol does in no way mean an inner wish to actually become a groupie (Cline, p. 72, in Anderson, 2012), in much the way that readers of E.L. James’ “50 Shades of Grey” trilogy do not necessarily harbour a secret vision of becoming dominatrices.

To finish this part, I’d like to use a little anecdotal example just to remind us that the stereotypes and prejudices discussed above are still alive and kicking. Anderson tells of how Andrews & Whorlow (2000, pp. 262-263 in Anderson, 2012, p. 146) describe a concert scene; several generations of females all making the most of being in an "all girl" space, finding their inner fangirls (to coin a more modern phrase), while the few men in the audience looked frankly rather shocked at the sheer mass of oestrogen and/or progestogen filling the air. The following (given in its full, ehem, glory) was written by Lauren Murphy, freelance journalist, and published in The Irish Times on 28th October 2014. This just happens to be the very concert I attended when I was in Dublin conducting the first part of my research. I could go into detail as to why most of the article is factually wrong or question how someone on the supposedly "sane" side of the fandom barrier could even dream up such hurtful and ultimately, disrespectful things. But give someone enough rope...

**JEDWARD - Olympia Theatre**

There must be some mistake, surely. An all-seated Jedward gig? Stools on stage? Moody lighting? I mean, how are you supposed to scissor-kick while sitting down? As it turns out, the seating plan is abandoned when John and Edward Grimes take the stage to a chorus of ecstatic squawks but in any case, it certainly doesn't signify a newly matured version of the twins who were deposited into our lives via The X Factor five years ago. Mature? Pffft. They may have recently turned the ripe old age of 23, but Jedward don’t do ‘mature’. Neither do their audience: alongside the excitable kids, tweens and teenyboppers waving glowsticks and homemade signs are a group of grown women dressed as Crayola crayons. At least there’s someone who looks a little more out of place
than us and the smattering of exasperated dads rubbing their temples. They waste no time in launching into an excitable 2012 track 'Luminous'; new songs 'Perfect Wonderland' and 'Free Spirit' quickly follow, as does zippy 2012 Eurovision entry 'Waterline'. Singing along rather shakily to a backing track, it’s essentially group karaoke with a thousand screaming kids and songs that aren’t actually very good. An acoustic covers set doesn’t fare much better, with three aborted attempts at Coldplay’s 'Sky Full of Stars' and a shaky singalong of Canadian band’s Magic! hit 'Marry That Girl'. Yet it’s never been about the music with Jedward, has it? The duo’s shared defining characteristic is their space cadet personalities, and their stream-of-consciousness ramblings between songs undoubtedly prove more entertaining (if a little patience-fraying). Nonetheless, the whole thing is unquestionably shambolic. There is no light show, no sense of rehearsed ‘show’ usually peddled by pop acts, nor is there even a basic backdrop, and the gig subsequently feels rather cheap and a little exploitative. Nevertheless, the shrieking voices and beaming smiles defiantly challenge any grown-up cynicism – and that’s just John and Edward’s.
Method:

I've discussed Autoethnography in some detail in a separate part of this thesis but first I would like to present my thoughts ahead of my data-collecting visit to Dublin, before describing and discussing some reflections on how things actually went.

Preparation:

In September 2014, I wrote: when it comes to the area of investigation I've chosen for my thesis, I think the most effective way of accessing other peoples' experiences of the fandom and John and Edward themselves, both as artists and as individuals (this in itself, an area that I need to be very clear about – public and private), would be to either ask fans directly (interviews) or observe their behaviour in conjunction with a fan event – for example, the gathering of fans in "the lane" i.e. Sycamore Street which runs down the side of the theatre where the concert is to take place on October 24. The main reasons as to why I've decided not to use the actual concert for observation are: a) I want to experience the concert as myself, a fan, rather than a researcher (though how far I'll succeed in "shutting off" is another matter) and b) although actions sometimes speak louder than words, I find it difficult to see how it would be possible to glean the type of information I'm wishing to analyse and discuss from such a scenario (if not simply due to the fact that it's nay on impossible to conduct a conversation during a concert). There's also another reason: while a concert can in many respects be argued to be the ultimate fan experience when those one is a fan of are, indeed primarily music artists, there is also the question of whether crowd behaviour (in lieu of some unforeseen event) differs in any significant way over time. Upon saying that, there may be some sort of group activity such as fancy dress going on bearing in mind that the concert takes place just over a week before Hallowe'en. There's also a tradition of winding up the staff at the Olympia Theatre as they try to enforce the rule of remaining seated while Jedward encourage everyone to get up and dance*.

For now, however, I've decided that the answers to my area of research are best accessed through interviews. How structured these ultimately will be is something that I need to work on, but at this point in time, I'm leaning towards four open questions where others may be asked by way of explanation or exemplification or even an extra question posed at a later date if a pattern appears indicating some underlying current that needs clarification or looking into further.

There indeed advantages of being very close to informants which are, among others, an air of intimacy and openness, I can get straight to the point without having to explain lots of things, we can enjoy an informal, relaxed atmosphere conducive to dialogue as well as those being interviewed know I'm not on a mission to bad mouth either them or Jedward, or at least not hostile (the twins have been, and still are, treated appallingly by media, fans and trolls alike, this in itself an issue I need to handle without becoming too incensed).

On the other hand, the disadvantages are that it's very easy to use tactic knowledge as a mutual belief system when the informant and myself may actually be talking about something completely different. The notion that others think and rationalise and see a common history or envisage a similar future for the twins could also prove to be difficult. The informants may think I expect them to respond in a certain way, may feel uncomfortable saying something negative, as well as being used to me participating in a
discussion rather than just asking questions and letting them talk without input.

The advantages of safe distance are a minimised risk of affecting or contaminating proceedings, no (or at least a lesser level of) emotional attachment/investment. It may also be easier to establish a system of symbols, codes and generally create a greater level of "clinical unattachment" to view things as an outsider. Then again, there are disadvantages of keeping a safe distance from informants, for example, a scenario where I simply don’t understand or even have a clue what I’m taking about or witnessing and therefore concentrate on/cling to extraneous information which may confound. An example here could be being able to ascertain what parts of behaviour are inherent of the Planet Jedward fandom rather than being a behaviour generally observable in tourists to Dublin. By not asking people directly, other than drawing conclusions from written sources (which admittedly is the only possibility in certain circumstances, for example, historical cases where there are no longer informants alive to be observed or answer questions), information may be second, or indeed, third hand. By not actively participating, there’s no sounding board to discuss ideas and explanations with.

In my own case, I need to be extremely clear and extremely aware of what is my own opinion, what are translations of other’s opinions, what is my own conclusion and what is based on tacit knowledge. I need to be aware of empathy to either the twins or the informant, attempts to defend the twins against negativity or criticism, that I’m seen as being trustworthy, that the informant may actually be telling me something in confidence and wish to retract it at a later date (for this reason, already when asking people if they wish to be informants, I’ve attempted to use a more neutral tone than when conversing ordinarily. I’ve also stressed the fact that they are anonymous). Luckily, I’ve previously always attempted to stay out of fandom politics and have no particular affiliation within it other than speak to people in general except on the odd occasion when somebody is being particularly obnoxious; even then I usually only ostracise them by unfollowing and on the odd occasion blocking them on Twitter, no screaming matches.

Another thing I need to keep in check is the fact that I have what I refer to as a "second dominant language" i.e. I use my second language more frequently than my first, which on occasion has resulted in misunderstanding as I can’t find the correct word in my first language and use the wrong translation. I’m also a very strong willed person and need to listen to what is being said and not get into any ideological (or preferably any) arguments with informants. I’ve attempted to choose people of different ages to interview and not simply those that I’m closest friends with within the fandom and therefore "yes sayers".

Despite what I’ve written above about age being a positive factor for me as a researcher of an area that I’m already familiar with, I need to be aware that there is an attitude among some of the younger fans (which, interestingly, appears to be more usual among those who I wouldn’t have had a lot in common with even as peers) that we older fans are "sex crazed grannies" <sic> or, alternatively, bored housewives who simply like John and Edward because they’re attractive young men who we want to bed (projection anyone?) and that we should get a life, preferably cooking and cleaning for our families instead of wasting time on social media and stalking Jedward. And as the previous statement has also revealed, I need to work on my tolerance of people who think differently to myself. Unfortunately, these people’s opinions won’t be included in my thesis because they’d never entertain the idea of being interviewed by a "paedo" like myself (quotation marks in this paragraphing pertain to actual comments posted on Twitter).
To reiterate, while I’m aware that non-participation may in some circumstances be preferable or even the only way of studying certain things, I feel that it would not be a wise choice of research method if I’m to understand more about the phenomena of Jedward and their fans.

*(they didn’t and we wore masks purchased for one euro apiece from a fan in the lane who was giving the money to a charity that the twins support called “Join Our Boys”).*

**Conducting Research in Dublin:**

Originally, I approached six people via direct message on twitter, all of which were going to the Dublin concert at The Olympia Theatre on 24\textsuperscript{th} October 2014. I explained that I was writing a Bachelor Thesis in Social Anthropology and wondered if we could meet up as I’d like to ask them some questions about Jedward and the fandom as part of said thesis and emphasised that they would be anonymous. I didn’t have any particular kind of person in mind as to who I approached, although there was apparently some idea behind the mix which didn’t become apparent to me until I was in the process of transcription (see below).

