"She's god basically mother of this universe": The 'Authentic' Lady Gaga and the Re-evaluation of the Little Monster Fan Identity.

By

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ABSTRACT:

Lady Gaga is a gender-subverting and theatrical pop-star who cultivated a uniquely close subcultural bond with her fans, the Little Monsters, by embracing the 'monster'. However, in September 2014, Lady Gaga 'shocked' fans and challenged audience expectations of her as an artist by releasing a collaborative jazz album with Tony Bennett, *Cheek to Cheek*. This thesis is primarily concerned with critically investigating how Little Monsters received Lady Gaga's significant transformation in image and sound for the *Cheek to Cheek* era, and whether the jazz album impacted how fans perceived their fan-identity, the Little Monster community, and Lady Gaga. The following research questions were developed in order to gain an insight into the Little Monster identity: 1) "What is the relationship between the release of Lady Gaga's collaborative jazz album with Tony Bennett, *Cheek to Cheek* (2014) and the perception of the Lady Gaga fan-identity"; 2) "How did the change in musical genre and persona affect how Little Monsters perceived their identity"; and 3) "How did the fan reception of *Cheek to Cheek* impact the fan community and fan practices". An online questionnaire was employed and survey data was analysed in relation to a range of academic fields including identity, community, fandom, social anthropology, and postmodernism in order to critically analyse whether participants re-evaluated their Lady Gaga fan-identity. Often contradictory and conflicting results illustrate how participants received *Cheek to Cheek* in contrasting ways, as some Little Monsters expressed their desire for the return of the music which made the singer commercially successful, while other fans perceived the jazz album to an extension of Lady Gaga's identity. The divide participants experienced throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era meant that some Little Monsters felt isolated from the fan community, as they did not conform to the appropriate norms and fan practices.

Keywords: Lady Gaga, Little Monsters, *Cheek to Cheek*, fandom, fan community, authenticity, music, pop music, music fandom, popular culture, thematic analysis.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare this submission to be my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

Signed:

Blair Ian Speakman

27/06/2016

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Ooh, there ain't no other way, baby, I was born this way"

- Lady Gaga.

1.0 Introduction:

The purpose of this thesis is to critically investigate how Lady Gaga fans, the Little Monsters, responded to Lady Gaga's shift in image and sound for her collaborative jazz album with Tony Bennett, *Cheek to Cheek* (2014). Specifically, this research will explore whether *Cheek to Cheek* impacted how Little Monsters perceive their fan-identity and the Lady Gaga fan community. By analysing the data collected from an online questionnaire in relation to scholarship on community, identity, fandom, and authenticity, this body of research aims to provide an insight into how fandoms evolve over time, and whether this evolution impacts the perception of fan-identity, fan-relationships, and fan practices. This introductory chapter will outline the background and rationale for this investigation, the research question, what this study aims to achieve, the structure of this thesis, and key terms.

1.1 Background:

Lady Gaga is an Italian-American pop-star and music recording artist who achieved significant commercial success due to her catchy pop music, theatrical persona, and outlandish behaviour. Although Lady Gaga's pop image and music were inextricably linked to Little Monsters' consumption of her music and the way they perceived their own fan-identity, the singer 'unexpectedly' released a collaborative jazz album with Tony Bennett on September 14 2014, *Cheek to Cheek*, which was not in keeping with her previous album releases. This thesis will investigate whether such a seemingly contrasting transition in sound and image impacted the Little Monsters' consumption of the singer's music and persona as well as how they perceived their fan-identity.

I became a fan of Lady Gaga in 2008 after watching the music video for her debut single, *Just Dance* (2008), as I was enamoured with the song's catchy chorus. The singer's camp music and persona, messages of self-empowerment, and strong LGBTIQA-rights stance guided me throughout my formative years and played a critical role in how I understand

my identity as a young gay male. As a Little Monster, I regularly checked online forums in order to interact with other fans and discuss Lady Gaga's music. During the *Cheek to Cheek* era, I observed that the album appeared to polarise the fandom, as some fans appreciated that the singer demonstrated her 'true' talent while others claimed that anything outside of Lady Gaga's pop persona is 'fake' and not the 'real' singer. The Lady Gaga fan community is often framed as being a 'united family of monsters' by Lady Gaga, the fans, and the media, however, this anecdotal evidence of in-fighting between Little Monsters suggested a rift in the fan community. Consequently, I hypothesised that Little Monsters re-evaluated their fan-identity as they felt alienated from Lady Gaga, and decided to delve deeper into this issue to investigate the album's impact on how fans perceive their identity and Lady Gaga.

I explored academic literature on Lady Gaga and noticed that academic enquiry on the singer primarily focused on how Lady Gaga's ability to appear 'genuine' and 'real' through her social media posts and messages of self-empowerment allowed the singer to build and maintain the Little Monster community (Click, Lee, Holladay, 2013; Bennett, 2013). However, throughout the research process I discovered that there was a dearth of research on how Little Monsters perceived their identity in relation to Lady Gaga's shift in music and image throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era. Consequently, I pursued this issue further by exploring the aspects of Lady Gaga's image which made fans identify with her as well as examining whether fans felt alienated from the singer and the fan community.

1.2 Research Rationale:

Although a range of academic fields will be incorporated throughout this thesis, it will primarily fit into scholarship on fandom and popular culture studies as it is concerned with understanding Little Monsters' personal and collective ambivalence to the choices offered to them as consumers of popular culture. During the research process, it became apparent that although fandom received considerable academic attention, there are a number of gaps or areas which have been under researched. In particular, fandom studies scholars such as Duffett (2013;2014), Jenkins (2006;2008), and Fiske (1992) recognised that crucial aspects of fandom include individual's deep, positive, and emotional connection to popular media texts, the construction of a community, and the practice of certain behaviours. However, little attention had been paid to how the level of emotional connection to a popular media text differs between fans within the same fandom, if

multiple-fan identities exist within the same fandom, and how and why fandoms evolve over time.

This study will only provide a 'snapshot in time' of the Lady Gaga fandom, however, it aims to provide an insight into why fandoms evolve over time and whether this impacts how fans perceive their identity. In order to address these aforementioned scholarship gaps, this thesis will implement a postmodern identity framework (Hall, 1992; Kellner, 1992) in order to consider identity as being unfixed and unstable. By integrating postmodern identity theory with fandom and popular culture studies, this thesis aims to investigate whether multiple fan-identities exist within the Lady Gaga fandom, how they differ, and how this difference impacts the socio-cultural climate of the Little Monster community.

1.3 Research Question and what this thesis aims to achieve:

A primary research question and two sub-questions were developed in order to guide this study and address areas of scholarship which require further academic attention and debate:

1. **Primary Research Question:** What is the relationship between the release of Lady Gaga's collaborative jazz album with Tony Bennett, *Cheek to Cheek* (2014) and the perception of the Lady Gaga fan-identity?
   a. **Sub question 1:** How did the change in musical genre and persona affect how Little Monsters perceived their own identity?
   b. **Sub question 2:** How did the fan reception of *Cheek to Cheek* impact the fan community and fan practices?

The primary research question will serve as an enquiry into participants' notion of self-identity by investigating the relationship between *Cheek to Cheek* and the perception of the Lady Gaga fan-identity. The researcher then developed sub-questions in order to critically explore the fan reception of the jazz album, and how this reception impacted participants' perception of themselves, Lady Gaga, and the fan community. An online questionnaire with a mixture of qualitative and quantitative questions were designed with the purpose of answering this research question; survey data will be analysed using thematic analysis as well as existing contemporary scholarship in order to provide a critical discussion of the impact that *Cheek to Cheek* had on Little Monsters.

1.4 Thesis Structure:

Firstly, this thesis will conceptualise Lady Gaga as an artist in relation to wider socio-cultural trends, and discuss the construction of the Little Monster identity as well as how the singer continued to 'shock' fans by releasing *Cheek to Cheek*. The literature review will explore existing academic literature on identity, community, fandom, taste, and authenticity in order to provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the Lady Gaga fandom and fan-identity. This will be followed by the methodology chapter which will outline the methodology, research method, and research design of this thesis, as well as the results chapter which will provide an overview of the data findings gathered from the internet survey. Chapters six, seven, and eight will analyse how Little Monsters' reception of *Cheek to Cheek* affected how they perceived their own identity as well as the fandom. In particular, chapters six and seven are 'two sides of the same coin' – as both chapters will provide an insight into the often contrasting ways in which Little Monsters received *Cheek to Cheek,* there will be some overlap between the two. Chapter 8 will discuss how conflicting views regarding the album impacted the Little Monster community. Finally, chapter 9 will conclude this body of research, highlighting key limitations in the study, key findings, and areas for future research.

1.5. Key Terms:

A number of slangs, words, and phrases present in the Lady Gaga have been used throughout this thesis. A glossary is provided in Appendix I with definitions of these phrases.

For the purpose of this thesis, the terminologies, the Lady Gaga fandom, the Lady Gaga fan community, and the Little Monster community are synonymous with each other. As fandom can be regarded as a network, a collective identity, and a type of community (Coppa, 2014), this thesis will use the terms fandom and fan community interchangeably in order to refer to Little Monsters and their various fan practices.

The term, Little Monsters, refers to individuals who are fans of Lady Gaga. Consequently, this thesis will also use the phrases, Little Monster and Lady Gaga fans, interchangeably in order to refer to fans who "explore all aspects of Lady Gaga's persona" (Click et al,

2013, p. 368). Finally, as this study collected responses from Little Monsters online, it will specifically discuss the online Lady Gaga fandom.

Throughout this thesis, two specific terminologies will be used when discussing Lady Gaga's various personae including:

'Pop-Gaga': specifically refers to Lady Gaga's persona, fashion, live performances, music (in terms of aesthetic and song-writing) throughout her pop albums.

'Jazz-Gaga': specifically refers to Lady Gaga's persona, fashion, live performances, and music (in terms of aesthetic and song-writing) throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALISING LADY GAGA, THE LITTLE MONSTER COMMUNITY, AND *CHEEK TO CHEEK*.

> So the real truth about Lady Gaga fans, my little monsters, lies in this sentiment: They are the Kings. They are the Queens. They write the history of the kingdom and I am something of a devoted Jester – Lady Gaga.

2.0 Introduction:

"Since her arrival on the popular music scene in 2008, Lady Gaga has exerted an unmistakeable force on popular culture in the realms of music, fashion, performance, and social activism" (Click, Lee & Holladay, 2013, p. 367). Although Lady Gaga became a global megastar due to her avant-garde fashion and theatrical persona, the singer reinvented her image by releasing a collaborative jazz album with Tony Bennett, *Cheek to Cheek* (2014). This chapter will provide the context for this study's focus on the re-evaluation of the Lady Gaga fan-identity by discussing the construction of the singer's persona and her fan community, the Little Monsters, as well as explaining Lady Gaga's shift in sound and image for the *Cheek to Cheek* era.

2.1 The construction of Lady Gaga's persona:

The proliferation of mass communication and digital technologies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries intensified the tensions between authenticity and inauthenticity by facilitating the simulation of authenticity (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). In particular, the tension between authenticity and inauthenticity, as well as society's 'obsession' with the 'raw' is exemplified by celebrity culture, which can be defined as society's fascination with celebrities (Turner, 2004; Enli, 2015). This is because the rise of celebrity culture has contributed to the construction of a world of signs and images, which has posed the threat of inauthenticity; popular culture's fascination with celebrities, images, and simulations has blurred the boundaries between virtuality and reality (Rose & Wood, 2005; Meyers, 2009; Phelps, 2011; Soukup, 2006). While celebrities are culturally fabricated, paradoxically, consumers demand them to be authentic and appear

the same as their celebrity image as they are expected to be 'themselves' and 'act natural' while also being compatible with a particular format (Enli, 2015; Rose & Wood, 2005; Rojek, 2001).

Although the notion of a celebrity suggests that there is a division between the private and the public self, the rise of new media and social networking sites has blurred the boundary between celebrities' private and public selves (Beer, 2008; Rojek, 2001). In this period of celebrity and consumer culture, Lady Gaga has emerged as an entity who is aware of the contradiction of appearing authentic while also conforming to expected behaviours (MacFarlane, 2012). Lady Gaga is a persona constructed and used by Italian-American music artist Stefani Germanotta. Through this persona, Germanotta plays on contemporary notions of images and reality by blurring the boundary between the persona and the individual behind it (Burns, 2014). Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain whether audiences ever see the 'real' and 'raw' Germanotta, as the Lady Gaga persona has completely taken over. While the singer initially kept her past (Stefani Germanotta) in the past to ensure the success of the Lady Gaga persona, in later interviews and appearances she combined the persona of Lady Gaga and Germanotta so they are no longer separate entities, further highlighting how Lady Gaga plays on audiences' desire for celebrity authenticity (DiLonardo, 2011; MacFarlane, 2012; Burns, 2014).

Despite creating an identifiable style based on "the fantastical, bizarre, and grotesque" and "anything that creates a controversy" (DiLonardo, 2011, p. 7), Lady Gaga shattered the distinction between the performance of the figure on stage and her position in the 'real world' by constantly morphing her public image and personality (MacFarlane, 2012). According to MacFarlane (2012), Lady Gaga constantly reinvents her image based on music artists such as Madonna and David Bowie, and can be perceived as an accumulation of pop culture references. MacFarlane (2012) elaborated that Lady Gaga morphs on an almost daily basis in order to construct herself as a "postmodern repetition of images and sounds" as a way to disturb audiences by demonstrating that "there is no escape from this repetition" (p. 116). Furthermore, by blurring the distinction between reality and image, Lady Gaga has touched upon a "hypermodern disenchantment and appetite for the raw that continues to be fed by entertainment formats" (Corona, 2013, p, 746). In a period characterised by images, signs, and simulations, Lady Gaga can be perceived as "the inevitable product of the twenty-first century" (MacFarlane, 2012, p. 116).

