



**U2's '360°' tour: An episodic and perpetual experience of community**

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## U2's '360°' tour: An episodic and perpetual experience of community

### Abstract

This paper examines the concept of community in the context of U2's '360°' tour (2009-2011). It contributes to leisure studies by offering a detailed insight into the production of, sense of belonging and resistance to a community in relation to a rock music event. Despite a growing body of academic research focusing on U2, understanding of their live concerts is lacking. The originality of this research lies in the notion that although the communal experience of attending U2's concerts is episodic, due to the periodic and temporary nature of their tours, the sense of belonging to U2's community simmers continually online. Furthermore, it argues that U2 intentionally exploit the notion of community in order to inspire their audience and gain their support for the various socio-political campaigns they promote. The paper draws on online research of selected U2-related websites, in-depth semi-structured interviews with fans, an email interview with U2's show director, and content analysis of documentary material as part of a wider project examining rock music events as contemporary spectacle.

Keywords: community, collective effervescence, *communitas*, U2

## Introduction

This paper examines the concept of community in the context of U2's '360°' tour (2009-2011). It contributes to leisure studies by offering a detailed insight into the production of, sense of belonging and resistance to a community in relation to a rock music event. Despite a growing body of academic research focusing on U2, understanding of their live concerts is lacking. The originality of this research lies in the notion that although the communal experience of attending U2's concerts is episodic, due to the periodic and temporary nature of their tours, the sense of belonging to U2's community simmers continually online. Furthermore, it argues that U2 intentionally exploit the notion of community in order to inspire their audience and gain their support for the various socio-political campaigns they promote. Like the concerts of many other rock bands, for example Bruce Springsteen and the Rolling Stones (Baker, 2009; Cavicchi, 1998), U2's shows provide individuals with a distinct feeling of belonging to a unique global community. Cavicchi's, (1998, p.158) ethnographic study explains how Bruce Springsteen fans' have a 'strong affinity for one another and a sense of belonging together'. He revealed that fans cite music and Springsteen's storytelling as forces that unite them, with live shows providing opportunities for fans to meet and interact in person (Cavicchi, 1998, p.164-65).

However, this research focuses on U2's '360°' tour (2009-2011) due the band's intentional exploitation of the notion of U2 and their fans as a community. The idea of community is central to U2's existence and longevity as a band. The coda to one of the group's songs is 'there is no them, only us', which provides a useful example of how U2 communicates a sense of community. It reflects their ethos and concern for global

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3 humanitarian causes, such as their support for Amnesty International. Cogan (2006, p.9)  
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5 argues that 'U2's sense of being a community is one of the foundations of the band, and  
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7 also one of its permanent features'. U2's success is due to their 'collective vision and  
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9 common ground' (Cogan 2006, p.10). The band's identity is built on their shared norms  
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11 and values, which include 'respect for each other, a work ethic and aesthetic codes' (p.12).  
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13 Cogan (2006) suggests that community is evident within U2's concerts on two  
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15 overlapping levels. Firstly, the band members and their support staff form a community  
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17 and, secondly, U2 and their fans constitute a community. However, despite this, it is  
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19 argued here that some fans resist the band's attempts to create a sense of belonging.  
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28 'U2 360°', the band's 17<sup>th</sup> world tour generated £600 million gross profit from 110 shows  
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30 around the world. It was initially planned to take in 100 cities in locations in Europe,  
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32 North America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In January 2011, several additional  
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34 dates were announced, including South Africa, Mexico and South America, ending in  
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36 Moncton, Canada, in July 2011. U2 performed in some countries for the first time,  
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38 including Moscow (Russia) and Istanbul (Turkey).  
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44 In general, U2 concerts create opportunities for fans to come together as a real community  
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46 in a particular location and provide them with an intense feeling of 'communitas' through  
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48 collective rituals and knowing that they all share a common interest in the band, their  
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50 music and concerts. Notwithstanding this, the concert experience is temporary, due to the  
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52 short-term, periodic nature of U2's tours and performances. However, fans also form a  
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54 complex online community (Lizie, 2009). The numerous U2-related websites and forums,  
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56 such as 'Zootopia', enable fans to connect to a show, and form virtual emotional alliances,  
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58 which can lead to face-to-face meetings and the forming of long-term relationships  
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3 (Bennett, 2012). Online activities, such as contributing to U2 forums and, in particular,  
4 set-list parties<sup>1</sup>, perpetuate and reinforce a sense of unique community. Furthermore, U2's  
5 concerts heighten this feeling of community in terms of facilitating the shared experiences  
6 and histories that are formed through attending the concerts and participating online.  
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14 Previous academic attention has focused on the management, rather than social scientific  
15 analyses, of events (Andrews and Leopold, 2013; Lamond and Platt, 2016; Merkel, 2014).  
16 Numerous subject areas, such as tourism, hospitality and sport, have examined events  
17 (Getz, 2012; Horne and Manzenreiter, 2006; Roche, 2000). However, this qualitative  
18 study lies within the emerging area of the social sciences of events (Andrews and  
19 Leopold, 2013; Getz, 2012; Merkel, 2014), and is underpinned by critical event studies,  
20 which Lamond and Platt (2016, p. 5) argue is 'rooted in a concern for the people and  
21 places impacted by events, not one steered solely by ideas of profit'.  
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35 This paper was motivated and has been informed by the author's experiences as a long-  
36 time fan of U2, and his academic interests in teaching and researching events. As a fan-  
37 scholar, the author has extensive knowledge and experience of U2's music and concerts,  
38 which helped to gain access to the online data and interview partners, as well as analyse  
39 and interpret the results. Critical reflexivity combined with detailed insider knowledge of  
40 U2 and their concerts helped to achieve an empathetic understanding of the fans'  
41 experiences of U2's shows. Firstly, this paper contemplates those concepts and theories  
42 that shape this research, focusing on community, 'communitas' and collective  
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55 <sup>1</sup>Set-list parties are online gatherings where fans post details of 'concert set lists and other information  
56 as it happens, allowing non-attendees around the world to feel that they are part of the live event'  
57 (Bennett 2013, p. 52).  
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3 effervescence. Secondly, the band's contributions to the production and construction of  
4 the U2 community are investigated. Finally, the fans' comments relating to how they  
5 make sense of belonging to, contribute to and resist the creation of a distinctive  
6 community are discussed.  
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### 14 *Theoretical Considerations*

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19 Before examining the fans experiences, sense of belonging and resistance to the U2  
20 community, it is important to reveal the theories that underpin this research and to  
21 contemplate how they work together to create a framework for understanding music  
22 events and U2 concerts in particular. Firstly, it is important to consider research that  
23 investigates the notion of rock music audiences as community. Secondly, Cohen's (1985)  
24 suggestion that community is symbolically constructed is contemplated in order to  
25 comprehend how fans contribute to and resist the production of the U2 community.  
26 Thirdly, Turner's (1969) concept of 'Communitas' and Durkeim's (1912) 'Collective  
27 Effervescence' are examined to help understand the fan's experiences of being part of the  
28 U2 community. Finally, Bauman's (2001) notion of 'liquid modern communities' is  
29 considered in relation to the fans online and face-to-face experiences of community.  
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45 Previously, Bennett (2001), Frith (1981) and Lizie (2009) have analysed and  
46 conceptualised rock music audiences as communities. Bennett (2004) suggests that the  
47 notion of community can be applied to the analysis of music and youth culture in two  
48 ways. Firstly, community provides the means for individuals to convey their 'sense of  
49 togetherness' through associating music, identity and place. Secondly, community can  
50 be applied as a 'romantic construct', where individuals consider music as a 'way of life'  
51 and a source of community (Bennett, 2004, p. 224). Similar to Frith's (1981) notion of  
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3 rock music creating opportunities for connectivity, Bennett (2004, p. 224) suggests that  
4 during the late 1960s, the hippie movement and their subcultural style promoted a 'sense  
5 of community'. According to Bennett (2004), this was evident in the movement's  
6 commitment to politically themed rock music as a means to promote socio-economic,  
7 cultural and political change.  
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10 Storey (2006) examines the notion of audiences as community in the context of 1960s  
11 rock festivals, such as the Human Be-in, Monterey Pop Festival and Woodstock Music  
12 and Arts Fair. While the rock musicians 'celebrated the size of the rock community, the  
13 record companies celebrated the size of the rock market' (Storey, 2006, p. 106). The end  
14 of the bourgeois counter-culture in the late 1960s commenced with the commercialisation  
15 of such events. Storey (2006) highlights how, today, rock music fans form a different  
16 audience. He suggests that they are no longer a community but a market (Storey, 2006).  
17 However, as several authors argue, U2's audience forms a distinct face-to-face, as well  
18 as online, community that is out of reach of the profiteers, in other words the community  
19 produces its own fan culture (Cogan, 2006; Fiske, 1992; Lizie, 2009; Williams, 2015).  
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40 Frith (1981) asserts that the idea of community is key to understanding the significance  
41 of rock culture. He discusses the notion of authenticity in folk music and the 'myth of  
42 rock community' and argues that existing theories of community, in relation to rock, are  
43 unsatisfactory (Frith, 1981, p. 164). Frith (1981) suggests that 1960s rock fans saw their  
44 music as authentic, as opposed to commercial pop music, which was seen as  
45 manufactured and inauthentic. For rock fans, the music 'symbolised a community' (Frith,  
46 1981, p. 161). However, according to Frith (1981, p. 164), a community does not make  
47 music but instead provides 'communal experiences'. Rock community refers to a  
48 'sensation', rather than a group of people or particular institution (Frith, 1981, p. 164).  
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3 In addition to concepts of community that are concerned with traditional, 'simple'  
4 audiences, some researchers have focused on online audiences (Lizie, 2009), and on the  
5 convergence of fandom and technology within the live music experience (Bennett, 2012;  
6  
7 2017). Lizie's (2009, p. 1) research examines U2's global online fan base and attempts to  
8 demonstrate the ways in which fans 'form an online community, create online identities  
9 and negotiate socio-political situations'. Lizie (2009) suggests that traditionally  
10 communities were defined by geographical location and ideas of commonality. However,  
11 he highlights that more recent conceptualisations consider communities in terms of social  
12 relations, rather than place-specific entities. Lizie (2009) concludes that online  
13 community does exist amongst U2 fans, as in the social interactions between fans, rather  
14 than a geographically situated ideal. Furthermore, he found that online identities are  
15 created within the social structure of the community, rather than on individual preferences  
16 alone.