One person dropped out when she was told by another informant that I would be interviewing them (not quite sure what she thought I was going to do from the start, though, in retrospect, it might have been the fact that I was recording the interviews that was the real issue) as she didn’t feel comfortable talking about her experiences of the fandom, so I contacted another person instead. In asking three JedFriends, I’d hoped to have some kind of group discussion but this didn’t happen, as you’ll soon see.

I’d arranged to conduct the first interview on the day that I arrived in Dublin so I wouldn’t be doing more than two per day, something my tutor had advised me against. After spending a lot of time trying to find a supermarket that everyone claimed was ”just round the corner”, I arrived at her hostel only to find a person playing the guitar in the room where the interview was to be conducted. We rescheduled for the following day, when a mutual friend would be arriving who had also agreed to be interviewed. The interview went ahead the next day as planned and afterwards, we went shopping in central Dublin. However, the next informant arrived just before I was about to return to my hostel and prepare for an interview! We arranged to speak the following day and schedule a time to do the interview but basically, we only saw each other again for a very brief amount of time.

The second interview was conducted in my room at a different hostel and I added a few prompts to the basic questions as I felt the language barrier to be greater in this situation (I come from the north of England and while not having the broadest of dialects, it doesn’t exactly sound like the kind of the English that most people are taught at school). The following day I met up with my third informant nice and early and sat in the lane to do the interview. The fourth I ended up also doing in the lane and by this time, there were quite a lot of people around but luckily, the recording turned out ok in any case. I’d planned to meet the sixth person on my list (and possibly interview her friend too to make up for the loss of informant number 2) the day I was leaving for Sweden but to cut a long story short, I spent the last day trying to locate my beloved teddies that I’d loaned to John and Edward’s aunt to take backstage and not been given back.
In retrospect, I do feel that my tacit knowledge may have elicited shorter responses as I was “preaching to the converted” so to speak - the respondents were aware that they didn’t have to sell the twins to me in any shape or form. However, one thing that really stood out in the interviews was the impact that the twins had seemingly had on the informants’ self-confidence. I wished to pursue this issue further and subsequently asked them if they could jot down some pointers or write a short narrative as to in what fundamental way the genius of John and Edward has affected their lives. One person sent over two pages of information, another three sentences. One promised to send the information to me but never did, despite me appealing to the better side of their nature on several occasions. Another didn’t get in touch at all and consequently, I approached the person who I’d originally planned to interview on my last day in Dublin instead, who, after several reminders, did send me her material at the last minute.

In the course of this thesis, I have used several indirect references but have relied on these (which are in many cases paraphrases) as the person(s) quoting them are deemed to be reliable sources (academics, course literature etc).
Results

Here, I present the results of the different questions, introduce relevant theory and also discuss my own experiences.

Becoming a Jedward fan.

As with life in general, there are some specific markers in the history of Jedward, a few of these being The X Factor in 2009, where their career began, their two consecutive years (2011 & 2012) in the Eurovision Song Contest as entries for Ireland, Celebrity Big Brother (2011) etc. From the observations I've made on twitter and through talking to other fans in person, for many, the tale of how one discovered and became a fan of their idols, appears to be somewhat of a coming of age, love story even.

Deller, in her article entitled “Twittering On: Audience Research and Participation using Twitter” (2011), states that it's usual for reality and talent programmes, such as The X Factor, to trend regularly on twitter (p. 226), not least during the final in 2009, which is interesting to note because Jedward came sixth and therefore weren’t actually in the final itself. One unexpected aspect of the discussion of Jedward on twitter came from the US: some wondered, when confronted with the a name that was unfamiliar but bore resemblance to two of the most popular fictional characters of the time that Jedward may possibly be a blending of the two male figures in Twilight, i.e. Jacob and Edward. The informants below, like myself, had been interested in them from the start and, not surprisingly, are also from the UK:

“It may seem odd to most that a 34 year old, 'head on her shoulders' woman is a fan of Jedward. I first came across Jedward on X Factor and was instantly drawn to them; in a 'I'm not sure what to make of these at all' way. John came across arrogant and their performance was highly amusing but not very good singing-wise. However for the next few weeks I would gawp at the screen not quite believing what I was seeing. I can't even think of a word to describe what I was feeling. Mesmerised? Confused? Did I like them or not?! It was Ghostbusters that ignited my Jedtorch...Pure fun, fun, fun and oodles of energy. Something clicked.”

Here, the issue of age is mentioned. Interestingly, there are two other informants in the same age group but they didn’t mention this fact. One possible reason for this could be to do with the fact that the person above has a partner whereas the other two don’t (the specific issue of age and fandom will be discussed further under the next section “fandom”).

“I liked them from when they were on the X Factor and I just fell in love with them both straight away, I thought they were different, unique, and I just thought they were something different and I've followed them ever since then”

The informant above doesn’t mention if she actually met them at an early stage in their careers whereas the quote below shows us that this person first met them as part of her job:
“I was lucky enough to attend one of the Jedward XF Club PA events in January 2010. I was excited beyond belief at the prospect of not only seeing them perform a few songs but I was also going to MEET THEM. They certainly did not disappoint. Not only were they extremely friendly and welcoming the moment I met them, but we had a few interactions before and after the actual meet & greet and the boys were playful the whole time, which I loved!”

A second article, this time discussing twitter as a technology for audiencing and fandom, (Highfield, Harrington, & Bruns, 2013) takes a closer look at the ESC in 2012 (where Jedward competed for the second time in a row) and trending in Australia in conjunction with the event. The authors note that twitter tends to be used by fandoms in conjunction with such “global” events (my quotation marks). A lot of fans from places outside ESC-competing countries have not only become aware of the competition because of the twins, but also take an active interest in it, so even here, a fairly isolated event has become more popular in the wake of online possibilities. Harrington et al. (2012, in Highfield, Harrington, & Bruns, 2013, p. 316) impose on us the impact of twitter on real time communication, not least in regard to the use of hashtags and how they can be used and structured by viewers and producers alike. Jenkins (2006, p. 63 in Highfield, Harrington, & Bruns, 2013, p. 317) states that hashtags can aid in accruing information as to audience participation on the side of the producers as opposed to the traditional practice of merely looking at the number of those watching. Another aspect of this is the shift back to live audiencing, which on-demand viewing caused to decrease (Wool & Baugman, in Highfield, Harrington, & Bruns, 2013, pp. 317-318).)

Highfield, Harrington, & Bruns, (2013, pp. 131-132) point out that whilst the Jedward fandom were tweeting about their idols, they were also using the #eurovision hashtag which they maintain is important to note and explain as this went one step further in comparison to other artists performing in the 2012 ESC i.e. only Jedward were trending irrespective of the #eurovision hashtag, whereas the hashtag itself was at the heart of the others’ being mentioned in conjunction with it. In other words, Jedward had their own cluster of hashtags whereby the competition itself just happened to be the setting on that particular occasion.

The three informants quoted below had discovered Jedward as part of the Eurovision Song Contest.

"Everything started in 2011. I liked Lena Meyer-Landrut and watched the Eurovision Song Contest and everything about it, about the show and then they were there and they talked to Lena and I really started liking them. And then they sang their song and I liked the way, how they presented it on, on stage. And after that I started watching their You Tube videos and then I was a fan”

Even here, it was before the actual performance that John and Edward had made a lasting impression. The fan below didn’t have to wait long to find out that they were both down to earth and friendly:

"I became a Jedward fan because I saw them on the telly – Eurovision 2011. There was something about them I found just intriguing but I couldn’t put my finger on it and two weeks later they were in my city for, for an awards show so I just went and I was just curious to see what they are in real life, and I had no idea how they were with fans and they were just absolutely lovely and friendly and I didn’t really expect them to talk to me
but they were just like really, like, just like normal guys. So I was just wow. They’re kinda cool. And yeah, rest...and they were invited cause Eurovision got them known well, like all across Europe”

Below, we can see that although the respondent has been a fan in the past, there was something about the twins that caught her attention:

“I’ve always been a person who liked being fan of celebrities that are special in some way, but I can’t remember anyone who influenced me as much as they did. When I first saw them on tv in a Eurovision related show I liked them from the very first moment because they seemed to be different from everyone else on the show. They seemed to just enjoy life, they made crazy jokes and music that I liked. I was interested in them because they didn’t seem to take life too seriously, they joked around and laughed a lot. Compared to the others, their music sounded different, their outfits were different, they were just different and so I became very interested in them from the very first minute I saw them on tv.”

It would appear that a natural progression from seeing the Eurovision performances was to check out Jedward’s You Tube channel, JedwardTV, where there are not only music videos (many of which the twins themselves have made) but also fun sketches and archived Tweetcams/Hangouts.