Lady Gaga was perceived to be innovative as she was considered to be the first major star of the digital age by establishing a new approach to the production and marketing of pop

music (Shuker, 2013). According to Jameson (1992), innovation is linked to the perception of the cultural context at that time as it determines how a cultural product's originality is received. While celebrity musicians started interacting with their fans on social networking platforms such as *MySpace* prior to Lady Gaga's debut, the singer's use of social media was perceived as particularly innovative because she integrated her outrageous persona, bizarre outfits, high-budget music videos, and gender-bending and queer performances with the medium in a way which audiences had not been previously exposed to (Shuker, 2013; Click, Lee, & Holladay, 2013; Bailey, 2011). In particular, Lady Gaga generated significant social media attention by playing on internet rumours that she was a hermaphrodite, while also 'reviving' the music video genre into an advertisement for her music as well as being suited to the viral nature of the internet (Parker, 2010). By wearing multiple outrageous costumes a day, Lady Gaga was able to 'feed' audience's insatiable appetite for a continually updated image which ensured that she generated and sustained significant social media attention (MacFarlane, 2012).

As Lady Gaga generated significant public interest by integrating social media with her outrageous 'antics', she was claimed to represent a shift to the more traditional model of pop superstars from the 1980s because her singles and appearances became un-ignorable events (Popdust, 2013). In spite of this perception of innovation, the music industry pursues blockbuster models that favour what's been popular in the past in order to predict future hits as a way to ensure commercial success (Lieb, 2013). Jameson (1992) argues that cultural products can show a collective unconsciousness of the process of trying to create cultural texts that are a recombination of various cultural products, while also trying to create new cultural products which reflect the tastes of people in that specific cultural context. The contradictory aim between being new and a recombination of past hits is exemplified by Lady Gaga, who has incorporated aspects of David Bowie, Madonna, Michael Jackson, and Queen in her lyrics, music videos, performances, and fashion in order to construct a unique glam-pop aesthetic that can be defined as "neon-noir" (Corona, 2013; Jameson, 1992). The singer's ability to replicate decades of pop culture history in order to create a distinct identity illustrates how Lady Gaga follows previously successful music trends and formulas in order to attract and maintain significant commercial success (Lieb, 2013).

Lady Gaga balances her unconventional image and fashion by releasing commercial dance-pop music and collaborating with more 'conventional' peers like Beyoncé in order to sustain her mass appeal (Corona, 2013). Despite portraying herself as being an

'rebellious auteur' in control of her music, Lady Gaga can be regarded as an "identity that has emerged from a conglomeration of producers, managers, and music professionals that has been manufactured to appeal to a mass audience" (Fogel & Quinlan, 2011, p. 62). Fogel and Quinlan (2011) argue that Lady Gaga's persona has been constructed in order to 'lure' audiences to watch her music videos and purchase her songs, Lady Gaga posters and paraphernalia, and concert tickets. Due to the success and mass appeal of the Lady Gaga persona, the singer broke several music industry records including digital single sales, radio airplay, and touring. In particular, Lady Gaga was the first artist in the U.S music history to have multiple songs sell over 7 million while her debut tour, *The Fame Monster Ball Tour* (2009-2011), grossed over $220 million becoming the highest tour for a debut act ever, highlighting the significant commercial demand for Lady Gaga's theatrical persona.

2.2 Lady Gaga's relationship with Little Monsters:

The degree of intimacy that could be achieved between celebrities and fans was perceived to be limited before the introduction of social media, however, social networking sites such as *Twitter, Facebook* and *MySpace* had a significant impact on celebrity culture as they changed the production and the practice of celebrity personae (Anderson et al, 2013; Marwick & Boyd, 2011). In particular, web 2.0 facilitated a shift in the relations of music culture because fans believe they are able to 'hang out' and communicate directly with their favourite artists in the flattened environment of social media (Beer, 2008). "Social media has blown apart this millennia-long trade-off between reaching a mass of followers in an intimate way, and has created the opportunity for what we term "mass intimacy", as celebrities are able to communicate directly with a mass audience (Anderson et al, 2013, p. 28). Although this shift in celebrity and music culture "is not related to a particular genre, style, scene, or performer", social media has allowed for greater perceived connectivity between fans and celebrities (Beer, 2008, p. 233).

Social media facilitated a shift in celebrity management from a tightly controlled institutional model to the current model today where celebrities actively communicate with millions of fans (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). This can be seen with Lady Gaga who constructed an 'authentic' online persona by communicating her core values of acceptance and equality to Little Monsters which allowed her to create an intense sense of belonging with the fan community while also forming a reciprocal relationship with

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her 'acolytes' (Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Anderson et al, 2013, Wolk, 2011; Click et al, 2013). Lady Gaga's presence on *Twitter* created a sense of intimacy and authenticity with her fans as her posts convey personal and everyday details about her life, such as when she learned to play the piano as well as childhood memories. Due to this sense of intimacy, Little Monsters believe Lady Gaga 'actually' uses *Twitter* rather than a publicist, as they perceive their fan relationship with Lady Gaga as one where they receive direct and regular feedback (Click et al, 2013, Bennett, 2013, 2014)

"Music is sold on the basis of the pop star's identity" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 12), as their image can resonate with particular cultures or values, and offers individuals a sense of escape from everyday life (Shuker, 2013; Click et al, 2013). Furthermore, pop music fans' consumption of the personae of their favourite artists is inseparable from the experience of the music itself (Auslander, 2004). This can be seen with Lady Gaga, as she 'offered' fans a sense of escape by naming them Little Monsters and a community which they could voluntarily join. By framing herself as the 'Mother Monster' of the fan community, Lady Gaga attracted an audience of teenagers and young adults who felt confused and frustrated about their identities and saw her as a 'maternal figure' (Vozza, 2014; Click et al, 2013). Lady Gaga's strong anti-bullying stance resonated with millions of Little Monsters worldwide because her "messages are especially poignant in a social context where school bullying and homophobia persist and where suicide is one of the three main causes of death in teenagers" (Click et al, 2013, p. 377). By drawing on the figure of the monster throughout her performances, Lady Gaga simultaneously embodies cultural anxieties like bullying while also offering an alternative form of community and acceptance to her fans (MacFarlane, 2012).

Lady Gaga's 'normalisiation' of the monster can be seen as part of a larger trend in contemporary culture to 'de-monster' the monster (MacFarlane, 2012). The singer's embrace of the monster has resonated with her fans as they re-appropriated the term as a positive point of identification where individuals can celebrate their differences by communicating with other monsters, including Lady Gaga (Click et al, 2013). Ross and Nightingale (2008) argue that some fantasies serve to legitimate the individual's sense of self, which can be seen with Lady Gaga fans as identifying as a Little Monster can be a source of empowerment in the face of bullying and oppressive ideologies (Click et al, 2013). According to Meyers (2009) once the celebrity is positioned as 'authentic', the values and ideologies she symbolises also becomes 'real' and culturally resonant" (p. 895). This can be seen with Lady Gaga fans, as their identification as a Little Monster

allows fans to embrace the aspects of themselves often considered weird and their differences from society. Little Monsters make their interest in Lady Gaga as a way of life as they explore all aspects of the singer's persona, and they follow the singer's vision which includes accepting others regardless of sexuality and race (Click et al, 2013).

2.3 Why *Cheek to Cheek* was released:

Lady Gaga was initially praised for her theatricality, such as covering herself in blood during live performances and attending the 2010 MTV Awards in a meat dress (Miller, 2014). However, during the *ARTPOP* era (2013), Lady Gaga was criticised for being unoriginal and un-innovative; according to Caves (2000), innovation can be seen as creative products which are perceived to be unusually distinctive, satisfying, or opening new ground in the market. Despite being 'quirky' throughout *The Fame* (2008) and *The Fame Monster* (2009) eras, these albums made Lady Gaga accessible to general pop music consumers. However, *ARTPOP* and *Born This Way* (2011) were considered to be less accessible than her previous records, which meant Lady Gaga was perceived to bring nothing new aesthetically as she continued to use fashion and shock tactics to create controversy (Miller, 2014). Lady Gaga's image and style became predictably outrageous which meant she could no longer outdo her own grandiosity anymore, as audiences expected the singer to use shock tactics (Miller, 2014).

Although Lady Gaga initially attracted significant media attention and achieved massive commercial success, her bizarre behaviour and antics put off both fans and pop music audiences resulting in the perception that she had significantly declined in sales and cultural influence (Molanphy, 2013), highlighting the idea "the bigger the fad, the faster the fall" (Caves, 2000, p. 184). While *The Fame* sold over 4 million copies in the U.S and *Born This Way* sold over a million copies first week, as of 2016, *ARTPOP* has sold less than 800,000 copies. Lady Gaga was criticised by the media for having low album sales, as perception wise she was not meant to be measured by the same benchmark as her peers, as she was considered to be the "culture dominating, Madonna rivalling road warrior queen" (Molanphy, 2013). The singer appeared to maintain creative control throughout these album eras, however, the decline in sales emphasises the contradiction between being an artist and responding to the pressures of the market as Lady Gaga attempted to claim herself as an artist despite operating in a profit driven commercial industry (Shuker, 2013).

According to Shuker (2013), music artists' persona and image can evolve in a calculated manner in order to redefine a performer's audience appeal. This can be seen with Lady Gaga who redefined and reinvented her brand after underperforming with *ARTPOP* by releasing a collaborative jazz album with Tony Bennett, *Cheek to Cheek* (2014) (Lipshutz, 2015). Lady Gaga's jazz reinvention reflects Lieb's (2013) argument that in order for some pop stars to remain commercially viable they can "reform and repent or clean up their acts" (p. 101), as the singer 'toned down' her image for the album in order to sustain interest in her brand as an artist (Lawrence, 2015). Lady Gaga attracted significant media attention with *Cheek to Cheek* due to the 59 age gap between the singer and Tony Bennett, as well as the contrast between the singer's two personae, as although Lady Gaga is a quintessential pop star, Bennett is considered to be a 'living legend' and a star of a bygone era (McLean, 2015; Lawrence, 2015; Sun, 2015).

Instead of releasing a 'flashy' pop record after underperforming like most pop-stars, Lady Gaga went with an unexpected redirection as she showed a side of herself which contrasted with her early shock and awe antics; the singer created a new persona so bizarrely unsuited to her that she managed to surprise Little Monsters (McLean, 2015; Lawrence, 2015). Initially, media critics were sceptical of the collaboration as they were dubbed as an 'unlikely duo', however, audiences 'approved' of Lady Gaga's newest reinvention, which can be seen with *Cheek to Cheek's* success; the album debuted number 1 on Billboard's top 200 album chart, sold over 717,000 copies in the U.S and won a Grammy for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album at the 2015 Grammys (Sun, 2015). Although fan reactions have been briefly discussed by the media, there has been no discussion on whether the Lady Gaga fandom has had to re-evaluate their identity, lifestyle, and practices in relation to the significant shift in the singer's image and sound. It is the aim of this project to critically investigate whether Little Monsters reinvented their identity alongside the new persona, and how they re-conceived themselves as Lady Gaga fans.

2.4 Conclusions:

By integrating social media with her music videos, fashion, and persona, Lady Gaga emerged as one of the most global pop stars of the early twenty-first century, as the singer generated significant social media attention and forged a relationship with her fans that is unparalleled. The context chapter discussed Stefani Germanotta's construction of the Lady Gaga persona in terms of the persona's key characteristics, which was followed by

a discussion of Lady Gaga as a commercial product. This chapter then discussed how Lady Gaga constructed a close relationship with her Little Monsters through social media, her anti-bullying stance, and her appropriation of the term monster. Finally, this chapter discussed the media and fan reception to *Cheek to Cheek,* concluding that research is required in order to provide a greater insight into whether Little Monsters re-evaluated their fan-identity alongside the jazz album era.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction:

The emergence and development of fandom studies within academia has provided a valuable understanding of how identity can be conceptualised, as the relationship between an individual and their favourite popular media text can provide a deep insight into their social interactions with others as well as how they perceive their own identity. Fandom has attracted significant academic attention within recent years, as scholars have recognised how joining a fandom can impact how individuals perceive themselves and the social world around them (Duffett, 2013; Jenkins, 2006). Despite considerable research in this area of scholarship, a greater critical exploration of whether fans re-evaluate their fan-identity if they perceive their favourite popular media text to be inauthentic is needed in order to closely examine how fans re-negotiate their identity. By critically exploring a range of scholarship including identity, community, fandom, and authenticity, this literature review aims to identify areas which require further investigation in relation to the re-evaluation of the fan-identity.

3.1 Identity:

Generally, the meaning of identity is a highly conceptualised and difficult term to properly define (Lawler, 2014). Many prominent theorists have connected identity to a range of phenomena, which includes the individual's sense of self and the social categories they attach themselves too, as well as their identification with material possessions, their self-chosen or ascribed commitments, and how other individuals perceive them (Schwartz, Luyckx, & Vignoles, 2011; Lawler, 2014).