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19 By contrast, Bennett, (2017, p.127-142) examines the fans' experiences of Kate Bush's  
20 'Before the Dawn' concerts in 2014. She acknowledges that some artists, such as U2 and  
21 REM actively promote the use of mobile technologies as important parts of their shows,  
22 whereas others, such as Kate Bush, discourage such activity (Bennett, 2017, p.129).  
23 Drawing on Sandvoss's (2005, p.64) notion of 'Heimatt', a sense of warmth and  
24 belonging', Bennett (2017, p.140) argues that fans' abstinence of the use of technologies,  
25 such as mobile phones at concerts can be a 'Heimatic unifying force' leading to a more  
26 'immersive and authentic experience'. She concludes that fans' use of technology can be  
27 'manufactured as a powerful marker of taste and belonging', however this is subject to  
28 change depending on the different fan communities and artists (Bennett, 2017, p.140).  
29 These ideas are useful in order to examine U2's online community and fans' use of mobile  
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3 technologies at U2's concerts. However, it is also important to understand how fans  
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5 experience a sense of belonging to the U2 community.  
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9 Cohen's (1985) suggestion that community is symbolically constructed is a helpful  
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11 starting point for examining the complex dynamics of U2's audiences. He contends that  
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13 members of a specific community have 'something in common with each other' and,  
14  
15 share mutual interests, which differentiate them from other groups (Cohen, 1985, p. 12).  
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17 The community exists within the distinctions between commonality and difference  
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19 (Cohen, 1985). Customs, rituals and habits of a community mark its boundaries and  
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21 provide shared meaning (Blackshaw, 2010; Cohen, 1985). Cohen's (1985) suggestion  
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23 that community is symbolically constructed is particularly helpful for understanding the  
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25 fans' sense of belonging to the U2 community, which is developed through their shared  
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27 interest in the band, the individual members of U2, their music, style and fully lived  
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29 experiences at live shows. The community's identity exists within the boundaries  
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31 between commonality and difference, which is demonstrated in the fans' knowledge and  
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33 (emotional) experience of U2's music and concerts (Cohen, 1985). Furthermore, the ritual  
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35 practices, connections between fans and the band, and shared values form symbols that  
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37 hold meaning for the fans, and constitute the essence and boundaries of the community.  
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39 Cohen's (1985) ideas also help to understand how some fans resist being part of the U2  
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41 community.  
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49 This paper also draws upon Turner's (1969, p. 360) notion of 'communitas', which is  
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51 especially relevant and insightful for examining the fans' experiences of U2's concerts  
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53 due to its focus on rock music culture. Being part of the audience, and engaging in shared  
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55 customs such as clapping, singing and chanting, provides fans with an intense form of  
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57 'spontaneous communitas' (Turner, 1969, p. 360). Turner (1969, p. 360) suggests  
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3 'communitas' exists as a 'moment in and out of time and in and out of secular structure'.  
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5 Rock fans experience 'communitas' in the shared ritual activities of attending concerts  
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7 such as clapping, singing and cheering and being part of a like-minded audience  
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9 (Blackshaw, 2010; Sutton, 2000; Turner, 1969).  
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13 Turner (1969, p. 132) distinguished between three forms of 'communitas': existential or  
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15 spontaneous, normative and ideological. He described spontaneous 'communitas' as a  
16  
17 'happening'. Normative 'communitas' focuses on establishing goals and organising  
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19 resources to achieve them. Finally, ideological 'communitas' is 'a label that can be  
20  
21 applied to a 'variety of utopian models of societies' (Turner, 1969, p. 132). However,  
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23 Eade (1992) suggests that not all forms of communal gathering constitute 'communitas'.  
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25 He argues, in the context of pilgrimages, that Turner's notion of 'communitas' is  
26  
27 inadequate to address the differential roles within a group and suggests that a more critical  
28  
29 and differentiated examination of 'communitas' is required (Eade, 1992). Nevertheless,  
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31 this paper utilises the notion of 'spontaneous communitas' as this is most suitable for  
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33 labelling the findings of this research due to Turner's (1969, p. 138) suggestion that the  
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35 'beats' and the 'hippies' used the symbols and 'liturgical actions' of rock music and  
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37 technologies, such as 'flashing lights' to create a sense of community. Turner (1969, p.  
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39 138) argued that the hippies were trying to create a 'transformative experience', the  
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41 essence of which was 'communal and shared'. He suggested that the form of  
42  
43 'communitas' pursued by the hippies within their gatherings was more profound than the  
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45 'pleasurable and effortless comradeship' that can occur at any time between friends  
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47 (Turner, 1969, p. 138). However, contrary to Turner's (1969, p.203) proposition that 'the  
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49 closest we may ever get to sustained communitas' is in 'countless and transient  
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51 encounters', this paper argues that the U2 community simmers continually online.  
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3 This research also draws upon Durkheim's (1912) notion of 'collective effervescence' in  
4 order to contribute to a better understanding of the communal and spiritual aspects of  
5 U2's shows. Durkheim (1912) suggested that religion is formed by instances of  
6 'collective effervescence', which refers to the outcome of individuals within a social  
7 group uniting in order to perform religious rituals. This creates a form of 'collective  
8 excitement'. Durkheim (1912, pp. 217-18) argues that 'the very act of congregating is an  
9 exceptionally powerful stimulant. Once the individuals are gathered together, a sort of  
10 electricity is generated from their closeness and quickly launches them to an extraordinary  
11 height of exaltation'.  
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26 The concept of collective effervescence is similar to Turner's (1969, p. 360) notion of  
27 'communitas'. Olaveson (2001) highlights a number of parallels between the two  
28 concepts. Firstly, he suggests that both ideas refer to 'an intense emotional surge, and a  
29 type of collective delirium or ecstasy'. Secondly, he argues that 'collective effervescence  
30 and 'communitas' are social realities' that 'exist outside the normal social existence of  
31 groups'. Thirdly, he acknowledges the collective nature of both concepts and refers to  
32 their immediate, spontaneous and temporary nature (Olaveson, 2001, p. 107). These  
33 ideas will be applied in order to examine the fans' experiences of attending U2's concerts  
34 and how they contribute to the sense of belonging to a community.  
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49 Finally, this paper draws upon Bauman's (2001) notion of 'liquid modern communities'  
50 to aid an understanding the temporal dynamics of the U2 community. Bauman (2001)  
51 proposes that modern societies are increasingly focused on the individual and that  
52 communities have become fragmented and fluid. He suggests that individuals experience  
53 their lives in episodes and, where community does exist, it lacks a prolonged effect.  
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3 Bauman's (1992, 2001 and 2007) ideas are important because they relate to the cyclical  
4 and temporary nature of U2's touring and how their concerts offer fans the opportunity  
5 to come together, more or less frequently, as a face-to-face community. However, as will  
6 be shown, the U2 community simmers continually online.  
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14 The theories that underpin this research provide a framework for understanding  
15 community in the context of music events and U2 concerts in particular on four levels.  
16 Firstly, Bennett (2001; 2004), Bennett (2017); Frith (1981); Storey (2006) and Lizie's  
17 (2009) research helps to comprehend the notion of a rock music audience as a community.  
18 Secondly, Cohen's (1985) notion that community is symbolically constructed assists in  
19 understanding how the fans contribute to and resist the production of the U2 community.  
20 Thirdly, Turner's (1969) concept of Spontaneous Communitas and Durkheim's (1912)  
21 Collective Effervescence aid in understanding the fans experiences of being part of the  
22 U2 community. Finally, Bauman's (1992, 2001; 2007) notion of liquid modern  
23 communities help to comprehend how the U2 community is perpetuated online.  
24 However, before examining the production of the U2 community, and the fans' comments  
25 relating to their sense of belonging to it, it is necessary to consider the research  
26 methodology and methods.  
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#### 49 Research Methodology and Methods

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52 This research adopts a critical interpretive perspective, as it aims to understand the  
53 production of, fans experiences, sense of belonging and resistance to the U2 community.  
54 This paper utilises a blend of netnography and ethnography, while examining four  
55 concerts in different geographic regions and in different legs of the tour. The research  
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3 settings include Dublin, which happened in 2009, Istanbul and Moscow (2010), and  
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5 Pittsburgh (2011). Rich qualitative data were collected in three phases, including online  
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7 research of selected U2-related websites, in-depth semi-structured interviews with 26  
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9 fans, which were conducted via Skype, an email interview with Willie Williams, U2's  
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11 show director and a qualitative content analysis of documentary material including U2's  
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13 official tour book 'From the Ground Up: U2360° Tour', and the '360 Manifesto', which  
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15 described the producers' vision for the tour. The fans that were interviewed are  
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17 referred to by pseudonyms to protect their identity. The locations of the concert/s that  
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19 they attended are indicated in brackets, following their name. Data gathered from U2  
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21 related websites are acknowledged as online comments. The key research questions of  
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23 this paper are to understand firstly, how the band and their collaborators try to produce  
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25 and construct a distinctive U2 community and secondly, how the fans experience, make  
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27 sense of and resist being part of this.  
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### 35 ***Producing the U2 Community***

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39 The following provides a detailed insight into the production of the U2 community from  
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41 the band and their associates perspectives. It presents the results from an email interview  
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43 with U2's show director, Willie Williams and analyses and interprets the 'U2 360  
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45 Manifesto', a document provided by Williams, explaining his vision for the tour.  
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47 Furthermore, this section examines the data from a thematic analysis of the written text  
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49 of the '360°' tour official photo book, written by music journalist, Dylan Jones. U2 have  
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51 always been aware of the importance of, and have developed their careers by, connecting  
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53 with their audiences within their live performances. As Cogan (2006, p. 28) suggests, 'the  
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55 idea of community is also apparent during [U2's] live concerts'. She argues that the fans  
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57 become part of the community when the band interacts with them. Williams, U2's show  
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3 director explained to me that *'spectacle should not be a stand-alone experience nor one*  
4 *witnessed in isolation. Without a level of community and communication it can become a*  
5 *very hollow experience'*. Jones (2012) also discusses the notion of community in relation  
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8 to the '360°' tour. He refers to Bono, U2's lead singer, who commented that the band is  
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10 'about community' (Jones, 2012, p. 24). Jones (2012, p. 236) describes how Bono  
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12 acknowledged the band and their entourage as 'so very obviously a community'. Bono  
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14 explained that 'community is so important, and I suppose we look on everyone who works  
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16 with us as a family, and as a way of not being corporate'. Bono's comment acknowledges  
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18 that U2 is a corporate brand, however, the notion of community enables them to operate  
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20 in a non-corporate manner in that the band share a collective and artistic vision, and are  
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22 'part of a community of artists, of musicians, as well as friends' (Cogan, 2006, pp. 11-12;  
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24 Khare and Popovich, 2012).

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33 Moreover, Bono acknowledged the significance of community in relation to the band's  
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35 values and beliefs. He explained that 'this band is about joy, it's about community, it's  
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37 about loyalty. And it's very powerful to be with the same people for such a long time'  
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39 (quoted in Jones, 2012, pp. 236-7). Furthermore, Jones (2012, p. 32) recognises that there  
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41 is 'always a sense that if he [Bono] (and indeed they) [the band] had had the time, he  
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43 would have embraced every single person in the audience'. Commenting on the band's  
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45 live performances, Jones (2012, p. 204) remarks that 'with U2, the experience for both  
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47 band and audience was always about communion'.  
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53 In the email interview, Williams stressed the importance of music for individuals, as well  
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55 as the benefits of *'the communal witnessing of such songs being performed live by their*  
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57 *creators'*. He suggested that this *'brings great opportunity to create an environment that*  
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3 *can communicate with the human soul on multiple levels*'. Williams's use of terms such  
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5 as 'communal witnessing', 'creators', and 'soul' acknowledges religious and spiritual  
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7 elements of U2's '360°' show. Furthermore, Hebdige's (1979) contention that meaning  
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9 is produced in the ways in which music is used helps to explain Williams's comments.  
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11 The intention of U2's shows seems to be to create meaning by establishing a spiritual and  
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13 emotional connection between the band and their fans. These comments highlight the  
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15 importance of the notion of community within U2's '360°' show.  
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21 Williams outlined the 'physical parameters' of the '360°' tour design that contributed to  
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23 the sense of community. He explained that 'the largest part of the backdrop to the  
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25 performance is composed of other people, sharing the same experience. This is unusual  
26  
27 at this scale and presents great opportunity'. Williams also explained the 'overt[ly]  
28  
29 political' nature of U2's previous tours, which sought to inspire 'the viewers to future  
30  
31 action outside the concert'. He commented that 'in these new, fragmented times, perhaps  
32  
33 we can find another direction'. Furthermore, he referred to the notion of being 'in the  
34  
35 moment' and poses the challenge of 'turn[ing] this unusual situation of facing so many  
36  
37 other people into something larger than the stadium, but in a completely different way'.  
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41 He also suggested that:

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45 The idea of giving the audience something to do is interesting and valid. However,  
46  
47 instead of this being something to do individually and on some future occasion,  
48  
49 perhaps there is mileage in the idea of getting them to do something en masse,  
50  
51 right in the moment.

52  
53 Moreover, Williams explained:

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57 The meta-narrative of the show becomes a challenge to the audience to achieve  
58  
59 lift off; can we, here, now, together create something larger than ourselves? Not  
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3 for the future, not for the world but what can we be, right in this moment?  
4 Instructions. Create expectation. Bring something.  
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8 Williams proposed a number of 'simple, practical ideas' for crowd participation; for  
9  
10 example; 'Mexican waves, cell phone 'morse code' (flicking lighters), singing, chanting  
11  
12 together (Unknown Caller), shirt waving (Polish flag), passing things through the crowd,  
13  
14 non-language based'.  
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19 Jones (2012, p. 119) remarked that 'one of the highlights of the show soon became the  
20  
21 Aung San Suu Kyi moment'. He describes the producers' initiative to encourage fans to  
22  
23 wear a mask displaying the face of the Burmese leader, to 'help raise awareness and show  
24  
25 solidarity' for her (Jones, 2012, p. 119). Fans were asked to 'wear it at work or college;  
26  
27 wear it on the bus or the train', and to 'bring it to a U2 show' (Jones, 2012, p. 119). Jones  
28  
29 (2012, p. 119) comments that every night the band 'would make a dramatic call for her  
30  
31 release, as a procession of volunteers from Bono's One advocacy organization and  
32  
33 members of Amnesty International, along with local volunteers paraded around the stage  
34  
35 wearing masks with her image on'. Moreover, Williams describes the development of  
36  
37 one of the interactive segments of the concert, which involved the audience using their  
38  
39 mobile [cell] phones during the band's 'Moment of Surrender' song, to create a visual  
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41 effect, which contributed to the spectacle. Jones (2012, p. 132) expounds:  
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48 At the start of the song, Bono would ask the audience to take out their cell phones  
49  
50 and then call to Willie to turn out the lights. This was the moment when Bono got  
51  
52 the crowd to create an electronic milky way, a night sky on Earth. When U2 used  
53  
54 to tour, the audience held lighters and matches aloft to pledge their allegiance, but  
55  
56 since the world went digital they have used mobiles.  
57

58 U2 produce a sense of community by interacting with fans during their shows. Band  
59  
60 members, and in particular Bono, create a connection with fans by moving around the



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3 stage, making eye-contact with their audience, singing to them, touching their hands and  
4  
5 directing their performances at fans in different parts of the concert venue (Cogan 2006,  
6  
7 p.28). Bono often invites fans on stage during U2's concerts. Cogan (2006, p.18) suggests  
8  
9 that by doing his he 'makes them part of the U2 family'. Furthermore, the band and their  
10  
11 producers designed aspects of the '360°' concerts, such as encouraging the lighting up of  
12  
13 mobile phones and wearing masks of Aung San Suu Kyi to promote a sense of community  
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15 and intentionally exploit this in order to inspire the audience to engage in the socio-  
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17 political campaigns they support.  
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### 25 ***Belonging to, experiencing and resisting the U2 Fan Community***

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30 In addition to comprehending the production and construction of the U2 community, it is  
31  
32 also important to critically examines the fans' sense of belonging, experiences of and  
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34 resistance to the U2 fan community. The following presents, analyses and interprets the  
35  
36 findings from the online data of fans' comments and discussions relating to U2's '360°'  
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38 tour and semi-structured interviews with selected fans.  
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### 43 ***Belonging***