"I watched Eurovision 2011 and then I decided to check out their Lipstick fan and like music video on You Tube and then I just became their fan and continue watching their videos and...so I follow them on Twitter and like that”

The variation of JedwardTV You Tube content is talked about more here:

“When I watched their videos on YouTube I started to feel connected to them, because I thought we have many things in common: their kind humour, their love to their pets, especially to their birds, their positive attitude to live. I could identify with them and then there were these special traits that I saw in them, that I didn’t have yet but I wanted to learn. They were so much crazier than most people I knew in my everyday life– no matter where they were, they were always themselves, they never stopped laughing, and when someone didn’t like them and was mean, they didn’t seem to care, they always moved on. And there was me who was so shy and could only be crazy around the few people I really trust. I have experiences with bullying because I always have been a little different, too, and I let other people discourage me and get me down. When I saw how they handled other people’s opinions it was the first time that I realised that maybe the people who were mean to me could be wrong with the things they said about me.”

The fans quoted above (Eurovision and You Tube) are northern European, and without deliberately doing so, I realised when transcribing the interviews that I’d inadvertently chosen fans from the two other countries (outside their native Ireland and the UK) where Jedward are probably the most popular, at least when it comes to the number of fans who are active on twitter and those who’ve attended panto the last two seasons. One thing that struck me already here was the fact that the informants were talking about John and Edward being "intriguing" and "unique" but at the same time down to earth and while one person specifically names their song, Lipstick, the only other mention of it is in the actual performance, not the music per se.
Being a Jedward fan.

Apart from citing the answers my respondents gave to this question, I’d like to take a look at basic group psychology and also how this is deemed to work in the more specific setting of fandom.

It’s usual to feel a bit down after special occasions like holidays, for example, but coming down from Planet Jedward can be seen as more extreme for several reasons: one is the sheer amount of adrenalin pumping through your veins during the time you’re waiting for and are with the twins as well as being at an event, such as a concert. The other is the fact that for many of us, we travel long distances, often alone, and it’s only in this specific situation that we spend time with people from places, in places, geographically displaced from our everyday lives: it’s often very intense and very brief. I’ve spoken to others about the weird feeling of asking oneself afterwards “did that (just) really happen?!?” which may be in part the reason why some people don’t consider themselves to have “been there” without getting as many photos as possible.

“Having met them it was as if they’d cast a spell. I NEEDED to see them again! I just wanted to be in the presence of their energy and positiveness. Jedfans often talk about ‘coming down to Planet Earth’ after being on Planet Jedward; I totally relate to this. As happy as my real life is, Planet Jedward is FUN FUN FUN and to have to leave this behind in Ireland or wherever is the worst feeling ever.”

When asked why they were fans of Jedward there were lots of reasons given:

“Because they are always here for their fans, they are always being themselves <sic>, and don’t care what other people are saying, they are always themselves and they do, do whatever they want to do and, yeah, they are just amazing guys!”

Their personalities...

“I have always been in awe of the twins’ work ethic and drive and this is why I hold them in such high regard. I don’t believe they are the most naturally talented when it comes to their vocals, which they are often ridiculed for, but they give their all and more to achieving their dreams. Respect!”

The fact that they work hard and are enthusiastic...

“Because I think they are special people, they do everything the way they like and they don’t listen to anyone else, they don’t listen to anyone’s opinions about them, they don’t care about that… and they go their way. And that’s why they are, they are idols for me.”

That they don’t let anyone put them down...

“Because I think they’re just really nice people, when I met them, they didn’t disappoint me, they were everything I thought they were gonna be, they were just the same people as you could just chat to them and I just got on with them really well and I love being a fan of them!”

That they are down to earth...
“Jedward are such positive role models. They have nothing but encouragement towards their fans, be it egging them on to achieve their dreams, or helping them overcome life’s difficulties. Jedward have taught me there are still good people in the world and that you should embrace your uniqueness!”

And, well, I think the above says it all really - exemplifies what the others have said all in one sentence!

The following informant made the important demarcation of being John and Edward fans: this wasn’t just about their music either, other than included both things they are already involved in, such as acting, as well as things she deemed they would be successful at.

“It’s kind of hard to make that a short answer… I actually would say I’m more a fan of John and Edward than Jedward. Cause, I just like the way they do things, they do it in their own way and they always have like brilliant ideas. No matter if it’s lyrics or it’s videos or like loads of stuff, photos, they come up with amazing stuff so I would probably be a fan as well if they were like directors or if they were like actors or if they tried something else, if they came up with like a clothes brand or like something like that. So I like what they do cause they put so much into everything they do and everything they come up with therefore is like, yeah, just brilliant, they’ve got loads of talent. So if you just, yeah. I think if, if you’re a fan of Jedward you kind of become a fan of them as people as well, at least, that is the way it is for me. It’s not just about like an act but them as artists. And what they do.”

Once again, overall, those interviewed cited the twins themselves as the reason for being a fan of Jedward and not their music per se. Here, I’d like to look more closely at group dynamics as well as adding relevant aspects of football fandom research which struck me as being significant to the experience of fandom as a pop music fan, and more specifically, Jedward. One alternative way of answering this question would of course been to give examples of why Jedward are better than other artists but this seemed to be a foregone conclusion and I’m honestly not sure if this is because I myself am a Jedward fan and therefore “know” that they are or because the persons being interviewed do find the uniqueness they’ve spoken of the reason why Jedward don’t need to be compared with other artists. I would like to propose that this in fact what makes Jedward so popular: not only do they sing good “pop” songs (for want of a better description), but the twins are also multi-talented and well-behaved, they get to know their fans, ask us how things are going with the different projects a lot of us dare to pursue with the encouragement of them. Basically, John and Edward Grimes are among the most caring and genuine celebrities one could ever hope to meet.

I think we’ve got a pretty clear picture as to why these individuals, at least, are fans of Jedward (or should I say, John and Edward?). But why do people join groups and what benefits are there for the individuals in question? Forsyth, in his book on Group Dynamics (2006, p. 22) states that in order to understand the individual, one must study the groups which they are part of. Here, identity is divided into personal identity and social identity. Social Identity Theory seeks to explain how a group (and all that this entails) becomes integrated in one’s social identity and claims that the automatic cognitive processes of social categorisation and identification aid in making this happen (summary of Abrams & Hogg, 2001; Hogg, 2001; Tajfel, 1981; Turner & Onorato, 1999 in Forsyth, 2006, p. 89).

Social identification, in turn leads the group members to adopt traits which are
characteristic of the group. In a snowball-like effect, this leads to more active participation in group activities (presumably due to a heightened feeling of acceptance by said group) which means an internalisation of group norms as well as a greater engagement in working towards realisation of group goals (as exemplified by Cameron, 1999; Jackson & Smith, 1999 and Tropp & Wright, 2001 in Forsyth, 2006, p. 90).

A certain level of depersonalisation takes place as the individual is taken up in the group and by recognising the behaviours of other members as accurate generalisations reflecting the group, internalising even these, one goes through self or auto-stereotyping (Abrams & Hogg, 2001 in Forsyth, 2006, p. 92). Increases in identification with the group also increases the level of self-stereotyping, something which is more likely to occur in minority group members, as social identity salience coupled to group membership is deemed to be greater in such groups. This leads to attitudes, preferences and behaviours which the individual associates with the group being adopted by them to a greater degree (no reference given, in Forsyth, 2006, p. 93).
Views on Fandom

The answers I was given to the question of how the respondents saw the fandom were striking insofar as they were all very different. One informant had the following to say:

“I don’t really have a lot to do with the fandom, I am on Twitter and stuff but I don’t really, I meet a lot of fans through that but I don’t really go on twitter and stuff like that a lot so I’m not really part of a lot of the fandom as such, I never know really what’s going on and stuff on there. Get, get told a lot of it by other people who are on (twitter) who I’m close with”

At the same time, she has mentioned on occasion how surprised she was upon asking someone who maybe not then, but now, is infamous for lying about the whereabouts of the twins in order to put others off the scent (less people to share JedTime with), if she’d come to the right place and received a pronounced glare as an answer rather than a civil yes or no.

A rather diplomatic and somewhat deliberated answer was given in the form of:

“I see the fandom as (pause) many people that come together with…the same interests…and…holds together…to support the boys.”

Whereas I get the feeling that the following may be a schoolbook example of the person giving an answer they think the interviewer was expecting to hear:

“Yeah, but I see the fandom as like a family, a kind of family that you always, there’s always people you can talk to and it’s easy, easy to become friends with everyone so, it’s like a big family - a JedFamily.”

There are, obviously, both positive and negative sides to fandom, something which Anderson (2012) discusses in her work. She also mentions the difficulty in getting her informants to talk about the latter (p. 209). The closest I got was the following:

“I never, ever wanted to be part of a fandom. Never, ever, cause I always thought like it can’t go well with like so many people craving like attention or like whatever from their idols. It only works, in my opinion, with fandoms, that are about fictional characters like the Harry Potter fandom. Cause nobody in the Harry Potter fandom can like go on about how they, how many times they’ve met Harry Potter, or how they get dms from Harry Potter, or how Harry Potter is so much more lovely to them than he is to others. So it’s all kind of equal. Or like with dead artists.”