Significant debate around the definition of identity exists within cultural theory, and many well-respected scholars have proposed using social groups or categories to aid with differentiation or closer understanding of an individual's identity. Theorists such as Hogg (2003) and Stets and Burke (2003) suggest that these categories include ethnicity, territory, religion, age, gender, and sexual orientation. Hogg (2003) and Stets and Burke (2003) offered a positive critique of social identity theory, arguing that belonging to a particular group can influence individuals' attitudes, values, and lifestyle practices as well

as how they perceive themselves and others. Other theorists extended on these notions, noting that social identities can provide information on the similarities and differences between individuals. In particular, Akerlof and Kranton (2010) and Hawkins (2002) argue that identity can be based around the notion of difference as individuals identify their identity in relation to oppositions of sameness and difference, and in-groups and out-groups. By considering the tensions between individuals from different social categories, Akerlof and Kranton (2010) discussed how individuals are active in identifying with individuals who hold similar values, beliefs, or interests to them.

Although Hawkins (2002) explored some of the benefits of defining identity in relation to social categories, he also critiques this theoretical approach, arguing that it insists on "a structure of sameness" between individuals from the same social category (p. 13). Extending on this notion of 'sameness', Lawler (2014) was critical of social identity theory, arguing that it is problematic because it obscures the tensions within and between individuals by perceiving identity as a finished product. Lawler (2014) elaborated that instead, identities should be seen as "ongoing processes (and achievements) rather than as a sort of sociological system" (p. 10). Although Lawler (2014) recognises that "any discussion of identity always means we are in the presence of not one but many persons" (p. 8), he does not explore how multiple identities can exist within the same social category nor does he consider how the tension between these identities can influence how individuals perceive themselves and others within the social categories to which they belong. The scholarship that exists on social identity theory shows a lack of critical investigation of how the tensions within an individual identity as well as how the tensions that arise between multiple identities within the same social group impact how individuals perceive themselves and the social categories they belong too.

In his discussion of identity, Hawkins (2002) argues that it should no longer be divided into clear-cut groups or categories as identity no longer appears to be stable or fixed. Extending on the notion that identity is not fixed, Akerlof and Kranton (2010) theorise that identity is fluid because social categories refer to how individuals see themselves at the time, which means they can change their understanding of their lives and how they perceive themselves. Despite acknowledging the problematic nature of defining identity through social categories, neither Hawkins (2002) or Akerlof and Kranton (2010) discuss how the evolution of social categories impacts the individual nor do they discuss the tensions that arise from having a fluid identity.

Examining identity through a post-modern approach may have allowed Akerlof and Kranton (2010) and Hawkins (2002) to offer further critical evaluation of how identity is fluid. Hall (1992) attempted to delve into the post-modern identity, which he theorises is no longer thought of as being composed of a single identity, as instead, it can be considered as several, often contradictory or unresolved identities. Kellner (1992) too, elaborates on the how the post-modern identity tends to be more unstable and subject to change because it is constructed from the images and figures of popular culture, leisure, and consumption. Therefore, the post-modern individual lacks a 'core' identity as they are confronted with multiple identities they could at least temporarily identify with (Kellner, 1992). However, the application of post-modern approaches to defining identity is under-explored in the scholarship, as is research on why individuals temporarily identify with images and how they negotiate their various identities in a culture based around the images of consumption.

Identity theory has widened its approach since the proliferation of digital technologies in order to consider the role of online identities. Theorists such as Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) and Chan (2014) have raised concerns about the growth of online identities, as the possibility of constructing fake or misleading online identities raises issues of presence, absence, and authenticity. Chan (2014) was critical of online identities and relationships, arguing that they are perceived to be appealing because they act as a substitute for human embodied interaction, as individuals can construct an ideal self in order to attract other digital inhabitants. In contrast to Chan (2014), Waggoner (2009) recognised that virtual identities may appear as real to users as their offline identities because they may not perceive their virtual identity to be distanced from reality. However, Waggoner's (2009) perspective of online identities still considers it to be separate from reality, which is problematic as it creates a dichotomy between online and offline identities, similar to Chan (2014).

Cover (2016) is critical of this perspective of online identities, arguing that it is problematic because it suggests that online identities and relationships are secondary to offline identities, as they are not rooted in the physical world, and therefore, could be misleading or entirely 'false'. Furthermore, Cover (2016) elaborated that because online behaviour constitutes a sense of self and identity, online identities and relationships should not be considered as a separate activity from the embodied performances of the offline identity. Unlike Chan (2014) and Waggoner (2009), Cover (2016) acknowledged

that individuals' online behaviours, such as posting on online fan forums and fan boards, constitute a key aspect of their own identity.

Furthermore, when discussing online identities as being a performance, Waggoner (2009) and Chan (2014) did not incorporate Goffman's (1959) seminal study on a framework of identity performance. Goffman (1959) developed a framework of identity which perceives it as being a performance much like any other real life act. According to Goffman (1959), identity can be conceptualised in relation to two extremes; either the individual believes "the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality" or the individual is aware that their identity performance is a construction (p. 28). Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) applied Goffman's framework of identity performance in their analysis of online identities in order to demonstrate the problems with considering online identities as being a performance and offline identities as being the 'real' person. Individuals put on a 'mask' during online interactions and offline interactions, with the audience seemingly unaware that a different self lies beneath for a different situation (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013).

3.2 Community:

Similar to identity, the term community can also refer to a wide range of phenomena making it challenging to define as it is elastic and various in its definitions. Although the term community often refers to a set of social relationships that operate within specified boundaries, the concept is constantly evolving as it takes on new applications depending on the socio-cultural context (Day, 2006).

3.2.1 Conceptualising Community:

Despite significant debate around the definition of community, scholars have often proposed using place-based definitions in order to conceptualise it as being an entity rooted in social cohesion and strong patterns of social interaction. In particular, Bradshaw (2008) argued that place-based communities were built on formal institutions such as the government, economy, education, and religion. However, Bradshaw (2008) was critical of conceptualising community as being place-based, arguing that it is no longer useful to consider it as being fixed to a geographic location due to modernisation and digital technologies, which have resulted in a mobile society where individuals are linked by interest. Bradshaw's (2008) critique of community recognises that the solidarity among

people does not have to be tied to a specific geographic region or territory, as individuals have the ability to experience a sense of belonging with people they have not met or will never directly interact with.

In contrast to place-based communities, Day (2006) argued that 'new' communities are largely chosen according to taste and interests as people are increasingly constructing their identity and social relationships from the groups they have joined. Similar to the concept of place-based communities, Day (2006) posits that a sense of characteristics, identities, interests, and shared norms ensure that the 'new' community is maintained. A strength of Day's (2006) perspective is the recognition that there is a degree of voluntarism when joining a community, as individuals have the 'right' to leave a community if it no longer meets their needs. However, similar to criticisms of social identity theory, conceptualising community as being interest or taste based is problematic as according to Mooney and Neal (2009), it suggests that shared norms and identities are uniform among every community member.

In contrast to Bradshaw (2008) and Mooney and Neal (2009), Day (2006) is critical of defining community along shared interests and social norms as this approach obscures the tensions between individuals in a community. Day (2006) posits that "the strength of community does not consist in universal agreement, but in the way in which different social meanings are played off against one another" (p. 169). Similar to Akerlof and Kranton's (2010) discussion of social identity, Day (2006) discussed similarities and differences in communities, arguing that individual members associate themselves with others who feel share their beliefs and opinions while distancing themselves from those who contradict them. However, Day's (2006) study, as well as the wider scholarship on new and interest communities, indicates a lack of critical investigation into how conflicts in beliefs or opinions between individuals from the same social group impacts the wider community.

A key perspective in community scholarship is Anderson's (2006) concept of the imagined community; although individuals will never know, meet, or hear most of their fellow members, they perceive the image of their unity to be real. Similarly, Day (2006) argued that communities are imagined by its members as it has no existence outside of individual's perception of it – community only exists "because people want to believe in it" (Day, 2006, p. 2). Although Anderson's concept originally discussed the nation as an imagined political community, Phillips (2002) argued that the definition of imagined community has expanded as a more general usage of the term has developed in

contemporary analysis. According to Phillips (2002), a strength of the contemporary imagined community concept is the acknowledgement that a key aspect of communities is shared identities rather than directly interpersonal relationships.

However, Phillips (2002) claims that quantitative research on imagined communities is problematic because they take an essentialist approach to self-identity, and perceive the nation as the principle source of a place-based self. Similar to criticisms of social identity theory as well as 'new' communities, Phillips (2002) argues that quantitative studies on imagined communities also tend to perceive self-identity in non-divisible terms as individuals are attached to a collection of social identities that do not overlap or interact. Despite this critique, Phillips (2002) neglected to critically explore whether multiple identities can exist in an imagined community and how these identities interact with each other. Although Phillips (2002) recognised that a critical gap in scholarship on imagined communities is the sense of belonging which individuals feel towards a particular community, he did not develop this point further. Accordingly, there is a lack of theoretical discussion on how individuals feel a sense of belonging to a community despite tensions between conflicting identities, norms, and behaviours.

3.2.2 Online Communities:

The scholarship on community has also extended to view online communities as being a specific type of community which exists on online spaces. In particular, community theorists Rothaermel and Sugiyama (2001) define online communities as any group or network formed through any electronic communication medium that is not bound by geographic space. Similar to concerns regarding online identities as being virtual, Baeva (2016) argues that online communities are often considered to be artificial entities because digital inhabitants' production of phantom images of virtual characters produces a boundless quasi-reality. Baeva (2016) is critical of online communities, arguing that they have become more 'real' and significant in terms of value than the physical world. However, Piatti-Farnell (2015) highlights the dangers of this compartmentalised approach to the online community, arguing that this view considers online communities, interactions, and relationships to be secondary to real world interactions as they are often perceived to be intangible and separate from everyday life.

 In contrast to Baeva (2016) who neglected to critically explore how the shared norms, values, and interests present in online communities are considered to be 'real' to its users, Piatti-Farnell (2015) argues that it is the social standards and cultural rules present in

online communities which transform them into 'real-life entities' that are disconnected from the term virtuality. Similarly, Kirby-Diaz (2009) discussed how fan investment in online practices such as posting on fan forums and fan sites can transform fandoms into 'real' communities without borders. Piatti-Farnell (2015) and Kirby-Diaz (2009) recognised the importance of social norms, cultural rules, and fan practices present in online communities, however, they had a limited critical discussion of how these differ among individuals in online communities well as how tensions between individuals can transform online communities into 'real life entities'.

Scholars such as Song (2009) and Day (2006) conceive online communities as being a liberated form of community where individuals choose to be linked together rather than by accident, and are able to exercise freedom unavailable in the real world due to the democratic nature of online spaces. However, Jullen (2014) highlights the dangers of considering online communities as being "an online society in which information moves freely" (p. 7), arguing that this perspective neglects to critically explore how digital inhabitants have taken elements of inclusion and exclusion from the physical world and adapted this into online communities. Jullen (2014) theorised that digital inhabitants have created specific ways for excluding others from participating in a clearly identifiable culture by constructing specific parameters, rules, and structures that includes some while excluding others. However, Jullen's (2014) study lacked empirical evidence which means that although his study can be used as a theoretical framework for why online communities can be considered as an environment of exclusion, there is a lack of research on how digital inhabitants create a culture based on exclusion and dominance.

3.2.3 Habitus:

Much of the theory on community is connected to Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus, as it is a perceptual structure which guides individual's perception of the social world by organising practices, or the perception of practices, into logical classes. Bourdieu (1984) elaborated that an individual's habitus is directly influenced from the socio-economic and socio-cultural position in which they find themselves in. Consequently, Bourdieu (1984) theorised that because individuals unconsciously internalise the objective social conditions which they belong too, they develop the appropriate tastes and practices for their social position. However, King (2000) was critical of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus as being a rigid structure, arguing that he neglected to critically discuss how individuals create, maintain, and transform their social relations with each other. King

(2000) elaborated that although Bourdieu claims the habitus is open to transformation, this conceptualisation is flawed as according to the habitus, any choices individuals make are determined by their position in the social structures which they operate in. Consequently, this means that individuals reproduce the social environment they live in by repeating the same practice, which King (2000) claims to be a significant weakness in the habitus concept as it assumes that social change is impossible.

Despite this critique of Bourdieu's habitus, King (2000) neglected to offer a revised model of habitus which is more fluid and open to transformation from individuals. Although King (2000) recognised the importance of social interaction in developing practices, he had limited discussion on how individuals can develop different norms and practices in a habitus. A critical weakness in Bourdieu's habitus is the assumption that all individuals develop the same norms, practices, values, and tastes in a uniform manner as it neglects to discuss how individuals negotiate the social structures around them. Furthermore, Bourdieu's (1984) concept also fails to discuss whether multiple social structures, identities, or practices are present within a habitus, and how the tension between these impact how individuals perceive themselves. Accordingly, there is a lack of significant critical investigation into addressing the existence of multiple habitus within fandom and communities within present scholarship.

Bourdieu's (1984) concept of the habitus provides a framework in order to explain how individuals perceive and construct the social world they live in, however, he developed this theoretical approach prior to the proliferation of the internet and digital technologies. Jullen (2014) extended on Bourdieu's original conceptualisation, arguing that "the internet is a field that creates a new habitus" (p. 13) which means that the online habitus has a number of differences from Bourdieu's original concept. In particular, Jullen (2014) argued that social capital was transformed into digital social capital online, and through this new form of capital, digital inhabitants make judgements of distinction online by investing time developing skills and a way of interacting that is unique to that online culture. Unlike Bourdieu's original concept, Jullen's (2014) approach to the online habitus critically explores how social relationships play a crucial role in how digital inhabitants perceive themselves and others, rather than the social structures they belong too. Despite providing a framework for understanding the online habitus, Jullen's (2014) study lacked empirical evidence which highlights how there is a lack of investigation in how the internet transformed habitus.