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48 Attending U2's '360°' shows provided individuals with a distinct feeling of belonging to  
49  
50 a unique global community. Fans referred to, this community in a number of different  
51  
52 ways. Firstly, they explicitly pointed out the sense of community and belonging they felt  
53  
54 at the concerts. For example, in a review of the Dublin shows, an online commentator  
55  
56 suggested that U2's concerts provide fans with a '*sense of homecoming*' and '*belonging*'  
57  
58 or '*community*'. Ron (Pittsburgh and Dublin) described his attendance at U2's '360°'  
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3 show as a *'community thing. We all feel it and it is something that you can't quantify and*  
4 *you just feel it'*. For Sarah (Dublin), *'it was definitely like a sort of community feeling and,*  
5 *um, being part of something you know bigger than myself, like part of a greater whole'*.  
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12 Frith (1996) highlights the connection between music, identity and emotion, which helps  
13 to explain Sarah's (Dublin) comments. He argues that 'in responding to a song, we are  
14 drawn, haphazardly, into emotional alliances with the performers and with the performers'  
15 other fans' (Frith, 1996, p. 121). However, Frith's (1996) comments focus on listening to  
16 rock music, rather than its live performance and therefore do not account for the emotions  
17 experienced at rock concerts. Nevertheless, that emotional connectivity is, of course, a  
18 precondition for one's desire to attend a live concert.  
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32 Secondly, themes of compassion, caring and love contributed to and underpinned the  
33 sense of community within U2's shows. Fans expressed feelings of love in relation to  
34 U2's shows in their online conversations. One explained how they were *'wowed by the*  
35 *music, the spaceship & the love that was evident all around'*. Some fans mentioned love  
36 in their description of the crowd's response to the band *'The crowd definitely showed the*  
37 *boys much love and they gave it back'*. Sarah (Dublin) identified compassion as one of  
38 the main values within U2's show. Vera (Moscow) described her experience of this: *'all*  
39 *the people are really nice and lovely and you can feel it. People [...] well yeah, they care*  
40 *about each other. You feel like you are in a big massive family. You are like a family*  
41 *member'*.  
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57 Alex (Moscow) argued that U2 promotes humanistic values within their concerts. He  
58 suggested that in addition to compassion, the band also promoted tolerance and love.  
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3 Similarly, Sally (Dublin and Istanbul) commented that *'humanity, love, honesty, making*  
4 *things happen, beliefs, connection [...] that sort of stuff [...] very sort of human values,*  
5 *you know. And friendship. And making like warmth, making bridges. Getting people*  
6 *together from other parts of the world'*. Sasha (Pittsburgh) agreed and stated: *'I think*  
7 *there's always kind of a message of love and acceptance'*. Furthermore, Petra (Moscow)  
8 suggested that trust is an important value within the U2 fan community. She explained  
9 that *'you have these fans from everywhere around the world. And you know you can trust*  
10 *them. I don't know why but U2 fans – the real ones – I trust them completely'*. Lousley's  
11 (2013) notion that events can activate audiences by promoting values and ideas that offer  
12 an alternative to existing political and social ideals help to understand Sally's (Dublin and  
13 Istanbul), Sasha's (Pittsburgh) and Petra's (Moscow) comments.

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31 Thirdly, fans referred to a range of norms and values they believe to share, which  
32 contributed to a sense of community and belonging. These included collectivism,  
33 friendship, caring, compassion, love and trust. As discussed previously, community was  
34 one of the key values promoted within U2's '360°' show, through the band's identity,  
35 music, speeches and visual images. John (Pittsburgh) felt a *'sense almost of one that we*  
36 *are all different but let's come together [...] I just keep coming back to community or*  
37 *being connected, together'*.

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49 Fans also acknowledged how the band themselves represented collectivistic and  
50 friendship values. Vera (Moscow) remarked that *'the four of them together [...] work just*  
51 *perfect. The fact that they have stayed together and they are such good friends'*. She also  
52 revealed how she *'liked the [...] friendship and the family values they have [they] 'stick*  
53 *together' [...] like the song 'One'*. Moreover, fans remarked online how U2 promotes the  
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3 notion of community in their music, actions and socio-political messages. Arthur  
4 (Dublin, Moscow, Istanbul and Pittsburgh) explained: '*community, you know, I think that*  
5 *is a very clear message from the song 'One', and from the campaign 'One'*'. These  
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10 comments support Cogan's (2006, p. 9) suggestion that the notion of community is central  
11  
12 to U2's existence and is communicated through their music and live shows.  
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### 18 *Experiencing*

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23 Ritual practices, such as singing, chanting and clapping that fans engaged in at U2's  
24  
25 shows, were a key factor in the way they experienced a sense of community. Moore and  
26  
27 Myerhoff (1977, p. 7) argue that 'collective rituals are intended to produce at least an  
28  
29 attentive state of mind, and often an even greater commitment of some kind [...] and have  
30  
31 a social message and meaning.' This helps to explain the role of ritual in creating  
32  
33 commitment, and meaning, within the U2 community. The online discussions highlight  
34  
35 that fans participated in a range of 'embodied activities' (Paterson, 2009, p. 3). One of  
36  
37 the most common practices was applause. Some fans complained that their hands were  
38  
39 sore from clapping, whereas others acknowledged there was '*hardly any applause at the*  
40  
41 *end of the show or when the band were on the bridge right in front of us*'.  
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49 As well as applause, fans described other customs, including waving their hands in the  
50  
51 air. Referring to the Moscow concert, one fan expressed surprise at the audience making  
52  
53 a '*kind of "wave" similar to those seen in sport competitions*'. U2 shows clearly provoke  
54  
55 bodily movements and physical sensations, which can be described in terms of 'haptic  
56  
57 knowledges', which include 'internally felt bodily sensations' (Paterson, 2009, p. 3). This  
58  
59 suggests that in addition to visual and symbolic characteristics, the sense of community  
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3 provides a physical and emotional experience. Duffy (2014, p. 229) suggests that  
4  
5 'emotional and affective responses are integral to other processes of identity-formation  
6  
7 and social connection'. Furthermore, Ehrenreich (2008, p. 24), who examines the notion  
8  
9 of collective joy, suggests that 'to submit, bodily, to the music through dance is to be  
10  
11 incorporated into the community in a way far deeper than shared myth or common custom  
12  
13 can achieve'. That applies to the fans who embody the U2 community as a result of  
14  
15 participating in ritual practices, such as applauding, cheering and singing.  
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19  
20 Remarks such as '*singing our hearts out*', and '*singing all night really made it*' explain  
21  
22 the significance of this activity. Others talked about how they appreciated singing along  
23  
24 with 70,000 fans, again highlighting the importance of shared experiences for some.  
25  
26 Another fan explained how there were '*some great moments, everyone singing Stand By*  
27  
28 *Me, Walk On was very powerful*'. Fans also referred to singing parts of songs with and  
29  
30 without Bono. For example, one described how they, along with the rest of the audience,  
31  
32 sang the first verse and chorus of '*Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*' without  
33  
34 Bono, which was '*awesome*'. Ehrenreich (2008, pp. 215-16) acknowledges the influence  
35  
36 of African indigenous music on artists including 'Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly and Mick  
37  
38 Jagger'. She refers to the 'polyrhythms, antiphonal<sup>2</sup> responses, and capacity for both  
39  
40 repetition and creative variation', which have endured through 'centuries of enslavement'  
41  
42 (Ehrenreich, 2008, p. 215). Ehrenreich's (2008, pp. 215-16) ideas highlight the  
43  
44 significance of the fans responses to U2's music in terms of the 'call and response'  
45  
46 between Bono and the audience. This is significant because it demonstrates how the fans  
47  
48 embody the U2 community vocally by singing and chanting. These comments exemplify  
49  
50 how fans reflected on, and shared, their encounters of U2's shows online. This suggests  
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59 <sup>2</sup> Antiphon refers to a choral response  
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3 that the online conversations and reflections reinforced the fans understanding and sense  
4  
5 of community through their shared experiences.  
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11 Sarah (Dublin) explained how *'it [clapping and cheering]*  
12 *contributes to feeling part of something bigger than myself*  
13 *to me like the whole community of the audience and feeling,*  
14 *you know, that sort of togetherness and unity'*. Dave  
15 (Istanbul) referred to the *'entire crowd, [...] they sang in*  
16 *unison with the singer'*. Furthermore, Breda (Istanbul)  
17 commented: *'we had a great group who sang the songs together,*  
18 *who, you know, said 'Yeah-Hoo' and we were acting together'*.  
19 These comments demonstrate that being part of the audience, and engaging  
20 in shared ritual activities such as clapping, singing and chanting, provided fans with an  
21 intense form of 'spontaneous communitas' (Turner, 1969, p. 360). These 'moment[s] in  
22 and out of time' contributed to the feeling of community, which was also promoted  
23 through the band's actions, music and messages (Turner 1969, p. 360).  
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44 Ron (Dublin and Pittsburgh) reflected on what prompted him to engage in activities such  
45 as clapping and cheering: *'It is just a feeling, you just feel involved with it. It is part of*  
46 *feeling you belong there. It is part of who you are'*. He also acknowledged the shared  
47 experience of being lost in the music: *'it's a communal thing: you are all lost in the music.*  
48 *It is just an amazing feeling'*.  
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3 Similarly, Alex (Moscow) highlighted an important point relating to the powerful  
4 spiritual connection he experienced at U2's '360°' show. For him, the shows seemed to  
5 create a sense of nostalgic community, which he gained by attending the concerts. He  
6 explained:  
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15 *I think part of it is the sense of community, I do think that's very powerful. I don't*  
16 *think there are many places in life these days where you get a big sense of*  
17 *community, a big sense of belonging, a big sense of camaraderie. I think football*  
18 *matches do it, the very tribal and, I think religious activities, you know, churches,*  
19 *temples, synagogues because they provide that but I think that for most people*  
20 *that doesn't really exist anymore. I think concerts like that do provide that kind of*  
21 *human need or desire to connect or join with other people.*  
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27 Ron's (Dublin and Pittsburgh) and Alex's (Moscow) remarks highlight that, for some  
28 fans, the feeling of belonging that is achieved in attending U2's shows, constitutes a  
29 spiritual experience.  
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36 As well as describing physical activities, some fans explained how watching and  
37 engaging with the crowd reinforced their sense of belonging to and experience of the U2  
38 community. For example, Rick (Pittsburgh) commented: *'I also really enjoy the crowd, I*  
39 *like to watch the other people and usually, not always but usually, they're fun to talk to*  
40 *and you are sort of sharing that moment'.*  
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50 Similarly, Alex (Moscow) reflected on the importance of being part of a larger  
51 community, which highlights their contribution to the sense of belonging to and  
52 experience of the U2 community.  
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3 *In a show you kind of get to a point and you, you just kind of take a moment out*  
4 *and you look around the stadium and you look at what everyone else is doing and*  
5 *everyone else is doing the same thing and you're like wow, I mean that's a*  
6 *spectacle more than the lights when you see everyone singing the same*  
7 *songs together and being part of something together, that's really powerful.*  
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11 Ehrenreich's (2008, p. 218) suggestion that rock music is 'a participatory experience,  
12 rooted in an ecstatic religious tradition' helps to comprehend Alex's (Moscow) remarks.  
13  
14 Ehrenreich (2008, pp. 216-7) explains that rock music originates from 'ancient traditions  
15 of collective ecstasy achieved solely through rhythmic participation'. Alex's (Moscow)  
16 remark about the powerful effect of collective participation suggests that U2's shows  
17 invoked an ecstatic state amongst the fans.  
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27 Furthermore, Durkheim's concept of 'collective effervescence' helps to explain the fans'  
28 ritual practices and emotional experiences. Fans expressed communal excitement through  
29 their physical and emotional responses to U2's performances. These responses were  
30 communicated in the shared ritual practices, such as singing, clapping and cheering,  
31 which added to fans' sense of community. For example, Breda's (Istanbul) comment  
32 about singing songs together and shouting 'Yeah-Hoo', provides an example of collective  
33 effervescence. The idea that U2's shows provide a form of 'collective effervescence'  
34 contradicts Bauman's (2001) notion that modern societies are increasingly focused on the  
35 individual and that communities are fragmented and fluid. U2's '360°' concerts united  
36 fans in the stadium and online. Although the band's shows were temporary occurrences,  
37 the U2 community simmers continually online. The '360°' tour produced collective,  
38 haptic moments of effervescence, which provided shared memories and experiences, and  
39 provoked a sense of community.  
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3 However, Steve (Dublin) highlighted the temporary nature of the sense of community  
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5 fans experience:  
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10 *that last song er which was almost about people leaving the venue y'know "did*  
11 *not notice the passers-by and they did not notice me" y'know you just walk past*  
12 *people that a few minutes ago collectively y'know we were all kind of like friends*  
13 *that didn't know each other and then the shows over and you are going back to*  
14 *the car and you are alienated to an extent from each other.*  
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20 Despite this, Ron (Dublin and Pittsburgh) explained the importance of the sense of  
21  
22 community; *'well basically unity, and that you can make a difference together. There is*  
23 *strength in numbers. And you know just look out for each other and be there'*. Ron's  
24  
25 (Dublin and Pittsburgh) comments emphasised that for some fans the experience of  
26  
27 community was not perceived as temporary, which further contrasts with Bauman's  
28  
29 (2001) ideas.  
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36 The experience of community was created by the fans' engagement with the concerts as  
37  
38 well as connection to other people. Breda (Istanbul) explained how meeting other U2 fans  
39  
40 enhanced her experience of the show: *'the crowd was fantastic, because we were bonding*  
41 *together. We didn't know each other before the show. But after that and during the show*  
42 *we were getting closer'*. Sally (Dublin and Istanbul) highlighted the importance of  
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44 attending the concert with friends: *'it was also the companions, the friends which made*  
45 *it so special'*.  
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54 U2's concerts enabled fans to meet face-to-face, as well as initiate and consolidate online  
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56 relationships. Petra (Moscow) explained how she bonded with other fans at U2's shows:  
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3 *I did a few shows like so with friends, like French friends from the Fan Club and*  
4 *it was also like during the show we were together. I didn't know them before. I*  
5 *kept in touch on Facebook but I didn't see them between 360° and 'I+E' now. But*  
6 *we really connected during the show, which we were together and it was yeah like*  
7 *being with friends, sharing your passion and like [...] so jumping and singing but*  
8 *also having fun with your friends.*  
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12 Petra's (Moscow) comment highlights the temporal nature of U2's gatherings, and how  
13  
14 social media enabled her to maintain her connections with fans online.  
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19 Furthermore, some of the fans' social relationships extended beyond the concert  
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21 experience. For example, Derek (Istanbul) commented: *'we met quite a nice Mexican*  
22 *family there that we are still in touch with now; obviously Facebook friends and the odd*  
23 *message here and there'.*  
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### 33 *Resisting*