We exchanged a few sentences about the fact that I’d been reading an article about a psychoanalytic explanation of fans claiming to have spoken to the ghost of Elvis. Afterwards, the person above continued with:

“I think, like I said, I think fandom’s always a tricky thing cause like there’s loads of people who like crave whatever, it’s not like everyone wants the same and some people just want to talk to them about their worries in their lives, there are people who just want a kiss or a hug or a photo or, for all the different reasons, everyone, I think, there’s as many reasons as there is fans. So, I like the twins’ attitude towards that cause they say it’s for everyone, everyone should be welcome. Like, it doesn’t mean that you have to love every other fan,
or you have to be a fan of the fans. But it’s just live and let live. There will always be people that share, share opinions with you, there’s always people that have completely different opinions. But you still try, at least, try to get along, just be there for the twins and for your friends.”

This is actually a very similar stance to the diplomatic one given first, just explained in a slightly different way.

Moving onto the impact fandom has on day-to-day life, Porat (2010) in his article on football fans, maps out three different domains of fandom, one of which I find relevant to my own fandom experience. In his writings on the Emotional-Cognitive Domain, he brings up the subject of “topophilia” (Guilianotti in Porat, 2010, p. 285) which he defines as the “affection toward a particular social place”. My first thought was of the Olympia Theatre in Dublin, host to four seasons of panto and numerous concerts, but actually, more relevant to the theatre itself is “the lane”, officially called Sycamore Street and possibly one of the most sun-deprived, wind tunnel-like streets in the city of Dublin where many a Jedward fan has spent literally hundreds of hours camped out near the stage door. Another parallel I found between Porat’s examples of the emotional-cognitive domain and my experience was the way the game and club within football were treated separately by his informants, in much the way the distinction between Jedward and John and Edward has been marked by mine. One more relevant aspect of the cognitive-emotional domain which I find interesting here is the dissonance fandom causes between the fan and his non-fan friends and family. Porat explains this in the following way:

"explicitly, this appears as a conflict over his <sic> attention and social commitments. Implicitly, this is primarily a contest between components of identity for domination over his identity profile" (Porat, 2010 p. 286).

He gives examples of three alternative solutions to a situation where a fan must choose between their fandom and their family: to choose the fandom, choose the family or diplomatically find a middle-way. In Porat’s study, around 50% chose their fandom and the other two options were both approximately 25% each.

This is an aspect of fandom that Anderson (2012) also discusses, the difference here being that women are still expected to ask rather than tell their partners that they’re going to a fan event, and provide assurances that their children will be taken care of during their absence. She cites feminist studies by Hobson (1982), Gray (1992), Ang (1988) and Brunsdon (1997) (all in Anderson, 2012, p. 152) and the findings they’ve made regarding the total lack of respect for the way women’s popular culture and, by extension, women themselves, is shown. The "addiction" theme as pursued by Brunsdon (ibid) is reflected, albeit in a somewhat humorous way, in Anderson’s work and here she notes the fine line to be found between women struggling to find a space of their own free from the denigrating remarks of male partners and the yoke of domesticity. To add insult to injury, there is also the notion that adult fandom is age-inappropriate, something that women should have "grown out of”, to contend with. Here, Anderson (2001, p. 167) does raise the question of how this double standard relates to masculine egos bruised in the light of (often younger) male artists being given attention by their female counterparts. Ultimately, Anderson wonders “would men be as concerned about these activities in the context of the relationship with their wives?” (p. 154).

I know personally of several examples of similar situations whereby one fan actually lied
to her partner about going to another air terminal to meet up with a friend for a lift home when she arrived back from Ireland together with said boyfriend. She'd discovered that the twins were on a flight with a different carrier and landing almost at the same time as herself at a different terminal and she just had to go see them. And the friend who was driving her home? She'd initially only gone to the airport to see the twins. Subsequently, the couple went through a bit of a rocky patch, her boyfriend stating that her addiction to the twins was far worse than his weekend cocaine habit <sic>. Another fan once explained that her eldest child is now old enough to babysit her younger siblings in the school holidays, so all that was left to do was tell her husband that she was off for a few days.

Rudski, Segal, & Kallen (2009) have actually attempted to study if one can experience the inherent component of addiction (craving, withdrawal, tolerance and problems with social commitments) when "coming down" (own quotation marks) from another media form, namely, Harry Potter and while they concluded that most of the participants didn't meet the prerequisites for a diagnosis of Substance Dependency on DSM IV-TR, they did find an increase in levels of positive affect in the wake of the last Harry Potter book being released. However, there were some flaws in methodology in this study and I found several statements in the article that did give the impression of lack of insight into what substance dependence in reality entails. Once again, my thoughts are brought back to Jensen (in Lewis, 1992) and the comparison given in acceptable levels of engagement depending on whether one's passion is conducted during work or leisure.

Another similarity I noticed between the two fandoms was the way in which Anderson (2012, p. 94) described that when fans meet online or in real life, they discuss what kind of "girl" they are; while maybe not this specific question is asked (after all, there are only the two of them), the questions I chose to ask my informants are usual topics of conversation. Sandvoss (2005, p. 10 in Anderson, 2012, p. 95) talks of "fan texts" whereby idols are used as "self-reflection in which the object of fandom functions as an extension of the self". Anderson goes further to clarify that "the concepts of fan community and fan identity are tightly intertwined, perhaps explaining why active participation in such communities aids in sustainability of lifelong fandom". And this in its turn, can mean that fandom also gives the opportunity of finding lifelong friends. As one informant told me:

“Yes, cause, you meet people who Jed, who've been Jedward fans but you find people with, er, that share other interests as well like, I don't know, travelling, or books or other, other music or whatever, cooking, or whatever, whatever you prefer. That's, that's a really good thing cause it goes beyond the whole Jedward thing.”

I was rather surprised, in retrospect, that the subject of making good friends as part of being in the fandom wasn't addressed more as it's one of the things people tend to write on twitter about - that they have such good JedFriends as opposed to “civilian” friends who in many cases, “don't get the whole Jedward thing” (own quotes). The only other mention was the following:

“The more time I spent in the fandom the more I believe in myself and now my whole world seems to be a much better one! I found many friends because of them and I am very thankful for that.”

Online communication has changed both the quantity of interaction between fans and a
greater sense of connection, and made things so much easier, not least for those unable to participate in those areas of fandom which require physicality, such as those living in remote areas or confined to the home for any number of reasons (noted by Jenkins, 2002, p. 7 in Anderson, 2001, p. 38).

Two other aspects of online fandom which I’ve come in contact with but not stumbled upon in the literature is the possibility social media platforms such as twitter give people like myself the opportunity of “speaking” their native language and keeping in touch with day-to-day events specifically tailored to their interests. I normally seldom get to speak my first language and even by reading online newspapers, may not gain access to articles and information I’m particularly interested in as easily or quickly as through the sites I follow there, most specifically, twitter. Another aspect of this is foreign language practice for those who don’t have say English as their mother tongue. I’ll admit I’m sometimes surprised at the high level of English I’ve experienced both online and IRL when meeting fans from, for example, other non-British/Irish European countries.

And while Anderson (2012, p. 49) has specifically looked at lifelong fandom of Duran Duran, spanning three decades (while the maximum number of years one can have been a Jedward fan is just five and a half), fans of the former as well as the latter have fond memories which they love to recall, discuss and compare with each other. Together with some other fans, Anderson (2012, p. 120) describes the "rite of passage" and "coming of age" aspects of fan tattoos (I myself have a rather discrete J and E with two stars on my right calf). Within the Jedward fandom, the most usual are lyrics or the names of songs, two of the most popular being "Fragile but Unbreakable", a lyric from "Hold the World" or, most recently, "Free Spirit" (the first self-penned and produced Jedward single, which was released on 24th May 2014), usually accompanied with wings.

Durantard.com is apparently a site wholly dedicated to fans who are seen as being a bit too fannish, leading the Duran Duran equivalent of a Star Trek aficionado lifestyle, so to speak. While I’ve been in a situation where fans can quote lines from panto and Jedward’s Big Adventure back and forth at each other, I would say that eating, sleeping, breathing Jedward is usually just seen as being Jedicated. However, on a more personal level, despite the fact that I have a photographic memory, my brain can’t cope with such behaviour for any length of time; I tend to either zoom out or get incredibly confused.

Due to the fact that, where possible, the twins always have time to get to know fans and their lives, it’s difficult to say whether there is a Jedward fandom elite on par with the one Anderson (2012) describes, but there were previously a large number of Irish fans who obviously got to see the twins more often at the airport, radio/tv stations, tours etc. These were known as “regulars”, but I’m not sure how many remain as this did appear to be a predominantly young fan base.

I’ve mentioned previously that I see my age as not necessarily being a negative thing insofar as my choice of subject to study. Anderson (2012, pp. 176-177) touches upon the issue of sexual banter about band members but does point out that this only takes place in "safe" situations, where it's deemed acceptable because you know the people who are privy to your thoughts. However, there is a distinct difference between the demographics of the idols themselves here; John and Edward are 23 years old, this meaning that any open comments by "paedo" fans (i.e. over the approximate age of say 29) is frowned upon. Does this stop older fans from joking about the (obvious – we may be more likely to wear glasses, but we’re not blind) attractiveness of the twins? Not always, no. We just do
it more privately. Anderson (2012, p. 177) suggests that this can be seen as the female equivalent of male locker room behaviour and she has a valid point in stating that this is an forum for female pop fans to carve and spread out into their own space without male interference or input.