3.2.4 Subcultures:

Despite significant debate over how to conceptualise the term culture in cultural studies due to its ambiguity, Hebdige (1979) suggests that culture can be considered as a 'way of life' which expresses particular values. Similar to Hebdige (1979), Brake (1985) also critically discussed how cultures develop within a dominant value system, however, this system is never homogenous due to the existence of subcultures, which are considered to be a subset of larger cultural configurations. Subculturalist scholars such as Brake (1985), Hebdige (1999), and Muggleton (2000) argue that subcultures tend to form around an organised and recognised set of values and behaviours, which are perceived to be alternative to the prevailing set of norms in mainstream culture. Although Brake (1985) and Hebdige (1999) recognised that joining a subculture can influence how individuals perceives themselves and perceives others, they only critically explored the tensions that exist between subcultures and wider mainstream society. This is problematic as similar to social categories and 'new' communities, this perspective assumes that subculturalists adopt the same values, beliefs, and behaviours in a uniform manner, and neglects to consider the tensions between individuals within a subculture.

In contrast to Brake (1985) and Hebdige (1999), Force (2009) and Kuppens and van der Pol (2014) evaluated the tensions between individual members of a subculture, arguing that debates around authenticity is a key aspect of the subculture experience. Kuppens and van der Pol (2014) claimed that in order for individuals to be accepted as a legitimate member of a subculture, they must meet certain behaviours and practices in order to be considered authentic. They elaborated that discourses of subcultural authenticity are "the subject of a continual political struggle between parties who seek to 'naturalise' their particular definition of authenticity" by excluding those that don't conform to a particular ideology of authenticity (Kuppens & van der Pol, 2014, p. 153). Although this perspective is aware of the tensions that exist between individuals from a subculture, there is a limited discussion of how the 'struggle' between conflicting subcultural ideologies impacted the subculture or how its members perceive their subcultural identity.

Force (2009), Kuppens and van der Pol (2014), Brake (1985), Hebdige (1999), and Muggleton's (2000) conceptualisation of subcultures tended to discuss it as being place-based, which MacArthur (2009) claims to be problematic as this perspective is outdated due to the introduction and growth of the internet. MacArthur (2009) elaborated that the internet has allowed individuals to affiliate with online subcultures, regardless of geographic location and time constraints – similar to communities, it is no longer useful

to conceptualise subcultures as being place-based. Further problematic with Kuppens and van der Pol (2014) and Force's (2009) discussion of subcultural authenticity is that digital inhabitants have constructed new ways in order to determine subcultural authenticity due to the seemingly anonymous nature of online communities. According to Williams (2006) and MacArthur (2009), online subculturalists are determined to be authentic based on their avatars, photos, forum posts, and whether they conform to the socio-cultural norms and rules present in an online subculture.

However, Williams (2006) argues that a critical weakness in subcultural scholarship is the assumption that online identities are represented as mirrors or extensions of subculturalist's offline identities. Williams (2006) highlights the danger of this theoretical approach to online subcultural identities, arguing that it neglects to consider the tensions between users' offline and online identities. A strength of Williams' (2006) critique is the recognition that multiple identities within an online subculture can come into conflict with each other due to different norms, values, and behaviours. While there has been limited research on tensions between multiple identities in online music subcultures, there has been even less investigation on how a shift in an artist's image and sound effects the online community's subcultural discourse. Furthermore, another critical gap in scholarship on online subcultures is whether different subcultural identities negotiate a shift in subcultural discourse in conflicting ways.

3.3 Fandom:

3.3.1 'Taste'... In Fandom:

Similar to how social identities and 'new' communities are formed in relation to similarities and differences, Bourdieu (1984) conceptualised distinctions of taste in order to explain how individuals in a society distinguish themselves from others. Bourdieu (1984) elaborated that taste "classifies the classifier" in relation to other social subjects, as this division results in the production of classifiable practices as well as the judgements that individuals make of other individual's or group's practices (p. 6). Therefore, social harmony is created at the expense of those with aesthetically unacceptable taste as "any legitimate work tends to impose the norm of its own perception as the only legitimate mode of perception" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 28). In particular, Bourdieu (1984) developed three levels of taste which privileges and favours cultural products that are often

associated with high culture, while it disparages popular taste, or the choice of cultural products that have been devalued by popularisation.

Fandom scholars such as Jenkins (2006), Duffett (2013) and Fiske (1992) incorporated Bourdieu's concept of taste in fandom studies in order to highlight the dangers of his theoretical approach. Specifically, Duffett (2013) and Fiske (1992) argue that Bourdieu underestimated the value of popular culture and its role in distinguishing social groups, as fandom is something which is perceived to be purely about personal passion and taste. Similarly, Coppa (2014) and Jenkins (2006;2008) also recognised the importance of taste and passion in their definition of fans, arguing that fans are those individuals who recognise that they have a deep, positive, personal, and emotional connection to a popular media text, and self-identify as being a fan of that text. Duffett (2013) and Fiske (1992) developed Bourdieu's cultural capital concept in order to illustrate how fan culture is a form of popular culture that mirrors most of official culture's institutions and practices, however, in a popular setting and under popular control. Fiske (1992) elaborated that the use of cultural capital is a key practice in fandom as the amount of cultural capital a fan has impacts their status within that fan community. Although Duffett (2013) and Fiske (1992) recognise the importance of cultural capital in fandom, there has been a lack of research into how the interplay between cultural and popular taste impacts a popular media fandom, and how fans balance these seemingly opposed ideologies.

 Shuker (2014) and Anderson (2012) voiced criticisms of conceptualising fandom in relation to taste and individuals' emotional connection to popular media texts. In particular, Shuker (2013) was critical defining fans in relation to taste, as it assumes that there is a uniformity of interest among all individuals who belong to the same fandom. Shuker (2013) elaborated that instead, fans can have varying levels of enthusiasm in regards to their fan-identity. Similarly, Anderson (2012) also explored how fans may experience a dormancy in their fandom as "it would be unrealistic to expect any fan to continue performing and participating in their fandom at a consistent level" for an extended period of time (p. 71). However, neither Shuker (2013) or Anderson (2012) investigated how taste can vary among fans who belong to the same fandom. Although Anderson's (2012) study on life-long Bowie fan-ship found that fans generally stopped being a fan, or decreased their involvement in the fandom, due to a shift in priorities, he did not explore this finding further. Accordingly, there is a lack of critical discussion of how changes in an individual's life impacts their emotional connection to their favourite

popular media texts, and whether this change impacts how they perceive themselves in the scholarship on fan-identity.

3.3.2: Fan-Identity

Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) argued that fans are a skilled audience whose group participation in, and production of communities can change how they perceive themselves. The notion that fandom can influence how individuals perceive themselves was echoed by Coppa (2014) who posited that individuals take on additional identities when they become a fan, which then influences the way they engage with the world as fandom can affect its members in ways beyond shared media consumption. Furthermore, Coppa (2014) claimed that fans are active in the construction of their identity and are committed to a set of practices which define how they interact with each other and popular media texts. However, Coppa's (2014) discussion of fan-identities lacked a critical examination of the presence of multiple fan-identities within fandom as well as how fans have to re-construct their fan practices due to socio-cultural shifts in the fandom and in wider society. Therefore, research on the construction of multiple fan-identities and how conflicts between these fan-identities impact the fan community has been underexplored by fandom scholars.

Fandom is often associated with cultural products which are looked down upon for being mass produced and mass distributed by large media corporations including; performers, films, television shows, literature, and music (Duffett, 2013; Fiske, 1992). According to Coppa (2014), Hagen (2010) and Jenkins (2008), the internet facilitated the democratisation of media use which resulted in a wealth of opportunities for fans to tell their stories. Jenkins (2006; 2014) elaborated that because fans adopted the internet to communicate with each other, the communication medium encouraged fandom to create a participatory culture that fosters fan cultural production and a 'gift economy'. Despite this perception of the 'democratised' contemporary fandom, Stein and Busse (2009) argued that fandom limits fan authorship and creativity, imposing indirect constraints based on shared interpretations. However, the majority of research regarding conflict between fan interpretations of popular media texts tends to focus on fan cultural production instead of fan discussions on fan sites and fan boards, and have largely neglected to consider how these constraints create a sense of alienation among fans.

To fill this critical gap, this thesis will provide a specific case study in terms of how Lady Gaga fans imposed constraints around particular topics of discussions in the fandom,

causing a sense of alienation, while also investigating whether this alienation impacted their identification with other fans and Lady Gaga herself. Although fandom scholars such as Duffett (2013) and Coppa (2014) have recognised that fandom is constantly changing as it reflects the cultural context and climate of the time, these discussions around change emphasises technological shifts, democratisation of media, and fan cultural production. Critically investigating how fandom evolves over time in relation to the socio-cultural context, as well as how fans interpret popular media texts differently, could provide a greater insight into why individuals can become alienated and leave a fandom.

3.3.4 Music Fandom:

One of the main types of fandom which has attracted significant critical investigation by scholars is music fandom, which encompasses a range of tastes, roles, identities, and practices. In particular, well-respected theorists such as Shuker (1998; 2013) and Hawkins (2002) who have written extensively on music fandom suggests that a love for music is integral to the communication and identity formation processes of music fans. O'Reilly and Doherty (2006) elaborated that music consumption is more than going to concerts or listening to or buying music, as it is an integral part of how music fans understand themselves and others. Furthermore, O'Reilly and Doherty (2006) critically discussed how music consumption can indicate membership to a particular social category, as music has traditionally been a crucial dimension of the process of social groups differentiating and distancing themselves from others. However, similar to criticisms of social identity theory, this approach to music fandom tends to treat fans of a particular artist as a uniformed group that exists in opposition to fans of other musicians. Consequently, there is a lack of critical examination of the tensions between conflicting identities, tastes, beliefs, and values in music fandom, and how these tensions impact how music fans perceive their own identity in music fandom literature.

According to Shuker (2013), a crucial aspect of music fandom is a "passionate identification with the star" (p. 168) as music fans focus more on their favourite artist's image and persona, instead of the music itself. Shuker (2013) elaborated that this identification becomes "a source of pleasure and empowerment" for fans, as "their idols function almost as religious touchstones, helping them to get through their lives and providing emotional and even physical comfort" (p. 168). Auslander (2004) recognised that due to this intense identification, pop music fans' consumption of the personae of

their favourite artists is inextricably linked to their experience of the music itself. Despite exploring the relationship between an artist's image and their fans, Auslander (2004) and Shuler (1998; 2013) neglected to consider the flexibility of the post-modern identity in relation to how an artist's image can impact the individual fan.

Although fandom scholars discussed how music fandom traditionally encapsulated fan practices such as record buying and impersonation, the internet offered new and easier ways for individuals to participant in music fan practices such as fan remixes and fan videos (Baym & Burnett, 2009; Duffett, 2014; Hagen, 2010; Wall & Dubber, 2010; Shuker, 2013). However, a pop music fan practice usually overlooked by fandom scholars is chart obsession, which Parker (1991) defines as the consumption of pop music charts. Parker (1991) is critical of the lack of research on this particular music fandom practice, arguing that pop music fans' consumer obsession with sales figures is almost unique to the music industry. Although Parker's (1991) research provides a useful framework for understanding why pop music fans are obsessed with charts, his study is somewhat outdated due to the impact the internet has had on pop music fandom since his study was published. Consequently, there is a dearth of critical investigation on whether the accessibility to music charts through the internet has fostered music fans' obsession with sales figures.

3.4 Authenticity:

Baudrillard (1999) developed his seminal theory of simulation and simulacra in order to explain how postmodern societies are organised around simulations, as there is a new social order where codes, models, and signs rule. In a society of simulation, Baudrillard (1999) posits that identities are constructed through the identification of images, as signs impact how individuals perceive themselves and the world around them. Baudrillard (199) elaborated that because the physical world was replaced by sign systems, people feel lost in an artificial world of simulacra and cling to nostalgic notions of reality, truth, and reason. Consequently, individuals engage in a panic stricken production of the real by building off events and assigning the 'truth' through signifiers or images which results in the production of hyperreality and the loss of reality. Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality has been developed by theorists in order to critically discuss the construction of authenticity in the post-modern world. In particular, Grayson and Martinec (2004) extended on Baudrillard's discussion of the loss of reality in post-modern societies,

arguing that Western society is obsessed with distinctions of authenticity because it provides individuals with an escape from the 'phoniness' of consuming mediated images.

Also developing on Baudrillard's claim that the distinctions between reality and simulation are increasingly blurred, Enli (2015) argued that media consumers do not find authenticity in the fake, but are able to find elements of what is genuine, real, or true in consumption experiences that others may deem to be false. The notion that individuals can construct conflicting notions of authenticity was also recognised by Beverland and Farrelly (2010) who defined it as an evaluative concept of what is considered to be genuine or real and involves subjective judgments as authenticity is firmly rooted within socio-cultural contexts and changes in taste, values, beliefs, and practices. However, Grayson and Martinec (2004) are critical of scholarship on authenticity, arguing that there is a lack of research on how media consumers allow distinctions of authenticity and inauthenticity to "coexist as part of the same experience" (p. 306). Similarly, Enli (2015) also evaluated problems in discussions around authenticity and reality, arguing that there has been a lack of consideration of how consumers negotiate the authentic in a culture increasingly based on simulation.