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38 Although the use of technologies enabled fans to connect virtually, some online  
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40 commentators discussed the use of mobile phones and cameras at U2's shows and how  
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42 this impacted on their experiences. One explained that the atmosphere of the Dublin  
43  
44 concert was *'totally ruined by moronic fans with their stupid mobile phones held*  
45 *permanently aloft at the expense of punching the air and jumping up and down'.* They  
46  
47 continued, suggesting that *'with Bono even encouraging the use of the damn things at one*  
48  
49 *point it only served to make the gig that extra bit dull'.*  
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56 Other fans commented how they *'missed half the experience'* due to picture-taking at the  
57  
58 last couple of shows in Pittsburgh and Moncton. While mobile technologies enabled fans  
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3 to become ‘collectively connected’ to U2’s shows (Bennett, 2012), they also appeared to  
4  
5 detract from the sense of belonging by preventing some fans from engaging in collective  
6  
7 activities, such as jumping up and down.  
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12 Furthermore, despite U2’s attempts to promote unity and gain support for their socio-  
13  
14 political campaigns, some fans resisted the band’s requests. For example, Sally (Dublin,  
15  
16 Istanbul) explained that there was a limit to Bono’s influence over her actions:  
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21 *And well, maybe [...] maybe the limit for me goes like [...] even if Bono says like*  
22 *‘Go in and sign to this site’ I won’t do it (chuckles) because of the principle I want*  
23 *to choose myself to which [...] things that I sign into. I mean I can [...] I am glad*  
24 *to see their concerts and several of them. But my limit goes there. He says like ‘do*  
25 *this’ and ‘do this’ like exactly! So then I am not very interested in that.*  
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29 Moreover, the band’s support for Burmese pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi,  
30  
31 formed a key part of the ‘360°’ show. However, some fans were critical of U2’s  
32  
33 requests for them to show their united support for her by wearing masks of Suu Kyi  
34  
35 during the event. For example, Xavier (Moscow) commented: ‘*I thought it was a bit*  
36  
37 *gimmicky, you know what I mean?’*. Don (Dublin) made a similar comment:  
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43 *And in the early days there was the whole Aung San Suu Kyi mask arrangement,*  
44 *which I just didn’t really think kind of worked well; I am not sure what point it*  
45 *was meant to [...] obviously what point it was meant to deliver. But I am not sure*  
46 *whether every 1 in 50 people or 1 in 100 people putting on a black-and-white*  
47 *mask actually [...] actually delivered anything.*  
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51 Don (Dublin) added:  
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54 *And you could see [...] he dedicated the song to her and her visuals were on*  
55 *screen at the time. And you can make the connection between the song and the*  
56 *message; yet he just wants to put up this bloody barrier of, you know, [...] putting*  
57 *the bloody mask on your face while he is doing it.*  
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3 These comments suggest that some fans resisted or were unable to participate in activities  
4 that contributed to the sense of belonging and experience of the U2 community.  
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McManus's (2015) research examining the use of mobile technologies and social media at football matches supports this notion. He argues that such technologies contribute to place making and community and that 'the politics of building a transnational fan community is increasingly predicated on mediating between 'virtual' and 'actual' spaces' (McManus 2015, p. 10). However, he suggests that fans interact with a sense of 'distracted tactility' (McManus 2015, p. 10). Moreover, the findings of this research highlight the complexity of the U2 community underlining Bennett's (2017, p.140) suggestion that abstinence of the use of technologies, such as mobile phones at concerts can be a 'Heimatic unifying force' leading to a more 'immersive and authentic experience'.

### ***Conclusion***

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This paper has examined the concept of community in the context of rock group U2's (2009-2011) '360°' tour. It has contributed to leisure studies by applying theories of community to comprehend the production of, sense of belonging and resistance to a community in the context of U2's (2009-2011) '360°' tour. It has argued that U2 intentionally exploit the notion of community to inspire the audience and gain their support. Furthermore, the paper makes an original contribution to leisure studies by contending that despite the temporary nature of U2's concerts, the band's '360°' tour provided a powerful collective experience that extended beyond the concert venues, and was perpetuated in online conversations.

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5 The findings support Cohen's (1985) argument that the symbolic expression of  
6 boundaries reinforces people's sense of community. However, this research contradicts  
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8 Bauman's (2001) argument that modern communities lack a prolonged effect. Bauman  
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10 (2001) suggested that individuals live their lives in episodes, and where community does  
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12 exist, it lacks longevity. Although the collective experience of attending U2's shows is  
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14 episodic, due to the periodic and temporary nature of their tours and shows, the results  
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16 show that U2's community simmers continually online<sup>3</sup>. This also contrasts with  
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18 Wichmann's (2015) notion that some [sports] communities, for example the participants  
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20 of the World Gymnaestrada, 'hibernate' throughout the period in between events, in that  
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22 U2's community remains active online perpetually but their activity increases and  
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24 intensifies, and therefore comes to a boil, both before and during the band's tours. The  
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26 online simmering is significant in terms of U2's shows in that this activity prolongs the  
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28 sense of community between tours.  
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38 The findings suggest that U2's shows provide an intense feeling of community that is  
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40 expressed in the fans' social interactions and their reactions to the band's performances.  
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42 This contributes to a form of 'collective effervescence' by creating a transformative  
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44 spiritual experience in terms of the fans' feeling a sense of belonging to something bigger  
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46 than themselves (Durkheim, 1912). The collective excitement experienced by U2 fans  
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48 further disputes Bauman's (2001) notion that modern societies are increasingly focused  
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50 on the individual and that communities are fragmented and fluid.  
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58 <sup>3</sup> Some of these ideas have been developed from those published previously in Williams, M. (2015) 'One  
59 but not the same: U2 Concerts, Community and Cultural Identity', in Merkel, U. (Ed.) *Identity*  
60 *Discourses and Communities in International Events, Festivals and Celebrations*, Basingstoke:  
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3 Furthermore, this research has confirmed the usefulness of Turner's (1969) concept of  
4 'spontaneous communitas' for comprehending the sense of belonging of the U2 fan  
5 community. Turner's (1969) notion of 'spontaneous communitas' contributes to  
6 understanding how being part of the audience and engaging in shared ritual practices led  
7 to an intense feeling and sense of belonging. Moreover, Turner's (1969) ideas helped to  
8 explain how the '360°' shows provided a liminal space and invoked a communal,  
9 transcendent experience, which created a feeling of belonging to the U2 community. It  
10 can be argued that U2's shows provided a temporary form of 'communitas'. However,  
11 the findings suggest that a reworking of Turner's (1969) 'spontaneous communitas' is  
12 required in order to accommodate the perpetual experience of community that fans  
13 experience through online activities. Despite this, some fans resisted participating in  
14 activities such as the use of mobile phones and wearing masks in support of Aung San  
15 Suu Kyi that contributed to the sense of belonging to and experience of the U2  
16 community. Nevertheless, the '360°' concerts seemed to offer a powerful collective  
17 experience that extended beyond the concert venues, and was perpetuated in online  
18 conversations.  
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## U2's '360°' tour: An episodic and perpetual experience of community

### Abstract

This paper examines the concept of community in the context of a specific rock music event, i.e. U2's (2009-2011) '360°' tour. This paper examines the concept of community in the context of U2's '360°' tour (2009-2011). It contributes to leisure studies by offering a detailed insight into the production of, sense of belonging and resistance to a community in relation to a rock music event. Despite a growing body of academic research focusing on U2, understanding of their live concerts is lacking. The originality of this research lies in the notion that although the communal experience of attending U2's concerts is episodic, due to the periodic and temporary nature of their tours, the sense of belonging to U2's community simmers continually online. Furthermore, it argues that U2 intentionally exploit the notion of community in order to inspire their audience and gain their support for the various socio-political campaigns they promote. ~~that provided individuals with a distinct sense of belonging to a unique global community~~ Although the collective experience of attending U2's concerts is episodic, due to the periodic and temporary nature of their tours, the results show that the sense of belonging to U2's community simmers continually online.

~~The paper~~ It draws on online research of selected U2-related websites, in-depth semi-structured interviews with fans, an email interview with U2's sShow dDirector, and content analysis of documentary material as part of a wider project examining rock music events as contemporary spectacle. ~~Although the collective experience of attending U2's concerts is episodic, due to the periodic and temporary nature of their tours, the results show that the sense of belonging to U2's community simmers continually online.~~

Keywords: community, collective effervescence, communitas, U2

## Introduction

This paper examines the concept of community in the context of U2's '360°' tour (2009-2011). It contributes to leisure studies by offering a detailed insight into the production of, sense of belonging and resistance to a community in relation to a rock music event. Despite a growing body of academic research focusing on U2, understanding of their live concerts is lacking. The originality of this research lies in the notion that although the communal experience of attending U2's concerts is episodic, due to the periodic and temporary nature of their tours, the sense of belonging to U2's community simmers continually online. Furthermore, it argues that U2 intentionally exploit the notion of community in order to inspire their audience and gain their support for the various socio-political campaigns they promote. Like the concerts of many other rock bands, for example Bruce Springsteen and the Rolling Stones (Baker, 2009; Cavicchi, 1998), U2's shows provide individuals with a distinct feeling of belonging to a unique global community. Cavicchi's, (1998, p.158) ethnographic study explains how Bruce Springsteen fans' have a 'strong affinity for one another and a sense of belonging together'. He revealed that fans cite music and Springsteen's storytelling as forces that

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3 unite them, with live shows providing opportunities for fans to meet and interact in person  
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5 (Cavicchi, 1998, p.164-65).  
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10 However, this research focuses on U2's '360°' tour (2009-2011) due the band's  
11 intentional exploitation of the notion of U2 and their fans as a community. The idea of  
12 community is central to U2's existence and longevity as a band. The coda to one of the  
13 group's songs is 'there is no them, only us', which provides a useful example of how U2  
14 communicates a sense of community. It reflects their ethos and concern for global  
15 humanitarian causes, such as their support for Amnesty International. Cogan (2006, p.9)  
16 argues that 'U2's sense of being a community is one of the foundations of the band, and  
17 also one of its permanent features'. U2's success is due to their 'collective vision and  
18 common ground' (Cogan 2006, p.10). The band's identity is built on their shared norms  
19 and values, which include 'respect for each other, a work ethic and aesthetic codes' (p.12).  
20 Cogan (2006) suggests that community is evident within U2's concerts on two  
21 overlapping levels. Firstly, the band members and their support staff form a community  
22 and, secondly, U2 and their fans constitute a community. However, despite this, it is  
23 argued here that some fans resist the band's attempts to create a sense of belonging.  
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44 ~~Cogan (2006, p.240) argues that 'people who love U2 are fans but not fanatics. Most lead~~  
45 ~~normal lives, and have other things to worry about outside of U2'. However, she also~~  
46 ~~proposes that 'U2 fans have found an identity that differentiates them from other types of~~  
47 ~~fans' (Cogan, 2006, p. 208). In addition to an 'emotional relationship', U2 fans 'also have~~  
48 ~~an intellectual relationship', which is rooted in the longevity of their support for the band~~  
49 ~~and its brand (Cogan, 2006, p. 208).~~  
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58 -'U2 360°', the band's 17<sup>th</sup> world tour generated £600 million gross profit from 110 shows  
59 around the world. It was initially planned to take in 100 cities in locations in Europe,  
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3 North America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In January 2011, several additional  
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5 dates were announced, including South Africa, Mexico and South America, ending in  
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7 Moncton, Canada, in July 2011. U2 performed in some countries for the first time,  
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9 including Moscow (Russia) and Istanbul (Turkey).  
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14 In general, U2 concerts create opportunities for fans to come together as a real community  
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16 in a particular location and provide them with an intense feeling of 'communitas' through  
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18 collective rituals and knowing that they all share a common interest in the band, their  
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20 music and concerts. Notwithstanding this, the concert experience is temporary, due to the  
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22 short-term, periodic nature of U2's tours and performances. However, fans also form a  
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24 complex online community (Lizie, 2009). The numerous U2-related websites and forums,  
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26 such as 'Zootopia', enable fans to connect to a show, and form virtual emotional alliances,  
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28 which can lead to face-to-face meetings and the forming of long-term relationships  
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30 (Bennett, 2012). Online activities, such as contributing to U2 forums and, in particular,  
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32 set-list parties<sup>1</sup>, perpetuate and reinforce a sense of unique community. Furthermore, U2's  
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34 concerts heighten this feeling of community in terms of facilitating the shared experiences  
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36 and histories that are formed through attending the concerts and participating online.  
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45 Previous academic attention has focused on the management, rather than social scientific  
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47 analyses, of events (Andrews and Leopold, 2013; Lamond and Platt, 2016; Merkel, 2014).  
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49 Numerous subject areas, such as tourism, hospitality and sport, have examined events  
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51 (Getz, 2012; Horne and Manzenreiter, 2006; Roche, 2000). However, this qualitative  
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55 <sup>1</sup>Set-list parties are online gatherings where fans post details of 'concert set lists and other information  
56 as it happens, allowing non-attendees around the world to feel that they are part of the live event'  
57 (Bennett 2013, p. 52).  
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3 study lies within the emerging area of the social sciences of events (Andrews and  
4 Leopold, 2013; Getz, 2012; Merkel, 2014), and is underpinned by critical event studies,  
5 which ~~(Lamond and Platt (, 2016, p. 5) argue is 'rooted in a concern for the people and~~  
6 places impacted by events, not one steered solely by ideas of profit'). Numerous subject  
7 areas, such as tourism, hospitality and sport, have examined events (Getz, 2012; Horne  
8 and Manzenreiter, 2006; Roche, 2000).