For others, living a civilian life and having a fandom life in secret, can be seen as an exciting, if somewhat guilty, pleasure. I do sometimes find myself laughing at how shocked people I work with would be if they actually knew what I get up to on my little jaunts to Ireland...

Anderson (2012), quite rightly, takes up the subject of what is deemed to be acceptable behaviour, something which obviously is not universal between fandoms. There are some very competitive fans and sometimes drama or problems are created for the most mundane or far-fetched (and unbelievable) reasons. On occasion, this is directed towards the twins or their mother. As in the case of soap opera fans believing they can fare better as scriptwriters than those who do so professionally (Fiske, in Lewis, 1992, p. 40), so is the case when it comes to managing Jedward’s career. As well as what they should do, who they should tweet, who they should be friends with and basically how they should lead their lives. Or simply spamming for a direct message on twitter because they feel they “must have forgotten about me now you no longer care about your fans” (or words to that effect).

Being a fandom "insider" means that one is often only then privy to the jealousy and sometimes despicable behaviour aimed at fellow fans and on occasion, even the twins themselves. Two fan friends were incensed one night after panto last year because they’d witnessed John throwing a rose to one of the girls in the audience whereby the fan in front had grabbed it, pulled the head off and then tossed the rest of it to who it was intended for. On another occasion, I happened to be in the lane (where else?) when one particular small but very passively-aggressively verbal and highly visible group of fans were described by another fan as "dementors" (as of Harry Potter fame), sucking the life out of everyone as they walked past, which was very apt given the background of the situation. Actually, I did once lose my temper on twitter and ultimately told someone that in my professional opinion they needed psychological help. Of course, this had to be on the very day the twins later went on Twitter strike until there was "peace on Planet Jedward". Since then, I've kept my mouth shut.

With the arrival of the internet around 20 years ago, fandom interaction changed, bringing so called flaming and cyberbullying to the fore. In the case of the latter, other social media platforms are sometimes used as instruments to speak out about and possibly attempt to counteract the effects on self-esteem of bullying either IRL or online. Much like Milgram’s obedience to authority and physical (non-) proximity between “teacher” and “pupil”, internet gives us something to hide behind, to fire off missiles at (often common) targets, far, far away from ourselves. The twins themselves have spoken out about the issue of bullying and are very supportive of those going through the same thing. They are also prime examples that just because someone is bullied, that doesn’t mean they’re a lesser person or not capable of succeeding in life.

Another aspect of online fandom is the ease at which fan fiction can now be attained and spread, in both cases, anonymously if one so prefers. I wouldn’t say that there is a lot of fan fiction within the Jedward fandom but I’m aware of two girls that I currently follow (one from The Netherlands and the other from the UK) who regularly write fan fiction of
the romantic but also adventurous type (for example, the twins save each other and/or girl from extreme events or bullies or have special powers) and they’re extremely well-written, entertaining and actually rather addictive! Previously, there’s been a lot of twincest with both photoshopped depictions and fan fiction of (obviously) sexual nature on both tumblr and twitter, but this appears to have either dissipated or gone underground.

Apparently, an official Duran Duran messaging board was closed down due to the negativity it bred and when Anderson (2012, p. 194) finally found someone willing to speak to her about this topic, she was informed that it was a question of the same (single) number of individuals causing a breakdown of the new forum. One anonymous account which was previously active on twitter is ”More Jed Secrets” (I was apparently either not active in the fandom or blissfully unaware of the existence of a ”Jed Secrets”) combining the most incredulous and petty accusations aimed at both the twins and fellow fans, several bordering on libel. When I checked the account on 30th December 2014, the last post was from June (I’ve never followed the account nor read its contents at length because it made me quite cross) but interestingly, the last post, a twitlonger, was also very passive-aggressive in nature: apparently, fewer secrets had been submitted and their content had changed from positive to negative, this was explained as a reflection of the fandom as a whole and the fact that nothing was happening with the twins. But the person posting this wanted to thank the 10 co-bloggers for making the site work (it was on tumblr too) for the past 2 ½ years. Mmm…

There has also been a fair amount of jealousy and hate levelled at Tara Reid, not least when the twins arrived back in Dublin together with Tara and went ”VIP” from the airport and the fans who were waiting weren’t very happy to find that they’d left out the back, so to speak.

Once again, it may be the supposed wisdom of my years, but I’m still of the opinion that respect is an important issue in fandom, as well as the notion of not biting the hand that feeds (- your ego, identity, self-confidence etc). An amusing facet of the jet stone of hate is the amount of different people, journalists and ignorados alike, who make negative remarks about Jedward and, more often than not, their fans, only to be bombarded by a barrage of positivity on behalf of individuals in the fandom; so much so in fact, that it’s not entirely unusual to read of those in the firing line warning other of the (online) dangers of making off-the-cuff remarks about Jedward. Unsurprisingly, these are often stereotypical comments insulting the twins and the female teenagers who are supposedly their (sole) fans. An anecdote here is when, in the middle of an ongoing panto performance, Edward popped his head out the stage door and a guy walking past shouted something along the lines of ”fucking Jedward”, whereby Edward quickly retorted ”I’m not the one carrying a sales bag!” (or something to that effect) and jumped in again. Personally, I found this very succinct.

Anderson (2012, pp. 187-188) diplomatically explains what I call fandom politics in the following way:

“the reasons tensions escalate, particularly online, is because fans are so emotionally invested in their fandom that their community (and their place in it) is of great value to them, and, in fact, they often rely on it for their own validation”
Being round the twins.

“Er, my experience with the twins have been good, why, they are always so nice and, and they always make me really happy and make me feel really confident and loved for who I am, so all experience with them is actually amazing.”

This is quite a straightforward statement really: they treat me with respect and that makes me feel good about myself.

“Oh, I just love it, like I said, I just love, they bring out a buzz in me and I just love it, I feel all happy that, that, when I see them and stuff, I just love it, just love meeting them and, and spending a little bit of time with them and stuff and watching them, just love it.”

Here we get to hear about the adrenalin rush I mentioned earlier. And while I don’t agree that fandom is an addiction in itself, I do realise that the mechanisms behind these surges can lead people to pursue more and more of the same, just as some people get high on the rush of working out.

The informant quoted below goes into the nuances of mood that we don’t always associate with celebrities, probably because we don’t get to be around them often or long enough to notice. At the same time, in my honest opinion, if we did spend a lot of time with them, it might not be quite as exciting. Or (and I am speaking for myself here), we’d start to notice those irritating habits that we all have, and be like, “stop!”.

“Yeah, I think it always depends on like the situation: the first time they were at, it was 2011, they were, they, they had this image of being super-hyper and energetic and they are energetic of course but they also can be quite calm. So depending on the situation there’s loads of people, there’s kind of a mob or if there’s like just a few fans, if it’s in the morning, in the evening, before a show, after the show, it’s always different. Cause they are just like other people, they have moments when they are just like really excited and they’ve got moments when they’re just like, like rather calm and like, chilled out. So, yeah, but they always make an effort to make people like, to make many people happy and I sometimes wonder, it must be rather tricky for them too cause there’s always so many people that want something off them and they don’t have like time and, to do everything for everyone all the time cause if they would, they would spend like two hours on stage and ten hours in the Lane for example. That just can’t, can’t work. They, they do like loads like so much more than many other artists. But, er, yeah. They just, I think they, they really make an effort to make as many people happy as possible, er, like, meeting them and like online, like replying or retweeting or favouriting or whatever it is these days these young people do. Yeah, but, er, yeah, it’s always still, it’s always still a special occasion to meet them and it will probably always be just cause they’re as beautiful, just like interesting.”

“They are very, very lovely and very nice to everyone they see and I think it’s difficult to them to see everyone and to make everyone happy but they try their very best and they’re good at it.”

The last two excerpts bring up the issue of expectations constantly placed on the twins to spend time with their fans and maybe it is here that the focus on John and Edward rather than Jedward is at its pinnacle. Amongst much controversy, the meet and greet for fans at panto were discontinued the last season. The panto season is very hectic one for the
whole cast, with two shows of almost three hours (including break) daily beginning in the middle of December and continuing to the Sunday after New Year with only Christmas Eve and Christmas Day off. Add meet and greets after each performance, as well as the time spent with fans in the lane, that’s a lot of hours of gruelling work, which, frankly didn’t bring in that much money, if one is to believe the twins themselves. In order to get a meet and greet, one had to email the production company who would then send a confirmation closer to the event, with a date and time.

However, not everyone knew how to go about this and a lot of fans were cagey about spreading the information as they would have less chance of being granted one, the more that applied at the same time as one could be ostracised for spreading the details too. Bearing in mind that I’ve heard fans say that they’d tell the twins when they wanted to be put on the list and that some were in and out of there almost every day, I can’t really blame them for wanting to change things. At the same time, I think most people who had sent emails enquiring about them, should have been contacted by the production team in charge and told what was happening last season. It now costs on average 75 euros for a meet and greet or soundcheck ticket but the money is usually given to charity. These are a lot more personal and a damn sight cheaper than most major artists but even here, it’s usually only those with the money to travel in the first place who can buy them and I fear that a lot of foreign fans are no longer prepared to travel great distances without a chance of seeing the twins close up.