Distinctions of authenticity and inauthenticity has also been explored in literature on music fandom as it plays a critical role in social assessments of the fan formations and attitudes that characterise different pop music subcultures. Scholars such as Tetzlaff (1994) and Gunders (2012) specifically discussed the 'Rock Myth', which continues to be the dominant discourse around the value and authenticity of popular music. According to these scholars, the 'Rock Myth' dismisses pop music as being inauthentic due to its blatant commercialism, as it asserts that there is a distinction between art and commerce (Tetzlaff, 1994; Gunders, 2012). However, Tetzlaff (1994) is critical of applying the 'Rock Myth' to pop music authenticity, arguing that it is problematic because pop fans recognise the commercial status of pop music while pop stars are aware of the construction of their own persona. A benefit of Tetzlaff's (1994) criticism of the 'Rock Myth' ideology is the recognition that pop music fans construct distinctions of authenticity unique to pop music culture. However, there is a critical gap on how pop music fans construct pop music authenticity in comparison to mainstream discourses around the genre. Further problematic, there has been a lack of research on how pop music fans negotiate the authentic in a genre of music which is known for its blatant construction and commerciality. This thesis aims to address this critical gap in scholarship by

investigating whether Little Monsters constructed notions of authenticity or inauthenticity due to the release of *Cheek to Cheek.*

3.4.2 The 'Authentic' Lady Gaga:

Scholars such as Corona (2013), Anderson et al (2013), Click et al (2013), Jennex (2013) and Bennett (2013; 2014) discussed how Lady Gaga is self-aware of the construction and articulation of her persona, and has created a flamboyant identity while also utilising social media to create a sense of belonging among Little Monsters. Despite her theatrical persona and image, Corona (2013) argues that "Gaga has avoided the authenticity dilemma by affirming that she is the persona she inhabits on stage" (p. 734) by effectively using social networking sites to illustrate her authenticity to Little Monsters daily. Similarly, Anderson et al (2013) also discussed how Lady Gaga constructed a sense of authenticity as she has been "consistent in getting across her core values: acceptance for all, equality, creativity, and honesty" (p. 29) through her posts on *Twitter* and *Facebook.*

These studies' discussion of how Lady Gaga offers a model of celebrity authenticity provides a valuable framework of how Lady Gaga constructed an 'authentic image'. However, there was a limited discussion of how Little Monsters were instrumental in the production and maintenance of the singer's 'authentic' persona, as well as how Lady Gaga's perceived authenticity 'allowed' them to construct a sense of community and identity around her. In addition, Corona (2013), Click et al (2013), Anderson et al (2013), Jennex (2013) and Bennett's (2013;2014) studies lacked sufficient analysis of how Little Monsters perceived and constructed notions of Lady Gaga's authenticity. This lack of analysis is arguably problematic, as according to Enli (2015), authenticity is a subjective and evaluative concept which is constructed by media audiences.Although Anderson et al (2013) discussed the 'Gaganomics' of the internet, in order to truly understand how the singer has built a sense of authenticity and subcultural membership among her fans, there needs to be greater research on how fans have been instrumental in this process.

Click et al (2013) discovered that participants constructed a subcultural discourse around what constitutes a 'real' Lady Gaga fan. These participants created a distinction between Lady Gaga fans, who are only interested in her music, and Little Monsters who made their interest in Lady Gaga as a way of life by exploring "all aspects of Lady Gaga's persona" (Click et al, 2013, p. 368). However, Click et al (2013) neglected to critically discuss this finding in relation to a subcultural or authenticity theoretical framework,

which would have allowed for a greater analysis of how participants constructed distinctions of authenticity. In particular, developing an authenticity framework of how participants created distinctions of what is considered to be a 'real' fan would have provided an insight into the construction of the Lady Gaga fan-identity, as well as the norms, values, and behaviours which are perceived to be 'essential' in order to be a fan. This thesis will aim to address this particular gap in Click et al's (2013) research by examining the construction of authenticity in the Lady Gaga fandom in relation to the Lady Gaga fan-identity.

Furthermore, a weakness with Click et al (2013) and Jennex's (2013) studies is that their discussion of identity is rooted in a modernist and a social identity approach. Although they recognised that fans developed their fan-identity at the intersection between self and fandom, Click et al (2013) and Jennex's (2013) perceived individuals as having an 'inner core' (Hall, 1992; Kellner, 1992). This is problematic because, as previously discussed by Lawler (2014), identity should be seen as an ongoing engagement with the social world rather than reducing fans to a social category. Discussing the Lady Gaga fan-identity in terms of a social category, which provided fans with a sense of community and belonging, arguably obscured the tensions within and between Lady Gaga fan-identities. This meant that there was a lack of analysis of how identity is fluid and constantly evolves as individuals reconstruct their identity as their life changes, as well as how fans have evolved with the shift in Lady Gaga's image. Consequently, this thesis will specifically fit into this gap in the literature, as it acknowledges that fans continuously re-evaluate their fan-identity, and will investigate whether the singer's change of image has changed the fan-identity.

In contrast to Click et al (2013), Bennett (2013;2014), and Jennex (2013), Brooks (2015) argued that Lady Gaga's persona is perceived to be inauthentic as participants rejected the singer's brand of femininity. Brooks (2015) elaborated that because Lady Gaga does not conform to the cultural ideal of femininity and beauty in Western society, her persona was perceived to be incongruent to participants' everyday life, which meant they were highly critical of the manufacture of the singer's celebrity persona. Although this finding contradicts with Jennex's (2013) and Click et al's (2013) argument that fans use Lady Gaga as a way to subvert normative cultural ideals and celebrate their 'inner monster', a potential reason for this inconsistency is that Brooks (2015) surveyed a wide range of music fans, while both Jennex (2013) and Click et al (2013) researched individuals who self-identify as Lady Gaga fans. Although Brooks (2015) offers a valuable analysis for

how individuals outside of the Lady Gaga fandom perceive Lady Gaga's authenticity, Click et al's (2013) and Jennex's (2013) studies provide a more beneficial theoretical framework for this thesis as they specifically discussed the construction of the Lady Gaga fan-identity. The gap in scholarship on whether fans and non-fans interpret celebrities' authenticity in contrasting ways is where this thesis will critically site itself, as it aims to provide an insight into how and why individuals identify with a particular celebrity, Lady Gaga.

3.5 Conclusion:

This literature review has discussed themes and concepts which will provide a broad theoretical framework for this body of research. In particular, this chapter explored scholarship on identity, community, fandom, and authenticity highlighting areas which require further critical investigation. Firstly, scholarship on identity was examined in relation to social identity theory and online identities in order to illustrate how identity academics have neglected to consider the tensions within and between identities. This was followed by a broad discussion of literature on communities, online community, and subcultures; scholars in these fields have also had a tendency to consider community and subcultures as having uniform values and norms which has meant a lack of research on the conflicts between individual members. Thirdly, the literature review considered a wide range of theory on fandom, concluding that there is a lack of critical investigation on fan practices unique to pop music fandom as well as how conflicting identities, tastes, and beliefs impact how music fans perceive their own identity. This was followed by a discussion of how well-respected theorists developed Baudrillard's (1999) concept of simulation and simulacra in order to explain the construction of authenticity, while also noting that there is a lack of research on how individuals negotiate their identity in a world of simulations and simulacra. Finally, this literature view specifically discussed studies on Lady Gaga in order to highlight that despite attracting significant academic attention, there has been little research on how Little Monsters have constructed their identity around the singer. This thesis aims to address these areas of research by investigating whether Lady Gaga's shift in image and sound impacted how fans perceive themselves and the Little Monster community.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction:

The methodology chapter will begin by discussing why thematic analysis was the most appropriate research method for this study, as well as how its benefits and drawbacks will affect the process of enquiry when collecting data. Afterwards, the chapter will dissect how the methodology implemented in this research, a meta-critical framework, will allow the researcher to synthesise broad and often conflicting theoretical *approaches* in relation to the data. Finally, this chapter will explain why the data collection technique, an online questionnaire, was implemented in this study and how it will impact the data collection process.

4.1 Research Method:

Research methods can be defined as the set of techniques considered appropriate "for the creation, collection, coding, organisation, and analysis of data" (Bellamy, 2012, p. 9). This study will employ a thematic analysis with an ethnographic approach when interpreting the data in order to critically investigate the socio-cultural life of Lady Gaga fans; in particular, this approach will allow the researcher to explore the beliefs, values, attitudes, perceptions, and patterns of conflict in the Little Monster community. Thematic analysis is more than just counting words and phrases (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as it draws on themes, or specific patterns found in the data "in order to describe a particular aspect of the world" (Gavin, 2008, p. 280). Thematic analysis was chosen because its flexibility will allow the researcher to utilise a meta-critical framework in order to explore and synthesise a broad range of conflicting theoretical approaches during the data analysis.

Although thematic analysis is one of the most commonly used forms of qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006), this thesis will implement a mixed methods approach. Quantitative research can be defined as the measurement of a quantity or an amount, and is applicable to phenomena that can be expressed in terms of quantity (Thamilarasan, 2015). In contrast, qualitative research looks at nonnumeric data such as texts, images, and sounds (Guest et al, 2012), and is characterised by its attempt to understand some aspect of social life (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). A mixed methods approach was chosen for this research because qualitative analysis will allow the researcher to discover whether fans re-evaluated their fan-identity, while quantitative analysis will supplement

the qualitative data with audience segmentation information on the Little Monster community.

Although thematic analysis primarily focuses on presenting the experiences of individuals as accurately and comprehensively as possible, there is more concern with its reliability than other word-based research methods because the researcher organises text according to their own interpretation of the data (Content and thematic analysis, 2004; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Despite this, Guest et al (2012) argues that thematic analysis is still the most useful research method in terms of "capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set" (p. 14). The researcher acknowledges that he is an enthusiastic Lady Gaga fan who often has 'meltdowns' during online discussions on Lady Gaga fan boards and fan sites, and therefore, he has a subjective view point of how the fandom received the *Cheek to Cheek* era. Although it is accepted that subjective views will form a part of the research process in qualitative analysis, the researcher has a responsibility to manage this influence by establishing strategies for monitoring reliability throughout the research process, such as asking others to analyse the data as an accuracy check (Gavin, 2008).

4.2 Methodology – A Meta-Critical Framework:

The methodology provides the researcher with a holistic approach to the research process by considering and explaining the research methods and data collection techniques used in a particular study (Thamilarasan, 2015). This thesis will employ a meta-critical methodology as it will allow the researcher to synthesise multiple, broad, and often contradictory theoretical approaches. Although social anthropology, postmodernism, fandom, entertainment, celebrity, and popular culture studies all focus on different areas on how individuals interact with media content, they intersect on how individuals construct their lifestyles, values, and identities in relation to popular media texts. Synthesising these theoretical approaches together will allow the researcher to critically investigate whether participants re-evaluated their lifestyles, values, and identities in relation to Lady Gaga's shift in music and image.

This research is primarily located within the academic field of popular culture studies, which seeks to determine the reasons why popular media entertainment becomes popular (Danesi, 2012). Popular culture studies' interdisciplinary nature will allow the researcher

to draw strength from a number of theoretical approaches such as fandom, celebrity, entertainment, and popular music studies. As a 'vibrant' study of popular culture needs to consider the distastes, displeasures, disgusts, and dislikes of pop media audiences, this research will also analyse the data in relation to entertainment studies (Gray, 2012). Although this field of scholarship is closely related to popular culture studies, entertainment studies attempts to explain why certain popular media texts can entertain individuals yet thoroughly displease others (Gray, 2012). In order to examine whether Little Monsters re-evaluated their fan-identity, this thesis will critically investigate if participants were entertained by the *Cheek to Cheek* era.

Similarly, the researcher will explore the data in relation to fandom studies, which is focused on understanding individuals personal and collective ambivalence to the choices offered to them as consumers of popular culture (Duffett, 2014). In particular, this thesis will explore whether participants' re-evaluated their fan-identity in relation to Duffett's (2013) definition of a fan as an individual who recognises they have a positive and deep emotional connection with a popular culture text. As this thesis is primarily concerned with pop music, it will incorporate scholarly work on celebrities in order to examine the process of following a mass-mediated celebrity such as Lady Gaga.

Employing a meta-critical framework will allow the researcher to analyse inconsistencies in the results in relation to seemingly diametrically opposed approaches such as social anthropology and post-modernism. Social anthropology involves the study of social relations, rituals, law, language, and values through the examination of human behaviour (Firth, 1951). Specifically, this study will examine participant responses in relation to Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus in order to analyse the social relations, values, perceptions, and structures of power present in the Little Monster community. In contrast, this study will also analyse data in relation to Baudrillard's (1999) theory of simulacra and simulation, which posits that because individuals constantly assign the 'truth' to events through images, society creates the hyperreal which results in the loss of reality.

On the surface, Baudrillard's concept appears to conflict with Bourdieu's (1984) habitus, which perceives the social world as being rooted in a physical reality by explaining how individuals conceive and (re)construct their social world. In particular, the researcher will weave social anthropology and postmodernism together when discussing habitus in the Lady Gaga fandom. By applying Baudrillard's simulacra and simulation theory with habitus, the researcher will critically investigate whether there are multiple fan-identities in the Little Monster community. Furthermore, integrating these theoretical approaches

together with popular culture, entertainment, celebrity, and fandom studies, will allow this study to explore whether participants re-evaluated their fan-identity in conflicting and inconsistent ways.