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19 This paper was motivated and has been informed by the author's experiences as a long-  
20 time fan of U2, and his academic interests in teaching and researching events. As a fan-  
21 scholar, the author researcher has extensive knowledge and experience of U2's music and  
22 concerts, which helped to gain access to the online data and interview partners, as well as  
23 analyse and interpret the results. Critical reflexivity combined with detailed insider  
24 knowledge of U2 and their concerts helped to achieve an empathetic understanding of the  
25 fans' experiences of U2's shows. Firstly, this paper contemplates those concepts and  
26 theories that shape this research, focusing on community, 'communitas' and collective  
27 effervescence. Secondly, the band's contributions to the production and construction of  
28 the U2 community are investigated. Finally, the fans' comments relating to how they  
29 make sense of belonging to, ~~and~~ contribute to and resist the creation of a distinctive  
30 community are discussed.

### 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 ***Theoretical Considerations***

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53 Before examining the fans experiences, sense of belonging and resistance to the U2  
54 community, it is important to reveal the theories that underpin this research and to  
55 contemplate how they work together to create a framework for understanding music  
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3 events and U2 concerts in particular. Firstly, it is important to consider research that  
4 investigates the notion of rock music audiences as community. Secondly, Cohen's (1985)  
5 suggestion that community is symbolically constructed is contemplated in order to  
6 comprehend how fans contribute to and resist the production of the U2 community.  
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8 Thirdly, Turner's (1969) concept of 'Communitas' and Durkeim's (1912) 'Collective  
9 Effervescence' are examined to help understand the fan's experiences of being part of the  
10 U2 community. Finally, Bauman's (2001) notion of 'liquid modern communities' is  
11 considered in relation to the fans online and face-to-face experiences of community.  
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23 Previously, Bennett (2001), Frith (1981) and Lizie (2009) have analysed and  
24 conceptualised rock music audiences as communities. Bennett (2004) suggests that the  
25 notion of community can be applied to the analysis of music and youth culture in two  
26 ways. Firstly, community provides the means for individuals to convey their 'sense of  
27 togetherness' through associating music, identity and place. Secondly, community can  
28 be applied as a 'romantic construct', where individuals consider music as a 'way of life'  
29 and a source of community (Bennett, 2004, p. 224). Similar to Frith's (1981) notion of  
30 rock music creating opportunities for connectivity, Bennett (2004, p. 224) suggests that  
31 during the late 1960s, the hippie movement and their subcultural style promoted a 'sense  
32 of community'. According to Bennett (2004), this was evident in the movement's  
33 commitment to politically themed rock music as a means to promote socio-economic,  
34 cultural and political change.  
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51 Storey (2006) examines the notion of audiences as community in the context of 1960s  
52 rock festivals, such as the Human Be-in, Monterey Pop Festival and Woodstock Music  
53 and Arts Fair. While the rock musicians 'celebrated the size of the rock community, the  
54 record companies celebrated the size of the rock market' (Storey, 2006, p. 106). The end  
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3 of the bourgeois counter-culture in the late 1960s commenced with the commercialisation  
4 of such events. Storey (2006) highlights how, today, rock music fans form a different  
5 audience. He suggests that they are no longer a community but a market (Storey, 2006).  
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10 However, as several authors argue, U2's audience forms a distinct face-to-face, as well  
11 as online, community that is out of reach of the profiteers, in other words the community  
12 produces its own fan culture (Cogan, 2006; Fiske, 1992; Lizie, 2009; Williams, 2015).  
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18 Frith (1981) asserts that the idea of community is key to understanding the significance  
19 of rock culture. He discusses the notion of authenticity in folk music and the 'myth of  
20 rock community' and argues that existing theories of community, in relation to rock, are  
21 unsatisfactory (Frith, 1981, p. 164). Frith (1981) suggests that 1960s rock fans saw their  
22 music as authentic, as opposed to commercial pop music, which was seen as  
23 manufactured and inauthentic. For rock fans, the music 'symbolised a community' (Frith,  
24 1981, p. 161). However, according to Frith (1981, p. 164), a community does not make  
25 music but instead provides 'communal experiences'. Rock community refers to a  
26 'sensation', rather than a group of people or particular institution (Frith, 1981, p. 164).  
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40 In addition to concepts of community that are concerned with traditional, 'simple'  
41 audiences, some researchers have focused on online audiences (Lizie, 2009), and on the  
42 convergence of fandom and technology within the live music experience (Bennett, 2012;  
43 2017). Lizie's (2009, p. 1) research examines U2's global online fan base and attempts to  
44 demonstrate the ways in which fans 'form an online community, create online identities  
45 and negotiate socio-political situations'. Lizie (2009) suggests that traditionally  
46 communities were defined by geographical location and ideas of commonality. However,  
47 he highlights that more recent conceptualisations consider communities in terms of social  
48 relations, rather than place-specific entities. Lizie (2009) concludes that online  
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3 community does exist amongst U2 fans, as in the social interactions between fans, rather  
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5 than a geographically situated ideal. Furthermore, he found that online identities are  
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7 created within the social structure of the community, rather than on individual preferences  
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9 alone.  
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13 By contrast, Bennett, (2017, p.127-142) examines the fans' experiences of Kate Bush's  
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15 'Before the Dawn' concerts in 2014. She acknowledges that some artists, such as U2 and  
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17 REM actively promote the use of mobile technologies as important parts of their shows,  
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19 whereas others, such as Kate Bush, discourage such activity (Bennett, 2017, p.129).  
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21 Drawing on Sandvoss's (2005, p.64) notion of 'Heimatt', a sense of warmth and  
22  
23 belonging', Bennett (2017, p.140) argues that fans' abstinence of the use of technologies,  
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25 such as mobile phones at concerts can be a 'Heimatic unifying force' leading to a more  
26  
27 'immersive and authentic experience'. She concludes that fans' use of technology can be  
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29 'manufactured as a powerful marker of taste and belonging', however this is subject to  
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31 change depending on the different fan communities and artists (Bennett, 2017, p.140).  
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33 These ideas are useful in order to examine U2's online community and fans' use of mobile  
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35 technologies at U2's concerts. However, it is also important to understand how fans  
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37 experience a sense of belonging to the U2 community.  
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45 Cohen's (1985) suggestion that community is symbolically constructed is a helpful  
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47 starting point for examining the complex dynamics of U2's audiences. He contends that  
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49 members of a specific community have 'something in common with each other' and,  
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51 share mutual interests, which differentiate them from other groups (Cohen, 1985, p. 12).  
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53 The community exists within the distinctions between commonality and difference  
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55 (Cohen, 1985). Customs, rituals and habits of a community mark its boundaries and  
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57 provide shared meaning (Blackshaw, 2010; Cohen, 1985). Cohen's (1985) suggestion  
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3 that community is symbolically constructed is particularly helpful for understanding the  
4 fans' sense of belonging to the U2 community, which is developed through their shared  
5 interest in the band, the individual members of U2, their music, style and fully lived  
6 experiences at live shows. The community's identity exists within the boundaries  
7 between commonality and difference, which is demonstrated in the fans' knowledge and  
8 (emotional) experience of U2's music and concerts (Cohen, 1985). Furthermore, the ritual  
9 practices, connections between fans and the band, and shared values form symbols that  
10 hold meaning for the fans, and constitute the essence and boundaries of the community.  
11 Cohen's (1985) ideas also help to understand how some fans resist being part of the U2  
12 community. Furthermore, Cohen (1985, p. 109) explains how community can  
13 'accommodate all of its members' without them feeling their individuality to be overly  
14 compromised. Cohen's (1985) ideas help to understand the sense of belonging U2 fans'  
15 experience, which is developed through their shared interest in the band, the individual  
16 members of U2, their music, style and fully lived experiences at live shows.

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37 ~~Previously, Bennett (2001), Frith (1981) and Lizie (2009) have analysed and~~  
38 ~~conceptualised rock music audiences as communities. Bennett (2004) suggests that the~~  
39 ~~notion of community can be applied to the analysis of music and youth culture in two~~  
40 ~~ways. Firstly, community provides the means for individuals to convey their 'sense of~~  
41 ~~togetherness' through associating music, identity and place. Secondly, community can~~  
42 ~~be applied as a 'romantic construct', where individuals consider music as a 'way of life'~~  
43 ~~and a source of community (Bennett, 2004, p. 224). Similar to Frith's (1981) notion of~~  
44 ~~rock music creating opportunities for connectivity, Bennett (2004, p. 224) suggests that~~  
45 ~~during the late 1960s, the hippie movement and their subcultural style promoted a 'sense~~  
46 ~~of community'. According to Bennett (2004), this was evident in the movement's~~

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3 commitment to politically themed rock music as a means to promote socio-economic,  
4 cultural and political change.  
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9 Storey (2006) examines the notion of audiences as community in the context of 1960s  
10 rock festivals, such as the Human Be in, Monterey Pop Festival and Woodstock Music  
11 and Arts Fair. While the rock musicians 'celebrated the size of the rock community, the  
12 record companies celebrated the size of the rock market' (Storey, 2006, p. 106). The end  
13 of the bourgeois counter-culture in the late 1960s commenced with the commercialisation  
14 of such events. Storey (2006) highlights how, today, rock music fans form a different  
15 audience. He suggests that they are no longer a community but a market (Storey, 2006).  
16 However, as several authors argue, U2's audience forms a distinct face-to-face, as well  
17 as online, community that is out of reach of the profiteers, in other words the community  
18 produces its own fan culture (Cogan, 2006; Fiske, 1992; Lizie, 2009; Williams, 2015).  
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33 Frith (1981) asserts that the idea of community is key to understanding the significance  
34 of rock culture. He discusses the notion of authenticity in folk music and the 'myth of  
35 rock community' and argues that existing theories of community, in relation to rock, are  
36 unsatisfactory (Frith, 1981, p. 164). Frith (1981) suggests that 1960s rock fans saw their  
37 music as authentic, as opposed to commercial pop music, which was seen as  
38 manufactured and inauthentic. For rock fans, the music 'symbolised a community' (Frith,  
39 1981, p. 161). However, according to Frith (1981, p. 164), a community does not make  
40 music but instead provides 'communal experiences'. Rock community refers to a  
41 'sensation', rather than a group of people or particular institution (Frith, 1981, p. 164).  
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54 This paper also draws upon Turner's (1969, p. 360) notion of 'communitas', which is  
55 especially relevant and insightful for examining the fans' experiences of U2's concerts  
56 due to its focus on rock music culture. Being part of the audience, and engaging in shared  
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customs such as clapping, singing and chanting, provides fans with an intense form of 'spontaneous communitas' (Turner, 1969, p. 360). Turner (1969, p. 360) suggests 'communitas' exists as a 'moment in and out of time and in and out of secular structure'. Rock fans experience 'communitas' in the shared ritual activities of attending concerts such as clapping, singing and cheering and being part of a like-minded audience (Blackshaw, 2010; Sutton, 2000; Turner, 1969).

Turner (1969, p. 132) distinguished between three forms of 'communitas': existential or spontaneous, normative and ideological. He described spontaneous 'communitas' as a 'happening'. Normative 'communitas' focuses on establishing goals and organizing resources to achieve them. Finally, ideological 'communitas' is 'a label that can be applied to a variety of utopian models of societies' (Turner, 1969, p. 132). However, Eade (1992) suggests that not all forms of communal gathering constitute 'communitas'. He argues, in the context of pilgrimages, that Turner's notion of 'communitas' is inadequate to address the differential roles within a group and suggests that a more critical and differentiated examination of 'communitas' is required (Eade, 1992). Nevertheless, this paper utilises the notion of 'spontaneous communitas' as this is most suitable for labelling the findings of this research due to Turner's (1969, p. 138) suggestion that the 'beats' and the 'hippies' used the symbols and 'liturgical actions' of rock music and technologies, such as 'flashing lights' to create a sense of community. Turner (1969, p. 138) argued that the hippies were trying to create a 'transformative experience', the essence of which was 'communal and shared'. He suggested that the form of 'communitas' pursued by the hippies within their gatherings was more profound than the 'pleasurable and effortless comradeship' that can occur at any time between friends (Turner, 1969, p. 138). However, contrary to Turner's (1969, p.203) proposition that 'the

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3 closest we may ever get to sustained communitas' is in 'countless and transient  
4 encounters', this paper argues that the U2 community simmers continually online.  
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9 This research also draws upon Durkheim's (1912) notion of 'collective effervescence' in  
10 order to contribute to a better understanding of the communal and spiritual aspects of  
11 U2's shows. Durkheim (1912) suggested that religion is formed by instances of  
12 'collective effervescence', which refers to the outcome of individuals within a social  
13 group uniting in order to perform religious rituals. This creates a form of 'collective  
14 excitement'. Durkheim (1912, pp. 217-18) argues that 'the very act of congregating is an  
15 exceptionally powerful stimulant. Once the individuals are gathered together, a sort of  
16 electricity is generated from their closeness and quickly launches them to an extraordinary  
17 height of exaltation'. The concept of collective effervescence is similar to Turner's (1969,  
18 p. 360) notion of 'communitas'. Olaveson (2001) highlights a number of parallels  
19 between the two concepts. Firstly, he suggests that both ideas refer to 'an intense  
20 emotional surge, and a type of collective delirium or ecstasy'. Secondly, he argues that  
21 'collective effervescence and 'communitas' are social realities' that 'exist outside the  
22 normal social existence of groups'. Thirdly, he acknowledges the collective nature of both  
23 concepts and refers to their immediate, spontaneous and temporary nature (Olaveson,  
24 2001, p. 107). These ideas will be applied in order to examine the fans' experiences of  
25 attending U2's concerts and how they contribute to the sense of belonging to a  
26 community.  
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52 Finally, this paper draws upon Bauman's (2001) notion of 'liquid modern communities'  
53 to aid an understanding the temporal dynamics of the U2 community. Bauman (2001)  
54 proposes that modern societies are increasingly focused on the individual and that  
55 communities have become fragmented and fluid. He suggests that individuals experience  
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3 their lives in episodes and, where community does exist, it lacks a prolonged effect.  
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5 Bauman's (1992, 2001 and 2007) ideas are important because they relate to the cyclical  
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7 and temporary nature of U2's touring and how their concerts offer fans the opportunity  
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9 to come together, more or less frequently, as a face-to-face community. However, as will  
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11 be shown, the U2 community simmers continually online.  
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17 The theories that underpin this research provide a framework for understanding  
18 community in the context of music events and U2 concerts in particular on four levels.  
19 Firstly, Bennett (2001; 2004), Bennett (2017); Frith (1981); Storey (2006) and Lizie's  
20 (2009) research helps to comprehend the notion of a rock music audience as a community.  
21 Secondly, Cohen's (1985) notion that community is symbolically constructed assists in  
22 understanding how the fans contribute to and resist the production of the U2 community.  
23 Thirdly, Turner's (1969) concept of Spontaneous Communitas and Durkheim's (1912)  
24 Collective Effervescence aid in understanding the fans experiences of being part of the  
25 U2 community. Finally, Bauman's (1992, 2001; 2007) notion of liquid modern  
26 communities help to comprehend how the U2 community is perpetuated online.  
27 However, bBefore examining the production of the U2 community, and the fans'  
28 comments relating to their sense of belonging to it, to the U2 community, it is necessary  
29 to consider- the research methodology and methods. the uniqueness of the U2 community.  
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## 51 Research Methodology and Methods

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55 This research adopts a critical interpretive perspective, as it aims to understand the  
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57 production of, fans experiences, sense of belonging and resistance to the U2 community.