Now I’d like to take a closer look at the role of John and Edward themselves. While reviewing the literature, I’ve come upon Bass’ (1997) concept of Transformational Leadership and while this model is most often applied to managers in the field of business, I feel that in coupled with the way respondents have all brought up how John and Edward have helped them through difficulties and/or aided in forming and boosting their self-esteem, this could be a highly relevant application of Transformational Leadership Theory.

Forsyth (2006, p. 403) sums up the theory as follows:

Transformational Leadership is a "charismatic, inspiring method of leading others that often includes heightening followers' motivation, confidence and satisfaction, uniting them in the pursuit of shared, challenging goals and changing their beliefs, values and needs"

The twins have told their followers that if they’re uncertain about something to ask themselves "what would Jedward do?” and while this is in no way an original statement, it does give food for thought. I’ve attempted to put the definition above into practical examples and came up with the following:

Jedward leadership is a charismatic, inspiring method of leading fans that often includes heightening twitter followers' motivation (to succeed in life – school, career, relationships, dreams, ambitions) confidence (and self-esteem) and satisfaction (don't try to fit in when you were born to stick out), uniting them in the pursuit of shared (Planet Jedward), challenging goals (always do your best, let's do this & Jed we can!) and changing their beliefs, values and needs (once again – believe in yourself, don't allow bullies to get you down. And don't forget to download our new single).

Bass explained that transformational leadership and charisma go hand-in-hand and that
transformational leaders are usually consequential in their behaviour, often seeing the leading of followers in a transactional way, but go beyond this: their self-confidence and determination also infect their followers via the way they communicate with them in an expressive and exuberant way (Waldman, Bass & Yammarino, 1990; Yammarino & Bass, 1990 in Forsyth, 2006, p. 403). Whilst we tend to associate the expression “charismatic leaders” with manipulation of the negative kind (sect leaders often being described in this way, for example), as we’ve seen, John and Edward don’t only have this quality, they are very personal in their interactions with fans.

Transformational leadership, then, has four inherent components. In order to be effective and be perceived as believable and reliable, transformational leaders use idealised influence in the form of accentuating issues such as trust, conviction, ethics and commitment to these. The twins post words of wisdom on twitter as well as writing strong, empowering lyrics as Free Spirit (inspired by ice skater Gracie Gold) tells us

_Nothing can get her down,_
_No barriers can stop her now,_
_She’s got the power in her heart,_
_The girl’s a Free Spirit_  

_When it comes to love, she takes that chance,_
_You won’t ever see her giving up,_
_She lives in the moment, doesn’t need to impress,_
_The girl’s a Free Spirit_  

_Free Spirit, written and produced by John Grimes and Edward Grimes © 2014 Jedward_

Transformational leaders also envisage the future and convey this in terms of standards to be achieved as well as encouraging and promoting optimism via inspirational motivation (Let’s do this! Jed we can!). The third key to the source of social power in transformational leaders is that of intellectual stimulance whereby renewal of both theory and practice within the situational context are utilised and airing of new ideas encouraged. The twins ask for input from fans and often use this in different ways. One example was when they asked for fans to mail them their stories as to how being a fan had changed their lives. One fan was had gone through a kidney transplant and vowed that the support of the twins saw her through it. Transformational leaders are aware of their followers’ presence, treating them personally and as individuals as well as helping them to evolve and become the best they possibly can by way of individualised consideration. Through “seeing” fans and remembering their personal information, they give fans something to aspire to, to work for and believe in.

_Effectivity in all group situations is assured when transformational leaders use the four components listed above, as well as affecting levels of productivity from followers favourably. By aiding and enabling their followers to see optimistically to the future, both in terms of one's own development as well as belief in oneself and the group, (Conger, 1999 in Forsyth, 2006, p. 403), charismatic leaders are deemed to be more effective than merely transactional ones, basically irrespective of cultural setting, which may explain the universality of John and Edward._


How being a Jedward fan has changed my life.

This was the question that I added to the four that I’d started out with after picking up on how informants brought up the subject both non-instigated on my part and independently of each other. Before introducing what my informants had to say on the subject, I’ll take a look at an article published less than two years ago, where fans are once more seen as being gullible and easily manipulated. On this occasion, it is Jedward as a brand (and the fact that they are packaged as twins) and, by association, their professional status as artists which is being questioned.

In the introduction of Celebrity Forum Bennett (2013) states: “Neville & Neville claim Jedward’s celebrity work is not so much in the carefully crafted mania of Jedward’s onstage performances but in the willingness to undergo an erasure of their individual selves in learning the new modes of self-presentation required of celebrity”. In said article, Neville & Neville “The Spectacle of Twinship in Jedward” (2013) appear to take the stance (albeit not stating it straight out), that Jedward, both as twins and more specifically as John and Edward Grimes, were manufactured into a commercially viable product. One reason why I find this offensive is not so much that people in the early days seemed so overwhelmed by the concept of the twins being almost inseparable, but of the cynicism projected by such questioning of their authenticity as personalities and performers and thereby fuelling the consequential backlash of this unbelievably insular media-produced myth which still haunts them to this day. By being shoved into the limelight of controversy, who wouldn’t turn to their best friend who is moreover experiencing the exact same thing? Not only this, but there were there several errors in Neville & Neville’s article, which have only helped in putting across an even more distorted image.

What the authors seem to completely miss is that John and Edward have been twins from birth (!), they didn’t suddenly discover each other in 2009. And as hundreds of people will attest to, they are exactly the same when it comes to talking rapidly and as randomly offstage as on. I would even go so far as to say that their professionalism and stage presence are in some respects more controlled than when you’re having a chat with them about something as ordinary as Edward mistaking Swedish candles for sweets (and almost eating them).

The point I’m making here, in my humble opinion, is that this label was manufactured outside and above the heads of the twins, the myth of Jedward preceeding almost all of the things they have been attributed to after the fact. And as a final reminder, I’d like to just state the following: on 16th October 2014, John and Edward Grimes turned 23.

This leads to the question: have we all been fooled? What if John and Edward are mindless puppets, merely doing what they are told by media moguls? These statements, once again, bear witness to the low standing in society that is aimed at “boyband” artists and fans alike: there is presumed to be no substance to the artists themselves, let alone talent, other than that of being manager/record label puppets who are out to manipulate guillless fans into buying cheap merchandise. But as Fiske points out: “fans are amongst the most discriminating and selective of all formations of the people” (in Lewis, 1992, p. 48).

And as an extension of this, Anderson discusses how the inverted roles of artist and fan in
pop music have caused controversy between academics, some seeing this as a sign of female liberation, others not very keen on the suggestion that by objectifying the male pop star, fans are creating empowerment (Anderson, 2012 pp. 139-141).

Bandura (1994) defines self-efficacy as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives”.

Those who trust in their ability to execute difficult tasks are also more likely to set themselves higher goals and aspirations as well as following them through and sticking with them when the going gets tough. When things don’t work out, they don’t perceive this as harshly as those with lower levels of self-efficacy, other than pursue their goals (even when these are potentially threatening to their self-efficacy levels) with zeal and enthusiasm, determined that they will be able to control the outcome (Bandura, 1994).

The comment below touches upon the closeness of the twins as well as not taking their fans for granted:

“I think the genius of John and Edward is that they go their own way. They see the positive feedback of their fans, keep moving in the direction they think is right independently. They are there for each other and support each other as best friends and brothers. And also they are thankful for their fans’ support. They remember our names and listen to our stories. They treat every single fan with so much respect and give us as much attention as possible for them.”

There are four forms of influence which in their turn affect how people perceive their self-efficacy. The most effective of these is the handling different situations (“owning” them, to use a modern turn of phrase), as success is the building block of personal self-efficacy. By not always succeeding, on the other hand, we learn that most realisations of goals require that one perseveres and by continuing in one’s efforts, we in turn gain more trust in our ability and thus tend to quickly bounce back from eventual setbacks. Failure is viewed as something one can avoid in future by using more effort to learn the skills required to succeed, not a flaw or shortcoming on the part of us as individuals (that is, something inherent) other than something we can put more effort into mastering (Bandura, 1994).

And how one positive aspect in a person’s life can spill into others is exemplified below:

“The twins changed my life as in they changed my outlook on life. Theirs is such a positive one and it made me see a lot of things in a different, more positive, light. John and Edward always find the positive in everything and inspire me to do the same. I find lots of their tweets motivational and like that they’re all about sharing and spreading love. Their message is such a lovely one, a breath of fresh air in today’s society and I wish a lot of people would take a leaf out of their book. They’re two of the kindest people I’ve ever met and help making the world a better place.”

I think the enthusiasm and not least, positivity this person embraces, bears witness to how much her life has been changed, as is the same with the following:
and if someone told them things like their hair looked strange or laughed about their teddybear-shoes it didn't matter – they kept going the way THEY liked. They were the ones who inspired me to change my way of thinking. Don’t try to fit in, if you were born to stand out", that’s what I learned on Planet Jedward, that’s what they taught me. And I stopped trying to fit in everywhere and to be like people wanted me to be. John and Edward showed me that it was good to be no one else than myself and that I shouldn’t listen to anyone else. It was the first time that I started believing in myself: I even felt confident enough to go to a musical casting - although people around me didn’t want me to - and ended up being a main character, because John and Edward helped me to make this important step.