4.3 Research Design:

Data collection methods can be defined as the process for capturing what is important from the data in order to answer the research question (LeCompte & Schensul, 2012). This study will implement a questionnaire on *SurveyMonkey,* an online survey platform, as its primary form of data collection in order to gather information on whether fans re-evaluated their fan-identity. An online questionnaire will allow the researcher to study the Little Monster community, which is a large group of geographically dispersed individuals. Participants are required to be: 16 years old or older, aware of *Cheek to Cheek*, self-identify as a Lady Gaga fan, and able to write in fluent English. These criteria will ensure that the survey is specifically targeted at Lady Gaga fans in order to gather accurate data on how the *Cheek to Cheek* era was received by fans.

The survey will be promoted to a number of fan sites and music forums popular with online Lady Gaga fans including *ATRL.net*, *Gagadaily.com*, and *Littlemonsters.com*, as well as social media sites such as *Twitter.com* and *Tumblr.com*. A thread will be created on each forum inviting members to participate in the survey with an external link provided. *Gagadaily.com* was chosen as it labels itself as being the largest fan site devoted to Lady Gaga, while *Littlemonsters.com* was chosen as Lady Gaga's creative team, Haus of Gaga, created the social networking site specifically for 'Little Monsters'. Furthermore, the researcher will promote the survey to *ATRL.net* and *Twitter.com* due to the strong presence of Lady Gaga fans on these online platform sites.

The survey will comprise of 10 questions, three of which are quantitative while the remainder are qualitative questions. The quantitative questions will be on age, gender, and whether participants were aware of *Cheek to Cheek*. The qualitative questions will be broad and open-ended in order to encourage participants to write as much as they desire. As this study aims to discover whether Lady Gaga fans re-constructed their fan-identity in relation to *Cheek to Cheek*, the researcher carefully designed seven qualitative questions in order to investigate how Lady Gaga's foray into jazz music impacted the Little Monster community. In particular, the survey will include questions to determine if and how participants re-evaluated their fan-identity, and whether the Lady Gaga fan

community responded to *Cheek to Cheek* in terms of their fan practices throughout the era.

A total of 60 Lady Gaga fans participated in the survey, which ran from August 19, 2015 to September 28, 2015. Although the researcher initially predicted that a fortnight would be required in order to reach the full quota of 30 participants, the response rate to the questionnaire was slower than anticipated. This was for a number of reasons; firstly, the majority of individuals who participated in the survey did not complete their responses. As the researcher set the maximum number of individuals who could participate in the survey at 30 participants, it meant the survey automatically closed at 30 responses including those which were uncompleted. Although this impacted the survey's accessibility to potential participants, the researcher rectified this issue by allowing an unlimited number of people to participate in the survey.

Secondly, the data collection process was slower than predicted as a number of responses were either of low quality and un-usable for data analysis, or they did not meet the research criteria. The researcher believed these participants to be individuals who are not Lady Gaga fans, as their responses tended to have one word answers or appeared to lack a general knowledge of *Cheek to Cheek*. Although seventeen participant responses were of high quality as they had detailed answers rich in material, this number fell short of the 30 participants required for this study's data analysis. Consequently, the researcher supplemented these with responses which were deemed of average quality in order to ensure there was a sufficient amount of data required for analysis.

4.4 Conclusion:

Implementing a meta-critical framework as this study's methodology allowed the researcher to employ a thematic analysis with a mixed methods approach. By combining these research approaches, the researcher was able to synthesise often opposing theories in relation to the data, which allowed for a broad data analysis. Through a thematic analysis, the researcher was able to address the ideas, values, assumptions, and ideologies prevalent in the socio-cultural life of Lady Gaga fans.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

5.0 Introduction:

The results chapter will explain how the data was organised and provide a summary of the study's key findings. Firstly, this chapter will begin with an explanation of how the quantitative data was collected and displayed in pie charts, which will then be followed by a discussion of the quantitative data findings. Secondly, this chapter will explain how the qualitative data was organised under each of the three key themes: 1) Manufacturing the 'Other', 2) 'It's all the same Gaga anyway', and 3) Friends and Monsters, which will be followed by a brief discussion of the key findings from each theme. Finally, the results chapter will conclude with a discussion on how the researcher developed a model of authenticity based on the data that was gathered.

5.1 Quantitative Data:

5.1.1 Data organisation:

The researcher created pie charts to display the results of the following quantitative questions: 1) How old are you; 2) What gender do you identify as; and 3) Are you aware of Lady Gaga's collaborative jazz album with Tony Bennett, *Cheek to Cheek*. *SurveyMonkey* automatically collated the quantitative data into bar graphs, however, the researcher adapted these graphs into pie charts in order to visually depict the quantitative results. Although the questions on how participants received the *Cheek to Cheek* era were qualitative, the researcher quantified the data by creating two pie charts to represent if and how participants re-evaluated their fan-identity. The first fan-identity pie chart represents the percentage of participants who did or did not re-evaluate their fan identity, while the second pie chart illustrates the reasons why participants re-evaluated their fan-identity.

In order to determine whether participants re-evaluated their fan-identity, the researcher implemented a criterion based on the use of key words such as: no, not really, or I haven't. Participants who used these word generally did not re-evaluate their fan-identity, and remained Lady Gaga fans despite the shift in genre and image. Afterwards, the researcher implemented a secondary criterion to determine how fans re-evaluated their fan-identity

by sorting participant responses into three broad categories including: fan solidification, fan alienation, and fan diversification. Participants who used words or phrases such as respect, solidification, or I've become an even bigger fan were sorted into the fan solidification category. In contrast, participants who used words or phrases such as less of a fan, less interested in Gaga, alienation, and isolation were placed in the fan alienation category. Finally, participants who used words or phrases such as diversity, open to new music/genres, acceptance, and appreciation tended to fit the fan diversification category.

5.1.2 Quantitative Results:

Question 1: How old are you?

Figure 5.1: Age.
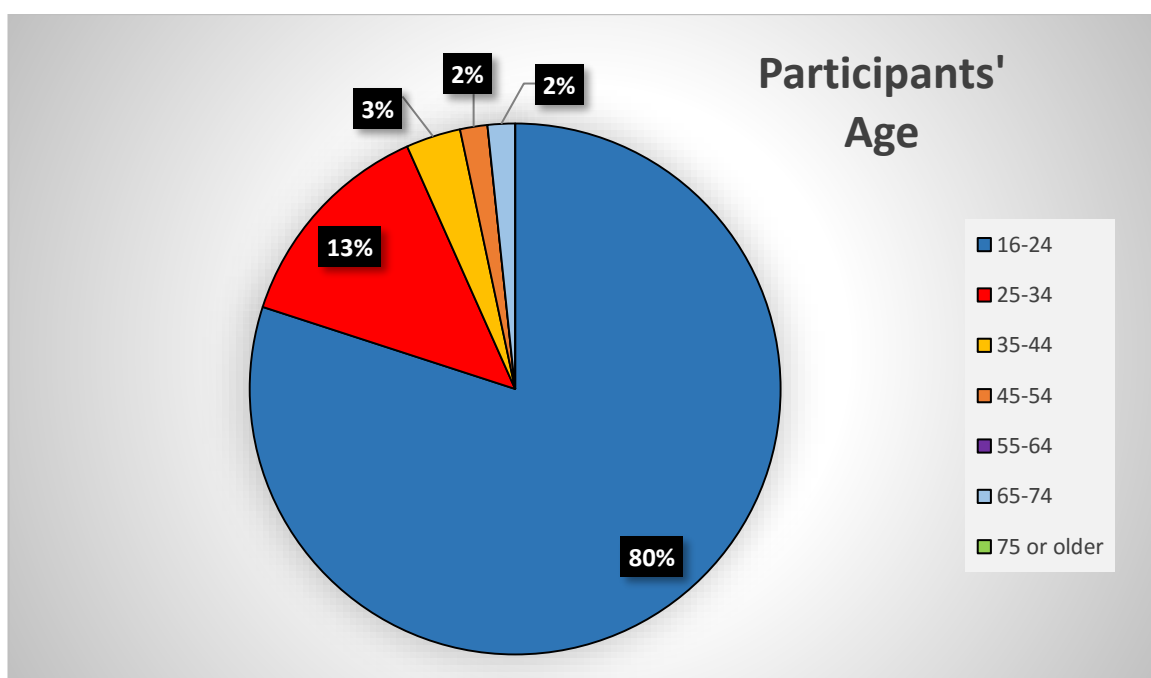
The 16-24 age bracket dominated the results, making up 80 percent of participants, which was followed by the 25-34 age bracket, which made up 13 percent of participants. Only three percent of participants reported being 35-44, while two percent reported being between the ages of 45-53. Although none of the participants identified as being within the 55-64 age bracket or over the age of 75, two percent of participants identified as being within the 55-64 age bracket.

Question 2: What gender do you identify as?

Figure 5.2: Gender.
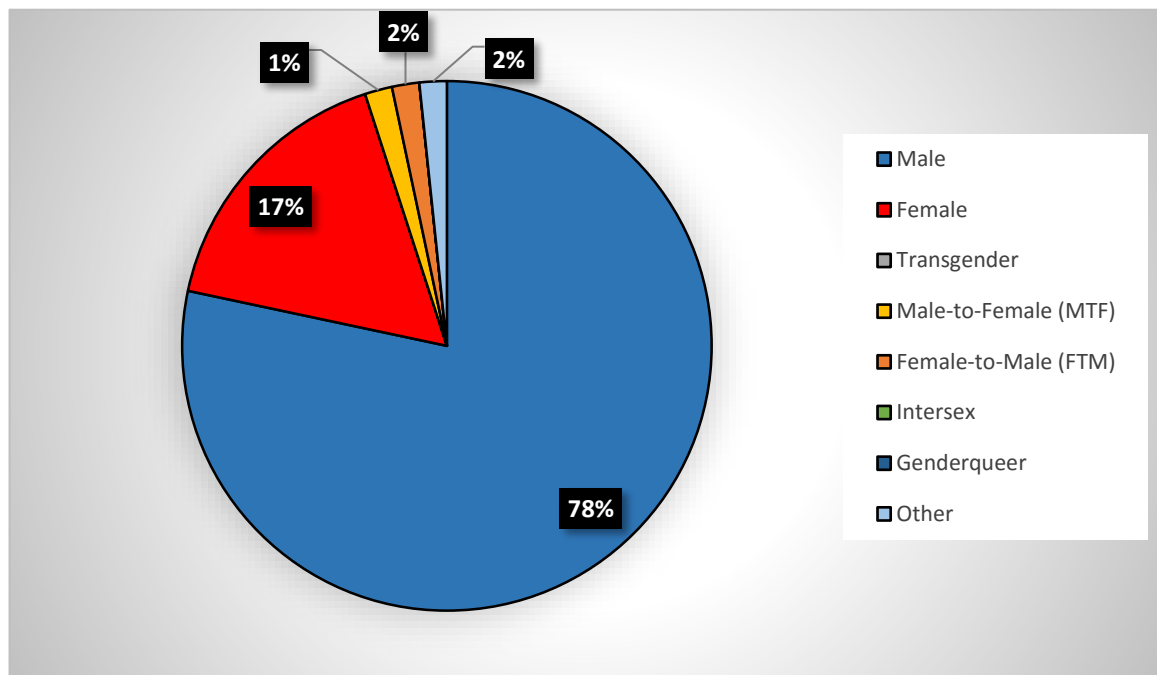
The majority of participants identified as male, making up 78 percent of participants. Females comprised the second largest group with 17 percent of participants, followed by both Male-To-Female (MTF) and Female-To-Male (FTM) at 2 percent, and other (a-gender) at 1 percent of participants. These results were especially surprising as the researcher did not expect the level of dominance of male participants in this study. It is possible that the majority of males who completed the survey are gay, as there is a perception that a significant proportion of fans on Lady Gaga fan sites and fan boards are gay males. Despite this speculation, the results do not suggest that the male participants are gay as the survey did not include a question on sexuality.

Question 3: Are you aware of Lady Gaga's collaborative jazz album with Tony Bennett, Cheek to Cheek (2014)?