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59 This paper utilises a blend of netnography and ethnography, while examining four  
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3 concerts in different geographic regions and in different legs of the tour. The research  
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5 settings include Dublin, which happened in 2009, Istanbul and Moscow (2010), and  
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7 Pittsburgh (2011). Rich qualitative data were collected in three phases, including online  
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9 research of selected U2-related websites, in-depth semi-structured interviews with 26  
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11 fans, which were conducted via Skype, an email interview with Willie Williams, U2's  
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13 show director and a qualitative content analysis of documentary material including U2's  
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15 official tour book 'From the Ground Up: U2360° Tour', and the '360 Manifesto', which  
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17 described the producers' vision for the tour. The fans that were interviewed are  
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19 referred to by pseudonyms to protect their identity. The locations of the concert/s that  
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21 they attended are indicated in brackets, following their name. Data gathered from U2  
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23 related websites are acknowledged as online comments. The key research questions of  
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25 this paper are to understand firstly, how the band and their collaborators try to produce  
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27 and construct a distinctive U2 community and secondly, how the fans experience, make  
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29 sense of and resist being part of this.  
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### 36 37 ***Producing the U2 Community*** 38 39 40

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42 The following provides a detailed insight into the production of the U2 community from  
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44 the band and their associates perspectives. It presents the results from an email interview  
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46 with U2's show director, Willie Williams and analyses and interprets the 'U2 360  
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48 Manifesto', a document provided by Williams, explaining his vision for the tour.  
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50 Furthermore, this section examines the data from a thematic analysis of the written text  
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52 of the '360°' tour official photo book, written by music journalist, Dylan Jones. U2 have  
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54 always been aware of the importance of, and have developed their careers by, connecting  
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56 with their audiences within their live performances. As Cogan (2006, p. 28) suggests, 'the  
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58 idea of community is also apparent during [U2's] live concerts'. She argues that the fans  
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3 become part of the community when the band interacts with them. Williams, U2's show  
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5 director explained to me that '*spectacle should not be a stand-alone experience nor one*  
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13 to the '360°' tour. He refers to Bono, U2's lead singer, who commented that the band is  
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15 'about community' (Jones, 2012, p. 24). Jones (2012, p. 236) describes how Bono  
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17 acknowledged the band and their entourage as 'so very obviously a community'. Bono  
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19 explained that 'community is so important, and I suppose we look on everyone who works  
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21 with us as a family, and as a way of not being corporate'. Bono's comment acknowledges  
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23 that U2 is a corporate brand, however, the notion of community enables them to operate  
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25 in a non-corporate manner in that the band share a collective and artistic vision, and are  
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27 'part of a community of artists, of musicians, as well as friends' (Cogan, 2006, pp. 11-12;  
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Khare and Popovich, 2012).

Moreover, Bono acknowledged the significance of community in relation to the band's values and beliefs. He explained that 'this band is about joy, it's about community, it's about loyalty. And it's very powerful to be with the same people for such a long time' (quoted in Jones, 2012, pp. 236-7). Furthermore, Jones (2012, p. 32) recognises that there is 'always a sense that if he [Bono] (and indeed they) [the band] had had the time, he would have embraced every single person in the audience'. Commenting on the band's live performances, Jones (2012, p. 204) remarks that 'with U2, the experience for both band and audience was always about communion'. ~~He refers to a conversation in which Bono explained this connection:~~

~~Ever since the eighties we've been trying to change the live experience [...] All of that climbing on speakers, that's all about me. About smashing the barrier between the audience and us. They're not content with this space on stage. They try and get rid of the distance between the audience and the stage [...] It's about emotional proximity as much as physical proximity. It's about the emotional connection (quoted in Jones, 2012, p. 204).~~

In the email interview, Williams stressed the importance of music for individuals, as well as the benefits of *'the communal witnessing of such songs being performed live by their creators'*. He suggested that this *'brings great opportunity to create an environment that can communicate with the human soul on multiple levels'*. Williams's use of terms such as 'communal witnessing', 'creators', and 'soul' acknowledges religious and spiritual elements of U2's '360°' show. Furthermore, Hebdige's (1979) contention that meaning is produced in the ways in which music is used helps to explain Williams's comments. The intention of U2's shows seems to be to create meaning by establishing a spiritual and emotional connection between the band and their fans. These comments highlight the importance of the notion of community within U2's '360°' show.

~~Jones (2012, p. 32) explained that the stage was meant to enable the band to connect with the audience; 'in a way, with 360, and in particular with the spectacular invention that will always be forever known as 'The Claw', he [Bono] was able to touch everyone at once'.~~

~~Williams expanded on this point. He compares 'rock and roll' shows to sporting events and acknowledged that:~~

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3 sport has an advantage over rock and roll in that no one knows how it's going to  
4 end, but what sport lacks is an MC, a shaman, a single person to focus and direct  
5 the energy of the crowd in a tangible way.  
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9 Moreover, Williams explained;

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13 An early analogy for the stage was to function as a Baldachin<sup>2</sup>. The covered place  
14 beneath which the priests or shaman produce the magic which transforms the  
15 wider space, creating the experience which unites the viewers. Through the music  
16 and this possibility of being face-to-face, we call down 'God' or energy or juju,  
17 however perceived, to create an experience larger than the sum of its parts. In a  
18 sense we let go. We challenge the audience. The responsibility for creating the  
19 experience is theirs as much as ours.  
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24 Williams makes an interesting point as he describes Bono as a secular 'shaman', who  
25 directs the energy of the crowd, and produces the magic within U2's shows. Eliade (2004,  
26 p. 4) refers to shamanism as 'technique of ecstasy'. Shamans are spiritual leaders who are  
27 able to heal and 'perform miracles' (Eliade, 2004, p. 4). Furthermore, he explains that  
28 shamans are 'persons who stand out in their respective societies by virtue of  
29 characteristics that, in the societies of modern Europe, represent the signs of a vocation  
30 or at least of a religious crisis' (Eliade, 2004, p. 8). He argues that shamans are 'separated  
31 from the rest of their community by the intensity of their own religious experience'  
32 (Eliade, 2004, p. 8). The findings suggest that the term shaman, as an artistic and spiritual  
33 leader, can be applied in a secular context to describe Bono's influence on U2's audiences  
34 due to his role as a celebrity and his religious background. U2's shows seem to provide  
35 an opportunity for Bono and U2 to 'touch' the audience both spiritually and emotionally  
36 by performing their songs.  
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<sup>2</sup>A canopy that covers a sacred place.

~~U2 produce a sense of community by interacting with fans during their shows. Band members, and in particular Bono, create a connection with fans by moving around the stage, making eye contact with their audience, singing to them, touching their hands and directing their performances at fans in different parts of the concert venue (Cogan 2006, p.28). Bono often invites fans on stage during U2's concerts. Cogan (2006, p.18) suggests that by doing his he 'makes them part of the U2 family'.~~

Williams outlined the 'physical parameters' of the '360°' tour design that contributed to the sense of community. He explained that 'the largest part of the backdrop to the performance is composed of other people, sharing the same experience. This is unusual at this scale and presents great opportunity'. Williams also explained the 'overt[ly] political' nature of U2's previous tours, which sought to inspire 'the viewers to future action outside the concert'. He commented that 'in these new, fragmented times, perhaps we can find another direction'. Furthermore, he referred to the notion of being 'in the moment' and poses the challenge of 'turn[ing] this unusual situation of facing so many other people into something larger than the stadium, but in a completely different way'.

He also suggested that:

The idea of giving the audience something to do is interesting and valid. However, instead of this being something to do individually and on some future occasion, perhaps there is mileage in the idea of getting them to do something en masse, right in the moment.

Moreover, Williams explained:

The meta-narrative of the show becomes a challenge to the audience to achieve lift off; can we, here, now, together create something larger than ourselves? Not for the future, not for the world but what can we be, right in this moment? Instructions. Create expectation. Bring something.

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3 Williams proposed a number of 'simple, practical ideas' for crowd participation; for  
4 example; 'Mexican waves, cell phone 'morse code' (flicking lighters), singing, chanting  
5 together (Unknown Caller), shirt waving (Polish flag), passing things through the crowd,  
6 non-language based'.  
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14 Jones (2012, p. 119) remarked that 'one of the highlights of the show soon became the  
15 Aung San Suu Kyi moment'. He describes the producers' initiative to encourage fans to  
16 wear a mask displaying the face of the Burmese leader, to 'help raise awareness and show  
17 solidarity' for her (Jones, 2012, p. 119). Fans were asked to 'wear it at work or college;  
18 wear it on the bus or the train', and to 'bring it to a U2 show' (Jones, 2012, p. 119). Jones  
19 (2012, p. 119) comments that every night the band 'would make a dramatic call for her  
20 release, as a procession of volunteers from Bono's One advocacy organization and  
21 members of Amnesty International, along with local volunteers paraded around the stage  
22 wearing masks with her image on'. Moreover, Williams describes the development of  
23 one of the interactive segments of the concert, which involved the audience using their  
24 mobile [cell] phones during the band's 'Moment of Surrender' song, to create a visual  
25 effect, which contributed to the spectacle. Jones (2012, p. 132) expounds:  
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44 At the start of the song, Bono would ask the audience to take out their cell phones  
45 and then call to Willie to turn out the lights. This was the moment when Bono got  
46 the crowd to create an electronic milky way, a night sky on Earth. When U2 used  
47 to tour, the audience held lighters and matches aloft to pledge their allegiance, but  
48 since the world went digital they have used mobiles.  
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53 U2 produce a sense of community by interacting with fans during their shows. Band  
54 members, and in particular Bono, create a connection with fans by moving around the  
55 stage, making eye-contact with their audience, singing to them, touching their hands and  
56 directing their performances at fans in different parts of the concert venue (Cogan 2006,  
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3 p.28). Bono often invites fans on stage during U2's concerts. Cogan (2006, p.18) suggests  
4 that by doing his he 'makes them part of the U2 family'. Furthermore, the band and their  
5 producers designed aspects of the '360°' concerts, such as encouraging the lighting up of  
6 mobile phones and wearing masks of Aung San Suu Kyi to promote a sense of community  
7 and intentionally exploit this in order to inspire the audience to engage in the socio-  
8 political campaigns they support.  
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### 16 17 18 19 20 21 ***Belonging to, ~~and~~ experiencing and resisting the U2 Fan Community*** 22 23 24 25 26 27

28 In addition to comprehending the production and construction of the U2 community, it is  
29 also important to ~~consider the fans' sense of belonging to, an~~ critically examines the fans'  
30 sense of belonging, experiences of and resistance to the U2 fan community. The  
31 following presents, analyses and interprets the findings from the online data of fans'  
32 comments and discussions relating to U2's '360°' tour and semi-structured interviews  
33 with selected fans.  
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### 42 43 ***Belonging*** 44 45 46 47

48 Attending U2's '360°' shows provided individuals with a distinct feeling of belonging to  
49 a unique global community. Fans ~~experienced, and~~ referred to, this community in a  
50 number of different ways. Firstly, ~~t~~they explicitly pointed out the sense of community  
51 and belonging they felt at the concerts. For example, in a review of the Dublin shows, an  
52 online commentator suggested that U2's concerts provide fans with a '*sense of*  
53 *homecoming*' and '*belonging*' or '*community*'. Ron (Pittsburgh and Dublin) described his  
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3 attendance at U2's '360°' show as a '*community thing. We all feel it and it is something*  
4 *that you can't quantify and you just feel it*'. For Sarah (Dublin), '*it was definitely like a*  
5 *sort of community feeling and, um, being part of something you know bigger than myself,*  
6 *like part of a greater whole*'.

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14 Frith (1996) highlights the connection between music, identity and emotion, which helps  
15 to explain Sarah's (Dublin) comments. He argues that 'in responding to a song, we are  
16 drawn, haphazardly, into emotional alliances with the performers and with the performers'  
17 other fans' (Frith, 1996, p. 121). However, Frith's (1996) comments focus on listening to  
18 rock music, rather than its live performance and therefore do not account for the emotions  
19 experienced at rock concerts. Nevertheless, that emotional connectivity is, of course, a  
20 precondition for one's desire to attend a live concert.