Above, we have a specific example of how a fan has put the encouragement given by John and Edward into practice: not only did she not let others tell her she couldn’t do it, she got the lead role!

Social models provide another source of development and sustenance of self-efficacy. If a person we identify with is seen to be succeeding, we in turn believe that we are able of achieving greater things. Note, however, that this also works conversely. Bandar (1994) states the following:

“Through their behaviour and expressed ways of thinking, competent models transmit knowledge and teach observers effective skills and strategies for managing environmental demands”

“They started going their very own way now by producing their own songs which have empowering messages and help us fans to go through live with an positive attitude like theirs. They tell us to be free spirits, to be independent and to enjoy life. They teach us so much while they show us how much fun life can be, without alcohol and parties, just by following your dreams and enjoying every minute.”

The fact that the twins are positive role models is attested to above.

Social persuasion is another factor which boosts self-efficacy, albeit not quite as effectively as the above. In fact, given to those who don’t believe in themselves, it can fall flat on its face, so to speak, because even if a person internalises the message that they can achieve something, as soon as they come up against any kind of resistance, this will only serve to confirm their original beliefs. We can see here that both high and low levels of self-efficacy can be somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy (Bandura, 1994).

Bandura (1994) states that there is more to the effective development of self-efficacy than simply boosting others via social persuasion: social models evaluate success by giving encouragement to those reaching their goals, rather than flaunting their own mastery. The “huge” & “positive”influence of the twins is in line with the other statements we’ve heard:

“I think John and Edward are very special persons and I think without them my life would be different now. As my idols they have a huge influence on my attitudes to life and the way they influence me seems very positive to me.”

Self-confidence is specifically mentioned in the excerpt below:
“I’ve become much more happier now, I’m much more self-confident and like, I like myself much, like much more now and I believe in myself more and I don’t care what people are saying anymore. I dare to be myself.”

One fan tells us:

“Before I knew John and Edward I always tried my best to be the way other people wanted me to be and to do what they wanted me to do. I didn’t have an own opinion and believed that the others know what’s right or wrong for me. John and Edward made me reflect on it by not caring what other people say and now after almost four years of being in the fandom, I do have an own opinion and I learned that just because someone says something, it doesn’t have to be true. John and Edward are perfect to me, and I see how much hate they’re getting everyday although they are lovely persons. I learned how different opinions can be and that there is no right and now wrong and that everyone should live the way they like and they made me stop trying to live the way other people want me to live, but the way I am happy and because of them I’m a much happier person now.”

Note that even here, the subject of hate (covered in the fandom section above) is mentioned.

Through favourable affect and the positive interpretation of physical responses, stress is not necessarily reduced but perceived as something that the individual is capable of handling or coping with. This more functional coping mechanisms are developed and implemented in times of stress, rather than resorting to avoidance and fear. (Bandura, 1994). I’ve sometimes reflected upon how a fast heart beat and butterflies in my stomach when around the twins are the exact same sensations as when sitting in the dentist’s waiting room, but are responded to in completely different ways.

There are four efficacy activated processes, the first of these being cognitive. Motivational processes (these too cognitively generated) are explained in the theories of goal, attribution and expectancy-value respectively. Bandura (1994) has the following to say on motivation:

“Motivation based on goals or personal standards is governed by three types of self-influence and they include self-satisfying and self-dissatisfying reactions to one’s performance, perceived self-efficacy for goal attainment, and readjustment of personal goals based on one’s progress”

The third of these processes is affective and basically means that by having an inherent belief in one’s ability to control circumstances, this acts as a buffer against a negative thought pattern and when negative thoughts do pop up (which they will), we find it easier to discount them because they are dissonant with the belief we have in ourselves. This in turn leads to lower levels of anxiety, stress. Basically, this belief in having control and being able to cope works on several different levels when it comes to our heath.

The choices we make during our lifetime coupled with the challenges we undertake are examples of selection processes dominated by our level of self-efficacy. There are even benefits of overestimating our ability: greater endurance, aspiring to higher goals, as well as daring to start innovative projects that those with lower levels of self-efficacy would
deem as being unfeasible ventures (moving into singer-songwriting, own label and production of music - they also believed in their ability to take the very first step by auditioning for the X Factor).

And people with high levels of self-efficacy coming together as a group pool their positive resources to make very effective teams for exactly the same reasons as explained above pertaining to the individual. another form of social model are in fact peers; being interested in the same things leads to mutual investigation in the attainment of shared goals, in much the same way as larger groups are deemed to (Bandura, 1994). JedFriends are mentioned again below:

“*It’s a huge part of my life and I love it because it makes me happy to see what they do and it is fun to support them I think. They changed my life in some way because before I knew them I was much more shy, and seeing how self-confident they are helped me to get more self-confident myself. And I met many new people because of them. Good friends.*”

According to Stevenson (2011, in Anderson, 2012, p. 79) although Bowie fans tended to look to their idols during difficult times in their lives, he states that this was only true for adolescent females. Anderson (2012) and myself have found this to be true even for the adult female fan. Thompson (1995, p. 219 in Anderson, 2012, p. 99) calls this non-reciprocal intimacy at a distance but in the modern age of online communication or for those having regular contact with the twins, this transcends simply thinking of one’s idol to see you through negative events and again, this can work by either the encouragement given by John and Edward (when I said I’d never work again and they found out I’d been to uni, they kept coming forward and saying “SEVEN YEARS BETH! SEVEN YEARS!” (I originally studied for seven years) or the messages conveyed in the lyrics of their own-penned songs.

Without giving specifics, we hear that the following fan has been helped by meeting John and Edward (alluding to real life contact with her idols), boosting her confidence:

“*Meeting John and Edward? A lot because like they did, they did help me a lot back at the start when they were on the X Factor n stuff, they really did help me so, they brought a lot of confidence out in me and they just, they’ve helped me an awful lot, so I’m really glad that I got to meet them and stuff because they have had a big impact on my life. So, they’ve helped me a lot.*”

Maybe this is one aspect of fandom that is a product of modern society, that is, when traditional social networks such as family and faith are no longer as strong as the spotlight aimed at online communication and belief in oneself rather than a non-human deity, fandom aids us in solving life’s problems or at least, enjoying it a lot better?

Having undertaken the research and work that has gone into this thesis, I find it hard to argue that those I interviewed bear any resemblance to how fans have been and still are portrayed as they one by one bear witness to what I have chosen to call the genius of John and Edward and how their lives have been changed in fundamental ways. By this I mean that they are neither fanatical, delusional or asocial individuals who have nothing else in their life but the twins.

I would say that in my opinion, they seem to have internalised the messages given by
John and Edward and woven them into their identities, aiding them in functioning at a greater level and forming close bonds both within and outside fandom, believing in themselves and what they are capable of achieving. And once again, this is applicable to all fans, irrespective of age, nationality or educational level. It applies to us all. I think John and Edward not only tell their own story, but instill in us their tale of empowerment with the following:

I've been through struggles  
Dodged a lot thrown at me  
Some people in the world  
Don't want you to succeed  
I spotted your true colours  
I saw through the disguise  
I figured you're a user  
You're only full of lies

Life is never easy  
Don't ever pack it in  
Deal with all the highs and lows  
Don't let them say you can't  
You've come out of the dark  
Found the courage within  
Now I know for a fact  
I can face anything

I'm setting free my inner wolf  
I will be ferocious  
And I'm setting free my inner tiger  
I will be ferocious  
And I'm setting free my inner wolf  
I will be ferocious  
And I'm setting free my inner tiger  
I will be ferocious

Ferocious, written and produced by John Grimes and Edward Grimes © 2014 Jedward
Summary

In this thesis, I have shown how my informants became Jedward fans (the X Factor and Eurovision Song Contest being the two mentioned by my informants) as well as why they have stayed fans. I have also shown why they are fans of Jedward: they have told of the way they love the uniqueness of John and Edward, the way they make them feel - including being spellbound.

Looking further as to how the respondents see the fandom, I’ve concluded that there are varying opinions and, as others (for example Anderson, 2012) have found, there are both positive and negative sides to fandom life.

All describe their experiences of being round the twins as a very special experience, and I’ve connected the twins' way of treating the fans with Bass’ (1997) theory of Transformational Leadership.

As to the additional question of in what way being a fan has changed these fans’ lives, we have seen testimonies stating that they feel empowered, their self-confidence has increased and that they have dared to do things they previously believe they could as well as seeing that they basically are very happy with being Jedward fans.

I would suggest the above has adequately answered my original question of whether other fans see and experience John and Edward Grimes in the same way as I do and more specifically that my subsequent five questions have been answered satisfactorily.

Final Comments

There are two basic things that have flowed like a red thread through this thesis: on the micro-level, we have the way fans pay homage to their idols and how they’ve enriched their lives, whilst on the other, macro-level, we see that the subject of fandom, both from media and academia, has been equated with the pathological, the immature, the female.