Figure 5.3: Percentage of participants aware of *Cheek to Cheek*.
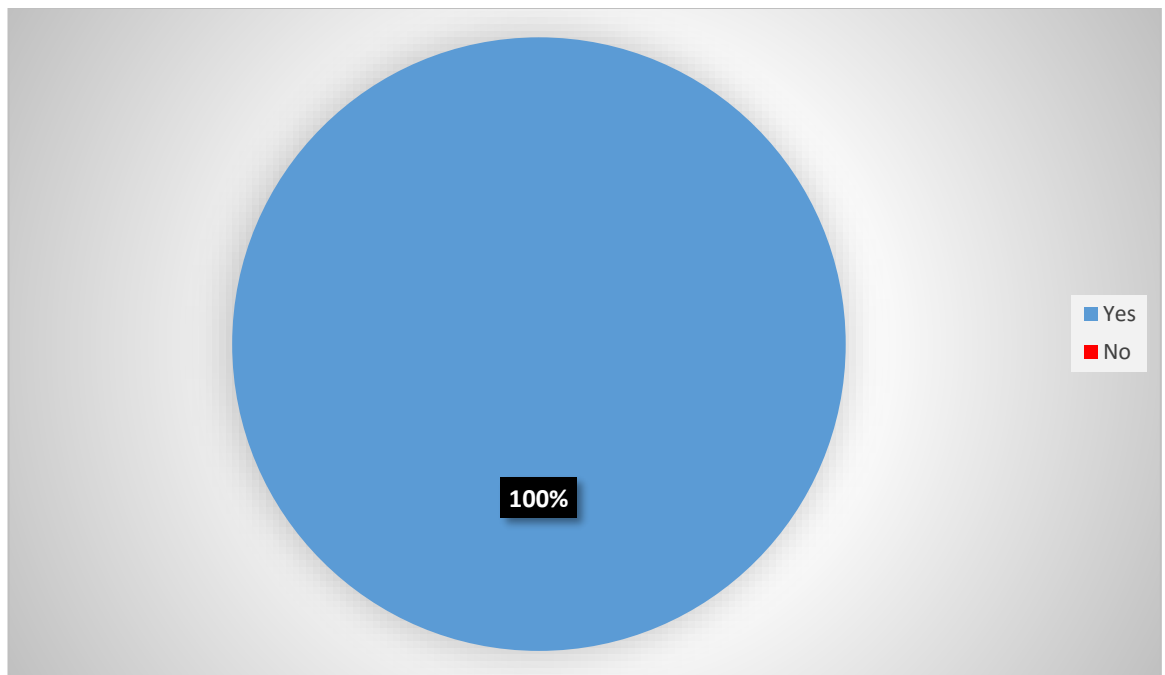
One hundred percent of surveyed participants were aware of *Cheek to Cheek*, which was expected by the researcher for two reasons. Firstly, one of the key criteria for participation in the survey was an awareness of the album, and secondly, this survey was specifically targeted at Lady Gaga fans who actively discussed the *Cheek to Cheek* era on fan sites and fan boards.

How fans have re-evaluated their Lady Gaga fan-identity:

Figure 5.4: Have Lady Gaga fans re-evaluated their fan-identity?
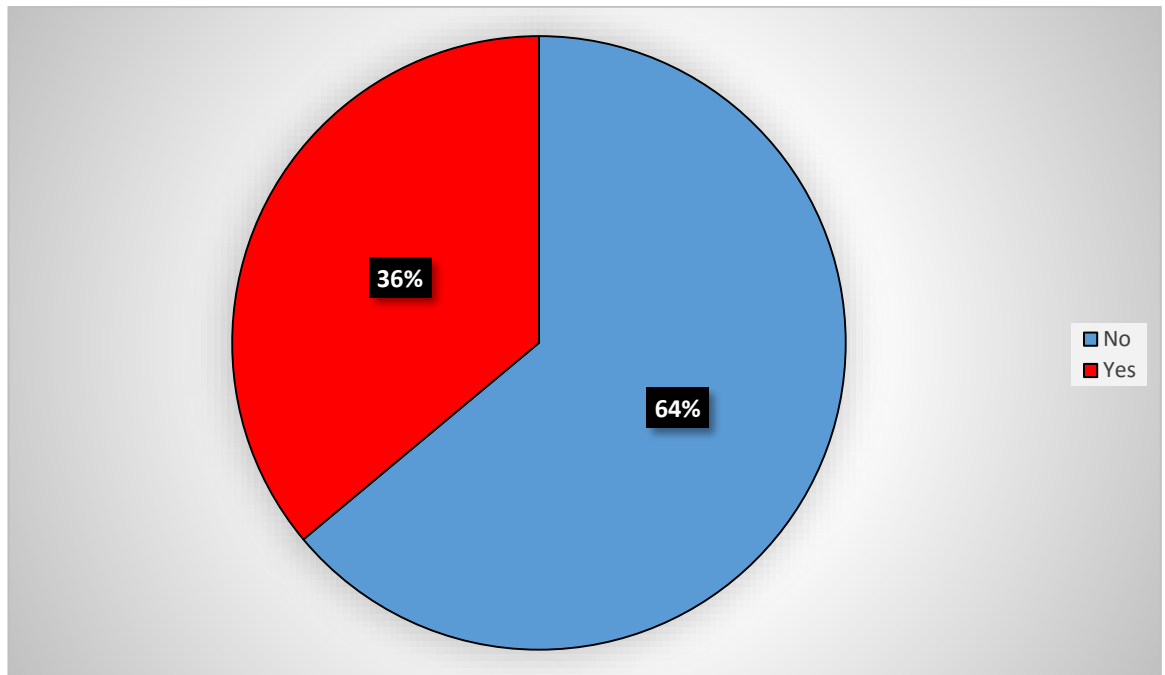
The study found that 64 percent of participants did not re-evaluate their fan-identity in comparison to 36 percent who did. This finding was surprising because the researcher hypothesised that the majority of participants re-evaluated their Lady Gaga fan-identity based on anecdotal evidence, as he noticed that members on Lady Gaga fan sites and fan boards were critical of the shift in sound and image which *Cheek to Cheek* brought with it.

Figure 5.5: How fans re-evaluated their Lady Gaga fan-identity
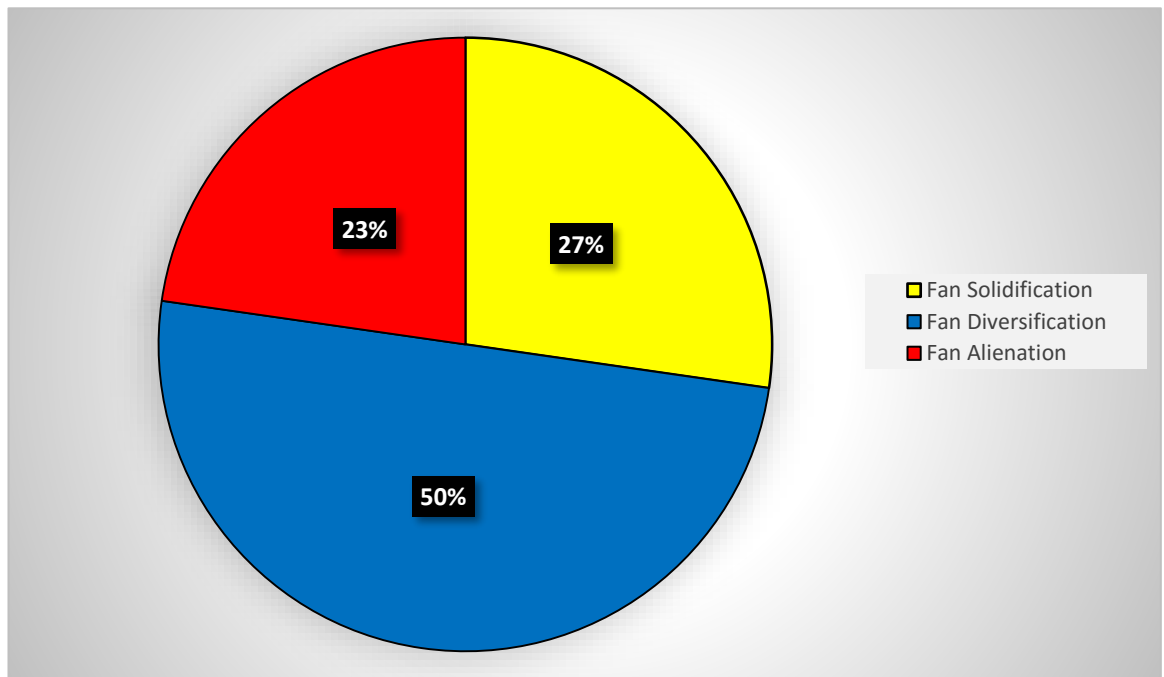
The reasons participants gave for re-evaluating their fan-identity were anticipated by the researcher, and included fan solidification, fan diversification, and fan alienation. Of the participants who re-evaluated their fan-identity, 50 percent became more open to diverse kinds of music, 27 percent solidified their fan-identity, and 23 percent became less of a fan because they felt alienated during the *Cheek to Cheek* era. The researcher was surprised that 23 percent of participants became less of a fan due to the release of *Cheek to Cheek* because he hypothesised that a higher percentage of participants re-evaluated their fan-identity due to fan division and isolation throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era.

5.2 Qualitative Data:

5.2.1 Qualitative data organisation and categorisation:

During the coding process, initially, the researcher categorised the data into 18 groups including: transition period, talent, health, fans miss pop music, live performances, persona, open to new music, the solidification of fan-identity, deeper appreciation for Gaga, alienation from the album, alienation from the fandom, artists need room to grow, fans will always support Gaga, mixed emotions, reinvention, lack of excitement, and

maturity. During this process, the researcher originally categorised the data into three broad themes which were: 1) transition period; 2) rediscovery of Lady Gaga as an artist; and 3) alienation. However, through data reliability checks, the researcher realised the data would be better organised into different themes in order to provide a greater insight into the fan reception of *Cheek to Cheek*. This re-organisation of data illustrates the importance of data reliability checks during thematic analysis, due to the open interpretation of codes. The study's reworked, and final themes are: 1) Manufacturing the 'Other'; 2) 'It's all the same Gaga anyway', and 3) Friends and Monsters.

As participants sorted into the first two themes, Manufacturing the 'Other' and 'It's all the same Gaga anyway' constructed contrasting notions of Lady Gaga's authenticity, the researcher created separate tables for these themes in order to depict how participants created conflicting notions of authenticity in the Lady Gaga fandom. For the final theme, Friends and Monsters, the researcher created a separate table with four categories including; 'Pop-Gaga' fans, 'Jazz-Gaga' fans, fan division, and capital; this final category included cultural, digital social, and pop capital.

During this process, the researcher created an inclusion and exclusion criterion for each theme in order to classify participant responses. When creating tables to depict the results, the researcher selected a number of participant responses within each theme and sub-theme based on key words or phrases used in order to represent the category's overall findings. Each response was condensed to bullet points of the key words and phrases used in order to easily identify which theme or sub-theme a response fitted. To differentiate the responses, a row was created for each individual response, which was identified with a capital P and a number; for example, P4 represents the fourth participant.

5.2.2 Manufacturing the 'Other':

The fans miss pop music, persona, alienation from the jazz album, alienation from the fandom, mixed emotions, and lack of excitement groups were combined into the first theme, Manufacturing the 'Other'. As these groups constructed the jazz album as being an inauthentic 'other' in Lady Gaga's discography, they were organized under the broader theme of Manufacturing the 'Other'. The first analytical chapter was split into four main sections, including the three criteria of authenticity as well as a final section on the construction of *Cheek to Cheek* as a side project. Although participants sorted into this theme did not explicitly discuss notions of authenticity or 'otherness', the researcher constructed a criteria based on key words or phrases used to identify inauthenticity.

Responses sorted into the creativity category used key words or phrases such as creativity, didn't write her own music, straight-forward / classy, outlandish live performances, and responses which indicate notions of missing Lady Gaga's pop music. In comparison, the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the commercial success category was based on whether participants used key phrases or words including: commercial success/ notions of missing seeing Lady Gaga's music perform well commercially, pop music, smash single/album sales, and radio/club hits. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the final sub-theme, persona, was based on whether responses used key phrases or words including: social standards/norms, sense of belonging and community, game changer, notions of missing Lady Gaga's outspokenness and attitude, and re-learning to love the singer. The final category, side project, included participant responses which used the following phrases or words: project/side project, wise career based decision, and proper era.

Although these words or phrases used to categorise participants into the Manufacturing the 'Other' theme don't explicitly mention notions of inauthenticity, they do indicate that some fans felt isolated from the *Cheek to Cheek* era. The researcher interpreted this fan alienation as an indication that participants perceived a sense of 'otherness' to 'Jazz-Gaga', which meant she appeared to be inauthentic, as they believed that 'Pop-Gaga' 'disappeared'. It can be argued that this belief suggests participants perceived a certain degree of 'otherness' and inauthenticity to 'Jazz-Gaga'.

Table 5.1: Manufacturing the 'Other'.

Manufacturing the 'Other': Authenticity Model	
Key Phrases/words	**Participant Response**
Creativity	
- Creativity - Straight-forward/classy. - Responses which indicate notions of missing pop music. - Outlandish live performances.	P1: - That **she didn't write** the songs she sings. - They have **less meaning**, and therefore, are less "**her**".
	P23: - I have missed the cheer [sic] **danceability of her pop albums.** **I miss some** of her earlier, more pop/rock genered works.

	P31: • The **take no prisoners approach** to pop culture and **societal norms** and standards. •
	P47: • **I mostly miss her creativity** with her clever and personal music videos and shows. • I also miss **hearing new songs** that she **wrote**.
	• She paved a pathway of being **crazy and creating social norms**. • **Made a space for fans** – a **wonderful community** where you could be celebrated for your fucked up thoughts
	P54: • **What I miss about hearing wise** is her catchy, yet **deep meaning lyrics**, awesome beats.
	P56: • **This era was minimal and had the same "classy" tone all throughout.** • It was very **straight-forward** and didn't need much **creativity** seeing as it was a **jazz project**.

Commercial Success	
• Commercial success. • Pop music. • Smash singles/ album sales. • Bops/ bangers/ slays • Notions of missing seeing Lady Gaga's music be commercially successful.	P30: • I miss all the **excitement** of seeing her singles **smash**.
	P24: • There are many people **hankering** for the return of the type of music which made her **commercially successful.**
	P49: • I got annoyed that she was promoting it as a **proper era** rather than a side project. • I don't think of this as a **real era**. I want my **pop bangerz**. • She hasn't given me anything I can see **slaying on the radio**.