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32 ~~The sense of community was created by the fans' engagement with the concert experience~~  
33 ~~as well as connection to other people. Breda (Istanbul) explained how meeting other U2~~  
34 ~~fans enhanced her experience of the show: 'the crowd was fantastic, because we were~~  
35 ~~bonding together. We didn't know each other before the show. But after that and during~~  
36 ~~the show we were getting closer'. Crossley's (2015, p. 41) notion of 'network foci' is~~  
37 ~~useful for understanding the sense of belonging that Breda (Istanbul) experienced at U2's~~  
38 ~~show. Crossley (2015, p. 41) explains that 'individuals' tastes will draw them to common~~  
39 ~~spaces (e.g. music venues) at common times (e.g. when particular bands are playing)~~  
40 ~~thereby increasing their likelihood of meeting and forming ties'. Sally (Dublin and~~  
41 ~~Istanbul) highlighted the importance of attending the concert with friends: 'it was also~~  
42 ~~the companions, the friends which made it so special'.~~  
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3 U2's concerts enabled fans to meet face-to-face, as well as initiate and consolidate online  
4 relationships. Dave (Istanbul) remarked: *'if I am going [...] to see a U2 concert, I do not*  
5 *necessarily want to go and watch it alone. It is a very communal and very tribal*  
6 *experience'*. Dave's (Istanbul) remark aligns with Bennett's (1999) notion of music  
7 communities as neo-tribes, which draws on Maffesoli's (1996) work. Bennett (1999, p.  
8 600) refers to music audiences as *'temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries*  
9 *and floating memberships'*. Petra (Moscow) explained how she bonded with other fans at  
10 U2's shows:

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22 *I did a few shows like so with friends, like French friends from the Fan Club and*  
23 *it was also like during the show we were together. I didn't know them before. I*  
24 *kept in touch on Facebook but I didn't see them between 360° and 'I+E' now. But*  
25 *we really connected during the show, which we were together and it was yeah like*  
26 *being with friends, sharing your passion and like [...] so jumping and singing but*  
27 *also having fun with your friends.*

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31 Petra's (Moscow) comment highlights the temporal nature of U2's gatherings, and how  
32 social media enabled her to maintain her connections with fans online.

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37 Some of the fans' social relationships extended beyond the concert experience. For  
38 example, Derek (Istanbul) commented: *'we met quite a nice Mexican family there that we*  
39 *are still in touch with now; obviously Facebook friends and the odd message here and*  
40 *there'*. Furthermore, U2's shows connected different generations. Barry (Istanbul) noted  
41 that the *'U2 show in Istanbul create[d] a sense of being, erm, united with the younger*  
42 *generations. I represent the older generation but the younger generations we were all*  
43 *together during the concert'*.

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56 In addition to relationships with other concert attendees, some fans remembered  
57 connecting with members of the band. For example, Vera (Moscow) explained that *'when*  
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~~there are so many people like [...] hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people standing there and all feeling the same, it is something special because you have a special connection with all these people and with the band'. Barry (Istanbul) remarked that 'Bono and Adam were looking at us [...], very nice experience and when we were waving hands or yelling they were sort of looking at us.' Petra (Moscow) 'remember[d] Bono stopping right in front of me [...] and looking at me, so that is something that I will never forget'. Similarly, Alex (Moscow) reflected on his experience of connecting with U2's bass player, Adam Clayton. 'Adam came round and he's really good, he makes a lot of eye contact with you [...] you kind of feel like you kind of connect with him'. Furthermore, some fans attempted to connect and interact with the band by displaying handmade signs to attract their attention.~~

Secondly, themes of compassion, caring and love contributed to and underpinned the sense of community within U2's shows. Fans expressed feelings of love in relation to U2's shows in their online conversations. One explained how they were 'wowed by the music, the spaceship & the love that was evident all around'. Some fans mentioned love in their description of the crowd's response to the band 'The crowd definitely showed the boys much love and they gave it back'. Sarah (Dublin) identified compassion as one of the main values within U2's show. Vera (Moscow) described her experience of this: 'all the people are really nice and lovely and you can feel it. People [...] well yeah, they care about each other. You feel like you are in a big massive family. You are like a family member'.

Alex (Moscow) argued that U2 promotes humanistic values within their concerts. He suggested that in addition to compassion, the band also promoted tolerance and love. Similarly, Sally (Dublin and Istanbul) commented that 'humanity, love, honesty, making

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3 *things happen, beliefs, connection [...] that sort of stuff [...] very sort of human values,*  
4 *you know. And friendship. And making like warmth, making bridges. Getting people*  
5 *together from other parts of the world'. Sasha (Pittsburgh) agreed and stated: 'I think*  
6 *there's always kind of a message of love and acceptance'. Furthermore, Petra (Moscow)*  
7 *suggested that trust is an important value within the U2 fan community. She explained*  
8 *that 'you have these fans from everywhere around the world. And you know you can trust*  
9 *them. I don't know why but U2 fans – the real ones – I trust them completely'. Lousley's*  
10 *(2013) notion that events can activate audiences by promoting values and ideas that offer*  
11 *an alternative to existing political and social ideals help to understand Sally's (Dublin and*  
12 *Istanbul), Sasha's (Pittsburgh) and Petra's (Moscow) comments.*

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Thirdly, fans referred to a range of norms and values they believe to share, which contributed to a sense of community and belonging. These included collectivism, friendship, caring, compassion, love and trust. As discussed previously, community was one of the key values promoted within U2's '360°' show, through the band's identity, music, speeches and visual images. John (Pittsburgh) felt a '*sense almost of one that we are all different but let's come together [...] I just keep coming back to community or being connected, together*'.

Fans also acknowledged how the band themselves represented collectivistic and friendship values. Vera (Moscow) remarked that '*the four of them together [...] work just perfect. The fact that they have stayed together and they are such good friends*'. She also revealed how she '*liked the [...] friendship and the family values they have [they] 'stick together' [...] like the song 'One*'. Moreover, fans remarked online how U2 promotes the notion of community in their music, actions and socio-political messages. Arthur

(Dublin, Moscow, Istanbul and Pittsburgh) explained: *'community, you know, I think that is a very clear message from the song 'One', and from the campaign 'One'*. These comments support Cogan's (2006, p. 9) suggestion that the notion of community is central to U2's existence and is communicated through their music and live shows.

~~*U2 kind of makes us think you are the same, like in brotherhood or sisterhood. So only because you are far away from someone, doesn't mean you have to be not aware of that pain. That is what they do with their campaigning, right. They shine a light on poverty and what is going on, right. So you kind of feel connected to humans in general, because [...] trauma people, you don't have to see them to show compassion or to feel happy for achievements or something like that.*~~

### *Experiencing*

Ritual practices, such as singing, chanting and clapping that fans engaged in at U2's shows, were a key factor in the way they experienced a sense of community. Moore and Myerhoff (1977, p. 7) argue that *'collective rituals are intended to produce at least an attentive state of mind, and often an even greater commitment of some kind [...] and have a social message and meaning.'* This helps to explain the role of ritual in creating commitment, and meaning, within the U2 community. The online discussions highlight that fans participated in a range of *'embodied activities'* (Paterson, 2009, p. 3). One of the most common practices was applause. Some fans complained that their hands were sore from clapping, whereas others acknowledged there was *'hardly any applause at the end of the show or when the band were on the bridge right in front of us'*.

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3 As well as applause, fans described other customs, including waving their hands in the  
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5 air. Referring to the Moscow concert, one fan expressed surprise at the audience making  
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7 a '*kind of "wave" similar to those seen in sport competitions*'. U2 shows clearly provoke  
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9 bodily movements and physical sensations, which can be described in terms of 'haptic  
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11 knowledges', which include 'internally felt bodily sensations' (Paterson, 2009, p. 3). This  
12  
13 suggests that in addition to visual and symbolic characteristics, the sense of community  
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15 provides a physical and emotional experience. Duffy (2014, p. 229) suggests that  
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17 'emotional and affective responses are integral to other processes of identity-formation  
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19 and social connection'. Furthermore, Ehrenreich (2008, p. 24), who examines the notion  
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21 of collective joy, suggests that 'to submit, bodily, to the music through dance is to be  
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23 incorporated into the community in a way far deeper than shared myth or common custom  
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25 can achieve'. That applies to the fans who embody the U2 community as a result of  
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27 participating in ritual practices, such as applauding, cheering and singing.  
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34 Remarks such as '*singing our hearts out*', and '*singing all night really made it*' explain  
35  
36 the significance of this activity. Others talked about how they appreciated singing along  
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38 with 70,000 fans, again highlighting the importance of shared experiences for some.  
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40 Another fan explained how there were '*some great moments, everyone singing Stand By*  
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42 *Me, Walk On was very powerful*'. Fans also referred to singing parts of songs with and  
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44 without Bono. For example, one described how they, along with the rest of the audience,  
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46 sang the first verse and chorus of '*Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*' without  
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48 Bono, which was '*awesome*'. Ehrenreich (2008, pp. 215-16) acknowledges the influence  
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50 of African indigenous music on artists including 'Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly and Mick  
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52 Jagger'. She refers to the 'polyrhythms, antiphonal<sup>3</sup> responses, and capacity for both  
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59 <sup>3</sup> Antiphon refers to a choral response  
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3 repetition and creative variation', which have endured through 'centuries of enslavement'  
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5 (Ehrenreich, 2008, p. 215). Ehrenreich's (2008, pp. 215-16) ideas highlight the  
6  
7 significance of the fans responses to U2's music in terms of the 'call and response'  
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9 between Bono and the audience. This is significant because it demonstrates how the fans  
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11 embody the U2 community vocally by singing and chanting. These comments exemplify  
12  
13 how fans reflected on, and shared, their encounters of U2's shows online. This suggests  
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15 that the online conversations and reflections reinforced the fans understanding and sense  
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17 of community through their shared experiences.  
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25 Sarah (Dublin) explained how *'it [clapping and cheering] contributes to*  
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27 *feeling part of something bigger than myself to me like the whole*  
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29 *community of the audience and feeling, you know, that sort of*  
30  
31 *togetherness and unity'*. Dave (Istanbul) referred to the *'entire crowd,*  
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33 *[...] they sang in unison with the singer'*. Furthermore, Breda (Istanbul)  
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35 commented: *'we had a great group who sang the songs together, who, you*  
36  
37 *know, said 'Yeah-Hoo' and we were acting together'*. These comments  
38  
39 demonstrate that being part of the audience, and engaging in shared ritual  
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41 activities such as clapping, singing and chanting, provided fans with an intense form of  
42  
43 'spontaneous communitas' (Turner, 1969, p. 360). These 'moment[s] in and out of time'  
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45 contributed to the feeling of community, which was also promoted through the band's  
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47 actions, music and messages (Turner 1969, p. 360).  
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54 Ron (Dublin and Pittsburgh) reflected on what prompted him to engage in activities such  
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56 as clapping and cheering: *'It is just a feeling, you just feel involved with it. It is part of*  
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58 *feeling you belong there. It is part of who you are'*. He also acknowledged the shared  
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3 experience of being lost in the music: *'it's a communal thing: you are all lost in the music.*  
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5 *It is just an amazing feeling'.*  
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10 Similarly, Alex (Moscow) highlighted an important point relating to the powerful  
11 spiritual connection he experienced at U2's '360°' show. For him, the shows seemed to  
12 create a sense of nostalgic community, which he gained by attending the concerts. He  
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17 explained:  
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22 *I think part of it is the sense of community, I do think that's very powerful. I don't*  
23 *think there are many places in life these days where you get a big sense of*  
24 *community, a big sense of belonging, a big sense of camaraderie. I think football*  
25 *matches do it, the very tribal and, I think religious activities, you know, churches,*  
26 *temples, synagogues because they provide that but I think that for most people*  
27 *that doesn't really exist anymore. I think concerts like that do provide that kind of*  
28 *human need or desire to connect or join with other people.*  
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34 Ron's (Dublin and Pittsburgh) and Alex's (Moscow) remarks highlight that, for some  
35 fans, the feeling of belonging that is achieved in attending U2's shows, constitutes a  
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39 spiritual experience.  
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43 As well as describing physical activities, some fans explained how watching and  
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engaging with the crowd reinforced their sense of belonging to and experience of the U2  
community. For example, Rick (Pittsburgh) commented: *'I also really enjoy the crowd, I  
like to watch the other people and usually, not always but usually, they're fun to talk to  
and you are sort of sharing that moment'.*