Those I interviewed have all experienced being a fan as something positive that has enhanced and even changed their lives in a fundamental way. At the same time, John and Edward (as opposed to "merely" Jedward) and their personal traits, their transformational leadership, seems to have played a lot bigger part in this than the music for which they are most well known.

However, being an older fan myself, even if it isn’t a reconnection with a band from my teens, as in the case of several of Anderson’s as well as Stevenson’s David Bowie fans (in Anderson, 2012, p. 62), I’ve found myself embracing and enjoying a passion, a force, an energy and such a surge of all-consuming love and excitement that I never even dreamed of experiencing as my younger fan self. One of Anderson’s informants gives this rekindled passion that a lot of fans do relive "Inner Teen Syndrome" (p. 78) and despite some wanting to bring Bourdieu's concept of social ageing (Anderson, p. 106) into the framework to put the mockers on things, I still think that for a lot of us, this may be because we’ve finally learned and/or allowed ourselves to let go; rather than teenage
screams being a preparation for childbirth, maybe, just maybe, the indignities of giving birth on the one hand, coupled with the surge of oxytocin re-experienced by love for those eliciting them on the other, said screams may in fact be a preparation for fandom in later life! (my answer to the comment in Lewis, 1992, about scream preparing fans for childbirth).

I have reflected upon if my findings may be due to the fact that I myself am a fan and not just random person who asked people if they could answer a few questions about being a fan. What I mean here is that this doesn’t necessarily mean that Jedward’s music is any less important other than my respondents may have worked out I love the music already. And, in retrospect, I have to admit, maybe I should have been specific and asked what their favourite song or lyric is and why, rather than assuming that because I was asking fans about a (predominantly) music artist, this would be the main focus of subsequent replies.

I do however, on the whole, feel that being an insider has been to my advantage: those interviewed or writing narratives have been able to express things without the researcher placing her own prejudices and misconceptions about fandom on them, a point which I’m soon to elaborate on. A non-fan may have completely ignored the important messages conveyed in regards to the competition that goes on for the twins’ attention and how this is rationalised because basically, until 2013, anyone wishing to meet John and Edward could simply turn up at an airport, recording studio, hotel etc and get to spend time with them – photos, a chat etc. However, during the last 18 months this has changed and there are different theories as to who is to “blame”. To be honest, I’m not sure that’s the right way to approach the question: as can be seen throughout, John and Edward have invested a hell of a lot of time and effort into their fans and our personal lives. Rather than squabbling and making accusations, whether they be aimed at John and Edward, their mother or each other, we need to let go of the 17 year old boys who bounced into our lives and admire the twenty-something beautiful young men who right now are embarking on possibly the most important reinvention in their career. The twins have a eclectic fan base when it comes to factors such as age, geographic location and level of education. They have also worked within a variety of areas within the entertainment industry and with the introduction of their own music, are evolving, day by day. #TeamJedward forever.
Suggested areas of future research

As one final word, I'd like to briefly discuss potential aspects of this thesis which could be investigated in future work. Anderson (2012, p. 190) quotes Harrington & Bielby (2010, p. 444) as an exemplification of the fact that relatively little research has been done on adult fans and fandom as a whole.

Another obvious contender would be looking into how the theory of transformational leadership has been employed by John and Edward and what specific results this has led to. Obviously, I would love to be given the opportunity to sit down and discuss with the twins what they think of this thesis and its contents. Maybe they could come up with a suggestion as to what we academics should be looking at?

Dixon (2011) calls for a meso-level approach to studying fans (albeit football fans) and presents arguments indicating that Giddens Structuration Theory may aid us in going "the third way". He states that the "mundane---everyday practice" (p. 280) of fandom can be effectively studied by application of Giddens said theory without having to go down the lines of structure and agency ruling each other out (p. 281).

What I've accomplished here may have helped a tiny bit in answering the questions of what, who and why, but as far as the theory of Fandom-Induced Self-Efficacy goes, (and in line with the above), it would be interesting to try and answer the question of how and in what far-reaching areas of life fandom and its process of internalisation reaches.
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NB: no page numbers are given in this link

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2013.750127


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http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2013.750129


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Appendix 1: My Jedward Story

I’ve never written this down at one sitting other than mentioned bits of it to the twins either face-to-face or in letters. So, after spending time getting to hear what my fellow JedFans had to say on the subject, maybe it’s time for me to tell my Jedward story…

How did you become a Jedward fan?

Some four and a half years ago, I read an article in Heat magazine about a pair of Irish twins who were competing in X Factor. During the autumn of 2009 I was backwards and forwards to the UK and watched avidly, finding John and Edward Grimes to be both entertaining and incredibly sweet. Having internalised the message that women of my age weren’t supposed to be avid about, well, a lot of things, and in conjunction with being ill, I kept my fangirling a secret, following the twins’ career through celeb magazines.

I was in Kista the week after the twins had been there and I was a bit annoyed that I’d missed them but I didn’t really think much more about it as there was a LOT going on in my life at that time. But as usual, I watched the programme presenting the different countries that were competing in the Eurovision and was really pleased when I found out the twins were representing Ireland that year. I’d been living away from home but when I found out about Celebrity Big Brother, I started spending more and more time there watching one episode after another. And then they were here in Linköping, of all places, in concert in January 2012. That was the same day I finally opened a twitter account. And the rest, as they say, is history!

Why did you become a fan of Jedward?

I just fell in love with them the first time I saw them on X Factor - they were so sweet, they gave it their all and had to put up with people making stupid comments. I liked their music when the second album came out too (the first was covers and I’ve never been a very big fan of some of the songs that were on that, though I do love “Ice, Ice Baby/Under Pressure maybe because that’s one of the first songs I heard them singing). I wish I’d been more active as a fan earlier but deep down I know, there’s no way I could have - I was too ill to do anything really. But once I decided to try and turn my life around, they’ve been with me all the way - first from afar and then, after meeting them, for real, so to speak. They know they’ve saved my life because I’ve told them.

How do you see the fandom?

To be honest, there are times when I’m on twitter and think “with fans like that, who needs enemies?!?”. But then I think of all the hours I’ve spent in the lane and around Dublin hanging out, talking, singing, having a laugh, all the in-jokes we have within the fandom and how well I’ve got to know some people, and I wouldn’t change it for the world. Just knowing that if I needed to talk to someone, there’s always someone there on the other
end of the, erm, iPad - we have iMsg contact details some of us too. I’ve met some really
good friends and knowing that they get you is a blessing in itself - there aren’t that many
JedFans round here! I’ve sometimes been in the lane and thought “oh my god - people
are actually coming up to me to talk!” It’s brilliant. My self-confidence is always at a high
after meeting the twins or going to see them. A lot of people say they feel like shit after
because they have to go back to real life whereas I feel great because I take the
memories with me and they give me something to think about. Everybody else can be
going on about the weather and I’m thinking “bugger the weather! we had a right laugh
singing along to Leigh Luscious in the lane when it was windy, raining and cold! Na, na,
na, nana, nana, na na na na naaaaaa (= my singing in the lane)”.

What’s your experience of being round the twins?

Unbelievable! I stand completely mesmerised when they are around. I must look like a
right idiot because I just (smiles like a Cheshire cat and signs). They are so SWEET! I just
want to hug them and talk to them and watch them and wrap them up and take them
home! They are so patient, if it’s not completely mobbed, they’ll take the time to talk to
you, sometimes they’ll come through the mob to give you a hug if they’ve not seen you
for a long time. And they always have time to exchange a few sentences, no matter how
many people there are. I prefer to speak to them than get loads of photos - I never
remember having the pics taken because I’m too busy wondering if I’m wearing a woolly
hat or what my hair looks like and you can’t actually see them when you take a photo
whereas if you have a little chat, you get to connect. Maybe it’s just me that’s like that or
maybe it’s because I’m a bit older, I’ve not grown up in the internet era, so to speak. Or it
could also be that I don’t get to see them as often as a lot of my other JedFriends
because I live over here and can’t afford to travel to the UK and Ireland every few months.

How has being a Jedward fan changed your life?

I’m so much happier now, I feel like I know who I am, where I belong. I wasn’t unpopular
at school - had my own bunch of friends and had a laugh but I was bullied and that,
obviously, made me very wary of people. But the twins are always there for you, even if I
don’t get to see them very often, I know they get my letters and I never have nothing to
do - and it’s a bit like corporate imagery: every part of my life is directly or indirectly
associated with John and Edward and the fandom: I have posters all over my flat
(including the bathroom and a JedWall in the living room), I have clothes and stuff I’ve
bought from Penney’s in Dublin, I use a PlanetJedward bag, have a Jedward watch, use
their favourite fragrance, have a pair of Twin Dalmation teddies called Edwin and
Jonathan who are also active on social media, pictures of them and me both in my office
and on my iPad/iPhone/Mac and say “sh sh sh shower” before I go in there every
morning. What else could a girl want?
## Appendix 2: Jedward Social Media

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<th>Platform</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Facebook</td>
<td>John and Edward - Official X Factor</td>
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<td>Google+</td>
<td>Jedward</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Edward Grimes</td>
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<td>@FijiMouse</td>
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<td>Vine</td>
<td>Jedward (authorised account)</td>
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<td>Jedward</td>
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