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3 Similarly, Alex (Moscow) reflected on the importance of being part of a larger  
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5 community, which highlights their contribution to the sense of belonging to and  
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7 experience of the U2 community.  
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12 *In a show you kind of get to a point and you, you just kind of take a moment out*  
13 *and you look around the stadium and you look at what everyone else is doing and*  
14 *everyone else is doing the same thing and you're like wow, I mean that's a*  
15 *spectacle more than the lights when you see everyone singing the same*  
16 *songs together and being part of something together, that's really powerful.*  
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21 Ehrenreich's (2008, p. 218) suggestion that rock music is 'a participatory experience,  
22  
23 rooted in an ecstatic religious tradition' helps to comprehend Alex's (Moscow) remarks.  
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25 Ehrenreich (2008, pp. 216-7) explains that rock music originates from 'ancient traditions  
26  
27 of collective ecstasy achieved solely through rhythmic participation'. Alex's (Moscow)  
28  
29 remark about the powerful effect of collective participation suggests that U2's shows  
30  
31 invoked an ecstatic state amongst the fans.  
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38 Furthermore, Durkheim's concept of 'collective effervescence' helps to explain the fans'  
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40 ritual practices and emotional experiences. Fans expressed communal excitement through  
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42 their physical and emotional responses to U2's performances. These responses were  
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44 communicated in the shared ritual practices, such as singing, clapping and cheering,  
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46 which added to fans' sense of community. For example, Breda's (Istanbul) comment  
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48 about singing songs together and shouting 'Yeah-Hoo', provides an example of collective  
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50 effervescence. The idea that U2's shows provide a form of 'collective effervescence'  
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52 contradicts Bauman's (2001) notion that modern societies are increasingly focused on the  
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54 individual and that communities are fragmented and fluid. U2's '360°' concerts united  
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56 fans in the stadium and online. Although the band's shows were temporary occurrences,  
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3 the U2 community simmers continually online. The '360°' tour produced collective,  
4 haptic moments of effervescence, which provided shared memories and experiences, and  
5 provoked a sense of community.  
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12 However, Steve (Dublin) highlighted the temporary nature of the sense of community  
13 fans experience:  
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19 *that last song er which was almost about people leaving the venue y'know "did*  
20 *not notice the passers-by and they did not notice me" y'know you just walk past*  
21 *people that a few minutes ago collectively y'know we were all kind of like friends*  
22 *that didn't know each other and then the shows over and you are going back to*  
23 *the car and you are alienated to an extent from each other.*  
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30 Despite this, Ron (Dublin and Pittsburgh) explained the importance of the sense of  
31 community; *'well basically unity, and that you can make a difference together. There is*  
32 *strength in numbers. And you know just look out for each other and be there'*. Ron's  
33 (Dublin and Pittsburgh) comments emphasised that for some fans the experience of  
34 community was not perceived as temporary, which further contrasts with Bauman's  
35 (2001) ideas.  
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46 The experience of community was created by the fans' engagement with the concerts as  
47 well as connection to other people. Breda (Istanbul) explained how meeting other U2 fans  
48 enhanced her experience of the show: *'the crowd was fantastic, because we were bonding*  
49 *together. We didn't know each other before the show. But after that and during the show*  
50 *we were getting closer'*. Sally (Dublin and Istanbul) highlighted the importance of  
51 attending the concert with friends: *'it was also the companions, the friends which made*  
52 *it so special'*.  
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5 U2's concerts enabled fans to meet face-to-face, as well as initiate and consolidate online  
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7 relationships. Petra (Moscow) explained how she bonded with other fans at U2's shows:  
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12 *I did a few shows like so with friends, like French friends from the Fan Club and*  
13 *it was also like during the show we were together. I didn't know them before. I*  
14 *kept in touch on Facebook but I didn't see them between 360° and 'I+E' now. But*  
15 *we really connected during the show, which we were together and it was yeah like*  
16 *being with friends, sharing your passion and like [...] so jumping and singing but*  
17 *also having fun with your friends.*  
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21 Petra's (Moscow) comment highlights the temporal nature of U2's gatherings, and how  
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23 social media enabled her to maintain her connections with fans online.  
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28 Furthermore, some of the fans' social relationships extended beyond the concert  
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30 experience. For example, Derek (Istanbul) commented: *'we met quite a nice Mexican*  
31 *family there that we are still in touch with now; obviously Facebook friends and the odd*  
32 *message here and there'*.  
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### 43 *Resisting*

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47 Although the use of technologies enabled fans to connect virtually, some online  
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49 commentators discussed the use of mobile phones and cameras at U2's shows and how  
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51 this impacted on their experiences. One explained that the atmosphere of the Dublin  
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53 concert was *'totally ruined by moronic fans with their stupid mobile phones held*  
54 *permanently aloft at the expense of punching the air and jumping up and down'*. They  
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3 continued, suggesting that *'with Bono even encouraging the use of the damn things at one*  
4 *point it only served to make the gig that extra bit dull'*.  
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10 Other fans commented how they *'missed half the experience'* due to picture-taking at the  
11 last couple of shows in Pittsburgh and Moncton. While mobile technologies enabled fans  
12 to become *'collectively connected'* to U2's shows (Bennett, 2012), they also appeared to  
13 detract from the sense of belonging by preventing some fans from engaging in collective  
14 activities, such as jumping up and down.  
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22 Furthermore, despite U2's attempts to promote unity and gain support for their socio-  
23 political campaigns, some fans resisted the band's requests. For example, Sally (Dublin,  
24 Istanbul) explained that there was a limit to Bono's influence over her actions:  
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32 *And well, maybe [...] maybe the limit for me goes like [...] even if Bono says like*  
33 *'Go in and sign to this site' I won't do it (chuckles) because of the principle I want*  
34 *to choose myself to which [...] things that I sign into. I mean I can [...] I am glad*  
35 *to see their concerts and several of them. But my limit goes there. He says like 'do*  
36 *this' and 'do this' like exactly! So then I am not very interested in that.*  
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41 Moreover, the band's support for Burmese pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi,  
42 formed a key part of the '360°' show. However, some fans were critical of U2's  
43 requests for them to show their united support for her by wearing masks of Suu Kyi  
44 during the event. For example, Xavier (Moscow) commented: *'I thought it was a bit*  
45 *gimmicky, you know what I mean?'*. Don (Dublin) made a similar comment:  
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54 *And in the early days there was the whole Aung San Suu Kyi mask arrangement,*  
55 *which I just didn't really think kind of worked well; I am not sure what point it*  
56 *was meant to [...] obviously what point it was meant to deliver. But I am not sure*  
57 *whether every 1 in 50 people or 1 in 100 people putting on a black-and-white*  
58 *mask actually [...] actually delivered anything.*  
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3 Don (Dublin) added:  
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5 *And you could see [...] he dedicated the song to her and her visuals were on*  
6 *screen at the time. And you can make the connection between the song and the*  
7 *message; yet he just wants to put up this bloody barrier of, you know, [...] putting*  
8 *the bloody mask on your face while he is doing it.*  
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12 These comments suggest that some fans resisted or were unable to participate in activities  
13 that contributed to the sense of belonging and experience of the U2 community.  
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15 McManus's (2015) research examining the use of mobile technologies and social media  
16 at football matches supports this notion. He argues that such technologies contribute to  
17 place making and community and that 'the politics of building a transnational fan  
18 community is increasingly predicated on mediating between 'virtual' and 'actual' spaces'  
19 (McManus 2015, p. 10). However, he suggests that fans interact with a sense of  
20 'distracted tactility' (McManus 2015, p. 10). Moreover, the findings of this research  
21 highlight the complexity of the U2 community underlining Bennett's (2017, p.140)  
22 suggestion that abstinence of the use of technologies, such as mobile phones at concerts  
23 can be a 'Heimatic unifying force' leading to a more 'immersive and authentic  
24 experience'.  
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45 ~~Correspondingly, an online commentator explained that his religious faith is 'not that~~  
46 ~~open to music' but during the concert they realised that they 'should except [sic] all of~~  
47 ~~their brothers and sisters'. This sense of empathy and awareness of other fans, also~~  
48 ~~expressed in Josie's (Dublin) comment, is an example of Anderson's (1983, p. 16) 'deep,~~  
49 ~~horizontal comradeship', in that it highlights that fans see themselves as part of a family.~~  
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56 This helps to understand the feeling of belonging and shared experiences of the fans.  
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3 The band invited a range of special guests, volunteers and fans on stage during their  
4 shows, which also promoted the idea of a diverse, global community. Sally (Dublin and  
5 Istanbul) noted that:  
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12 *When there was the local politician [Zülfü Livanelli] it was very moving because it*  
13 *symbolised the connection and it symbolised the humanity and the idea of bringing people*  
14 *together. And also like bring the band closer [to] the audience there where they haven't*  
15 *ever been before.*  
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33 *The bonds and friendships that developed during the concert experiences reflect*  
34 *Frith's (1981) idea that rock music provides opportunities for deep and intense*  
35 *connectivity. Furthermore, the practices of making eye contact with the members*  
36 *of the band and attempting to connect with them by displaying signs also supports*  
37 *Cohen's (1985) notion that community is constructed symbolically. However,*  
38 *Steve's (Dublin) observation that once the concert ends, fans feel 'alienated' from*  
39 *each other suggests that these connections are temporary. Despite the short-lived*  
40 *and episodic nature of U2's shows, fans revealed that some of the social*  
41 *relationships extended beyond the '360°' tour. This contradicts Bauman's (1992;*  
42 *2001; 2007) notion that modern communities lack a prolonged effect.*  
43 *Furthermore, the findings support Tollefsen's (2006, p. 198) suggestion that 'a*  
44 *U2 show leaves one with the sense of having participated in a "culture", to use*  
45 *Bono's words, a huge community in which all are one'. However, the friendships*  
46 *and bonds that exist outwith the concert experience contest his claim that the*  
47 *community is 'an image only, an appearance, generated by the powerful imagery*  
48 *of U2, but not, for that reason, more real' (Tollefsen, 2006, p. 199). This is*  
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~~important because U2's concerts seemed to offer a physical and emotional, as well as symbolic, experience of community. Thus U2's shows appear to offer both a real, and virtual sense of community.~~

~~Finally, the shared values and beliefs, including unity, compassion, caring, love, acceptance and trust, that were communicated within U2's shows strengthened the fans' commitment to the community. The findings reinforce existing research that suggests that the idea of community is central to U2's existence and longevity as a band (Williams, 2015; Cogan, 2006). The fans' observations about the friendships within the band support Cogan's (2006, p. 12) argument that their identity is built on their shared norms and values, which include 'respect for each other, a work ethic and aesthetic codes'. The results also uphold Cogan's (2006) suggestion that community is evident within U2's concerts on two overlapping levels. Firstly, the band members and their support staff form a community and, secondly, U2 and their fans constitute a community. The findings also suggest that U2's shows provide an intense feeling of community that is expressed in the fans' social interactions and their reactions to the band's performances. This contributes to a form of 'collective effervescence' by creating a transformative spiritual experience in terms of the fans' feeling a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves.~~

## **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the concept of community in the context of rock group U2's (2009-2011) '360°' tour. It has contributed to leisure studies by applying theories of community to comprehend the production of, sense of belonging and resistance to a community in the context of U2's (2009-2011) '360°' tour. It has argued that U2 intentionally exploit the notion of community to inspire the audience and gain their support. Furthermore, the paper makes an original contribution to leisure studies by contending that despite the temporary nature of U2's concerts, the band's '360°' tour

provided a powerful collective experience that extended beyond the concert venues, and was perpetuated in online conversations.

~~Cohen's (1985) suggestion that community is symbolically constructed helps to understand the fans' sense of belonging to the U2 community. The fans' common interest in and experiences of U2 concerts distinguishes them from other groups. The community's identity exists within the boundaries between commonality and difference, which is demonstrated in the fans' knowledge and (emotional) experience of U2's music and concerts (Cohen, 1985). Furthermore, the ritual practices, connections between fans and the band, and shared values form symbols that hold meaning for the fans, and constitute the essence and boundaries of the community.~~ The findings support Cohen's (1985) argument that the symbolic expression of boundaries reinforces people's sense of community. However, this research ~~results~~ contradicts Bauman's (2001) argument that modern communities lack a prolonged effect. Bauman (2001) suggested that individuals live their lives in episodes, and where community does exist, it lacks longevity. Although the collective experience of attending U2's shows is episodic, due to the periodic and temporary nature of their tours and shows, the results show that U2's community simmers continually online<sup>4</sup>. This also contrasts with Wichmann's (2015) notion that some [sports] communities, for example the participants of the World Gymnaestrada, 'hibernate' throughout the period in between events, in that U2's community remains active online perpetually but their activity increases and intensifies, and therefore comes to a boil, both before and during the band's tours. The online simmering is significant in terms of U2's shows in that this activity prolongs the sense of community between tours.

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<sup>4</sup> Some of these ideas have been developed from those published previously in Williams, M. (2015) 'One but not the same: U2 Concerts, Community and Cultural Identity', in Merkel, U. (Ed.) *Identity Discourses and Communities in International Events, Festivals and Celebrations*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan pp. 242-258.

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8 The findings suggest that U2's shows provide an intense feeling of community that is  
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10 expressed in the fans' social interactions and their reactions to the band's performances.  
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12 This contributes to a form of 'collective effervescence' by creating a transformative  
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14 spiritual experience in terms of the fans' feeling a sense of belonging to something bigger  
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16 than themselves (Durkheim, 1912). –The collective excitement experienced by U2 fans  
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18 further disputes ~~contradicts~~ Bauman's (2001) notion that modern societies are  
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20 increasingly focused on the individual and that communities are fragmented and fluid.  
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22 ~~Moreover, the findings demonstrate that Ehrenreich's (2008, p. 218) notion of rock music~~  
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24 ~~as a participatory experience is helpful to understand how fans embody the sense of~~  
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26 ~~community, which for some induced an ecstatic state.~~  
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33 Furthermore, ~~t~~This research has ~~also~~ confirmed the usefulness of Turner's (1969) concept  
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35 of 'spontaneous communitas' for comprehending the sense of belonging of the U2 fan  
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37 community. Turner's (1969) notion of 'spontaneous communitas' contributes to  
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39 understanding how being part of the audience and engaging in shared ritual practices led  
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41 to an intense feeling and sense of belonging. Moreover, Turner's (1969) ideas helped to  
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43 explain how the '360°' shows provided a liminal space and invoked a communal,  
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45 transcendent experience, which created a feeling of belonging to the U2 community. It  
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47 can be argued that U2's shows provided a temporary form of 'communitas'. However,  
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49 the findings suggest that a reworking of Turner's (1969) 'spontaneous communitas' is  
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51 required in order to accommodate the perpetual experience of community that fans  
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53 experience through online activities. Despite this, some fans resisted participating in  
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55 activities such as the use of mobile phones and wearing masks in support of Aung San  
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3 Suu Kyi that contributed to the sense of belonging to and experience of the U2  
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5 community. Nevertheless, the ‘360°’ concerts seemed to offer a powerful collective  
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