Persona	
• Sense of belonging • Spectacle • Image • Live performances	P4: • I've missed her **big pop performances**, especially at award shows since she always puts on **big spectacles**.
	P14: • Her craziness, her emotions, **a sense of belonging.**

	.
	P19: • The **surprise** of her performances, every performance in her pop eras is different.
	P27: • Her energetic and outlandish behaviour on stage.
	P28: • I do not miss anything. **Her toned down image is remarkable.**
	P32: • The **fullness** of her performances. She didn't play any instruments, dance or use any props.

Side Project	
• Side project / project. • Wise career based decision. • Didn't re-evaluate fan-identity.	**P39:** • I didn't really **re-evaluate** my identity as a Lady Gaga fan throughout the era as I treated it as some sort of **side project** for her.
	P49: • I got annoyed that she was promoting it as a **proper era** rather than a **side project**.
	P13: • A wise **career based decision** and a **side project** in between albums. • There is more to gain and not much to lose with the **project**.

5.2.3 'It's all the same Gaga anyway':

The talent, live performances, open to new music, solidification of fan-identity, and deeper appreciation of Lady Gaga groups were combined together under the second theme, 'It's all the same Gaga anyway'. These groups included responses which either discussed how fans developed more respect for Lady Gaga because she 'proved' her talent, or fans who believed that 'Jazz-Gaga' and 'Pop-Gaga' are the same artist. This theme was split into each of the three criteria of authenticity; creativity, commercial success, and persona.

Participants sorted into the creativity criteria discussed Lady Gaga's creativity in terms of her vocal talent throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era. The inclusion and exclusion criteria to decide whether a response fitted this category included key words or phrases such as:

respect, *Cheek to Cheek* as a career highlight, discussions of Lady Gaga proving she is more than a manufactured pop star, and talent. When discussing talent, participants tended to use terms that explicitly indicated a sense of authenticity, including pure, true, genuine, real, raw, and unadulterated.

In comparison, key phrases or words used to determine if a response fitted the persona criteria for 'It's all the same Gaga anyway' theme included: it's still Gaga, she's constantly shifting, she's born a jazz singer, notions of believing Gaga would at some point release a jazz album, and notions of identification with Gaga regardless of her genre of music. The use of these specific terms suggests that participants constructed 'Jazz-Gaga' as being authentic, as they made the distinction that the 'two' Gaga's are one in the same. Finally, for the success criteria, the key words or phrases used to include or exclude participant responses included: positive, image/brand/career reinvention, legacy/reputation, and audience reception.

Table 5.2: It's all the same Gaga anyway

'It's all the same Gaga anyway' – Authenticity Model	
Key Phrases/words	**Participant Response**
Creativity	
• Talented – pure, true, genuine, real, raw and unadulterated. • Respect / shocked. • Notions of Lady Gaga proving she is more than just a pop star. • Career highlight.	P5: • Cemented her as one of the most **talented** artists of her generation.
	P12: • I **respect** her more now. • She's like a walking machine of **pure talent**. • I just couldn't be more **proud** of her. • **She's god, basically mother of this universe.**
	P13: • It showcased Gaga's **talent** to the GP **without** using any costumes. • Just pure **unadulterated talent.**
	P37: • It is admirable to see somebody, that for much of their career has been **pigeon holed as a 'pop singer'**, go on to release a jazz album in 2015.

	P47: • I think she **shocked a lot of people** with her voice. • She **set herself apart** from all the other pop stars.

Persona	
• It's still Gaga. • Constantly shifting. • Born a jazz singer. • Notions of believing Gaga would release a jazz album. • Notions of identification with Gaga regardless of her genre of music.	**P1:** • She will be **constantly shifting** as that is the **nature of the chameleon Lady Gaga.**
	P5: • Has **removed me** from being an **'inside the box' fan.**
	P23: • **I always identified** with Gaga as a strongly independent, hardworking, and compassionate songwriter. • A change in her musical direction that she chooses is in fact more of a **solidification of my identity** as her supporter. • I am more appreciative of her diversity and **I reflect that in my identity as a Little Monster.**
	P28: • No, she is a **born** jazz singer. • She may do additional genres in the future, such as rock. **It's still Gaga.** •
	P31: • She has mentioned several times she was in a **jazz band while growing up**.
	P33: • A point of maturity in her career where it is **an extension of who she already is as a person**. • In this case, her **affinity and connection to older music** which has already been shown with her love for classic rock an classical music and **now in this case, standards and jazz.**
	P38: • She's still **the same artist** at the core. • **The reasons I love her haven't changed**.
	P46: • I think for the most part fans have been supportive.

	• Changing her music style **doesn't necessarily change who she is as a person that people identify** with overall.
Success	
• Audience reception. • Image/brand reinvention. • Legacy/honour/reputation. • Positive. • Healed Gaga.	P4: • The **era itself has been well received** and has been managed exceptionally. • It **has been a breath of fresh air**.
	P16: • Many of them [fans] are grateful as it appears to have **helped repair the broken image** she got after the ARTPOP era.
	P47: • The more mature fans appreciated and understood what an **honour** it was for Lady Gaga to have the **opportunity to work with a legend like Tony**. • **Reputation and legacy.** • This experience also **healed Gaga**.
	P56: • I think most of the fan base has **received it positively** noting that it is important for public perception.
	P57: • It was a way for **gaga to 'clean up' her image**, and really **change the gp's opinions on her.**

5.2.4 Friends and Monsters:

The fans miss pop music, persona, alienation from the jazz album, alienation from the fandom, mixed emotions, and lack of excitement groups were combined into the final theme, Friends and Monsters. These groups were combined together because they discussed how the album impacted the fan community; participants sorted into these groups tended to feel isolated and alienated from the Lady Gaga fandom. This theme was split into four sections, 'Pop-Gaga' fans, 'Jazz-Gaga' fans, divide in the fan community, and capital (digital social, cultural, and pop).

Key words and phrases used to determine if a participant was a 'Pop-Gaga' fan included: notions of missing pop music, commercial success, I listen to Gaga's pop albums daily, I don't enjoy jazz music, and I'm waiting for pop music. Although these particular phrases do not explicitly categorise participants as a 'Pop-Gaga' fan, the researcher interpreted

responses which state a preference for pop music over *Cheek to Cheek* as an indication that they are primarily a 'Pop-Gaga' fan. In contrast, key words or phrases used to determine if a participant was a 'Jazz-Gaga' fan included: appreciation, respect, proud, I diversified my taste in music, and notions of re-evaluating fan-identity. Although these terms and phrases are not explicit either, the researcher categorised participants who diversified their taste in music as a 'Jazz-Gaga' fan because they appreciated Lady Gaga as a multi-faceted artist.

In contrast, the key words or phrases used to categorise participant responses into the division in the fan community sub-theme were explicit, and included: alienation, divided, split, fan community, positivity, and alienation. The use of these terms indicated how the division in the fandom community resulted in alienation and isolation. For the final category, capital, key words or phrases used to include or exclude participant responses were: ignore, isolated, hard to discuss, and do not share my point of view. The use of these particular phrases suggests that some fans resented the *Cheek to Cheek* era, which meant it was difficult to discuss on fan boards and fan sites.

Table 5.3: Friends and Monsters

Key Phrases/words	Participant Response
'Pop-Gaga' Fans	
- Notions of missing pop music. - Notions of missing seeing Gaga's music perform commercially well. - Listen to Gaga's pop albums. - I don't enjoy jazz music. - Waiting for pop music.	P30: - I have **missed the catchy pop songs** that you can bop to on the radio, listen to on your iPod, or dance to in the clubs, - I **miss all the excitement** of seeing her singles smash.
	P39: I'm patiently waiting for her **next pop album to be released.**
	P48: - I don't particularly enjoy the jazz genre. - I would say (as an obsessed Gaga fan), **I was not on top of this 'era'**. - I wouldn't say I became less of a fan, I just don't enjoy CTC. - I love Gaga still and **listen to her other albums daily.**

	P55:
	• I've definitely become less intense of a fan throughout the C2C era, as the **jazz music doesn't really do it for me.**

'Jazz-Gaga' Fans	
• Notions of re-evaluating fan-identity. • Diversified taste in music. • Appreciation. • Respect. • Proud.	P5: • It has removed me from being an 'inside the box' fans.
	P12: • I **respect** her more now. • She's like a walking machine of **pure talent**. • I just couldn't be more **proud** of her for what she's doing in her career. • **She's god**, basically mother of this universe.
	P23: • I have **re-evaluated** my identity as a Lady Gaga fan throughout the Cheek to Cheek Era. • I have found that I am more appreciative of her diversity and knowledge of musical genres.
	P56: • It made me realise that **I am a true fan** and will stick by her through anything. • **The album got me into jazz music**. • I am **proud** to be a Gaga fan because her talent is genuine.

Division in the fan community/fan reception	
• Divided. • Positive. • Fan community. • Split. • Alienation.	P4: • The music itself **divided** fans. • Many prefer her more hard-edged, electronic music. • Others appreciate many genres.
	P9: • They are **focused on what really** matters: music. • Some Grammys and Emmys are good, but in the end what really matters is that Gaga is true to herself.
	P12: • This era had such a positive vibe around it **no drama or fan meltdowns** (like ARTPOP).
	P23: • The Lady Gaga **fan community** has received the Cheek to Cheek Era in different ways.

	• This has created somewhat of a **divide** in the **community**.
	P49: • It started off **hugely split** and caused a lot of **alienation** in the fan base. • When you're on [music] forums with other fan bases, they will tear you down if your fave is flopping. • Hasn't been positively viewed by everyone because they want her to have those massive album sales.

Cultural/ Digital Social / Pop Capital	
• Ignores. • Do not share my point of view. • Isolated. • Hard to discuss.	**P23:** • A large part of the Lady Gaga fan community largely **ignores** the release of Cheek to Cheek. • Blog posts and discussions still **largely pertain** to her earlier works, whilst somewhat **ignoring** her more recent work. • People may **only wish to talk** about the pre-Cheek to Cheek Era Gaga.
	P24: • Many people I interact with normally on Gaga-related media websites **do not share my point of view.** • **Fans strongly dislike Cheek to Cheek** for bringing a new image of Gaga that does not reflect why they became a fan.
	P30: • There's **not as much excitement** in terms of her behaviour, her interviews, or her extremity this time around. • The point of this era is to be a bit more stripped back.
	P34: • The major community still holds on to the cliché phrase **"Gaga go back to pop! It's where you belong!".** • **I have found myself kind of isolated from the fanbase.** • Fans are getting anxious – hope for another pop release before they finish college. • Younger and more immature fans want to enjoy their teenager days to the maximum, partying and living their dreams. That does not include a jazz era.

	P41:
	• I don't feel like it's something one can **actively discuss.**
	• Considering not every fan bought it, **it's kind of hard to discuss it.**

5.3 Overview of qualitative results:

5.3.1 Overview of Manufacturing the 'Other':

Participants sorted into this theme tended to be 'Pop-Gaga' fan as they believed in the 'Pop-Myth', which meant they constructed authenticity significantly differently to 'Jazz-Gaga' fans. Participants perceived the *Cheek to Cheek* era to be inauthentic because they believed it was not as creative as Lady Gaga's pop album releases, which suggests that Lady Gaga fans equate creativity with authenticity. Participants believed the *Cheek to Cheek* era lacked creativity in a number of ways, firstly, some believed that the jazz album was less "her" and had less meaning because Lady Gaga didn't write any of the songs on the album.

Secondly, participants missed the diversity of Lady Gaga's pop albums, as she wrote songs about sex, love, and drugs while also providing fans with more vulnerable and raw moments. As participants perceived *Cheek to Cheek* to lack creativity in these two ways, they could not identify with the music in the same way as Lady Gaga's pop albums, which meant that the jazz album was perceived as inauthentic. Furthermore, participants believed Lady Gaga's live performances throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era lacked creativity because she didn't use any props, didn't dance, and toned down her theatrical and 'outlandish' stage behaviour. Fans constructed their Lady Gaga fan-identity around the 'spectacle' of the singer's stage persona as she provided fans with a 'full' experience, which meant her pop performances were perceived to be superior to other performers.

Participants within this theme tended to believe that 'Jazz-Gaga' was inauthentic, as the values and lifestyles they associated with the jazz persona did not reflect the reasons why they became a fan of Lady Gaga. Specifically, participants tended to miss Lady Gaga's attitude and outspokenness during her pop album eras, as they perceived her to be a game changer who pushed societal norms and standards. By creating a community where fans "were celebrated for their fucked up thoughts" (participant 14), Lady Gaga created

subcultural authenticity among the 'Little Monster' community. It is possible that participants felt alienated from 'Jazz-Gaga' as they believed the substantial change in sound and image meant she no longer had subcultural authenticity. This particular result was expected, as it was hypothesised that the shift from pop to jazz music alienated fans due to anecdotal evidence from Lady Gaga fan sites where vocal members criticised the *Cheek to Cheek* era.

5.3.2 Summary of 'It's all the same Gaga anyway':

Similarly, participants categorised in the 'It's all the same Gaga anyway' theme assessed Lady Gaga's authenticity in relation to her creativity, persona, and success. In contrast to the Manufacturing the 'Other' chapter, participants in this theme perceived 'Jazz-Gaga' to be authentic. This is because fans believed the singer continued to express her creativity through jazz music, and they constructed a subcultural narrative that regardless of the genre of music she releases, 'it's all the same Gaga anyway'. Although it appears that these participants had a broader conception of the singer as an artist, both group of fans still constructed a formula of expected behaviour which Lady Gaga was 'required' to adhere to.

Participants in the 'It's all the same Gaga anyway' theme assessed Lady Gaga's creativity in relation to the display of her vocal ability throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era. In particular, a number of participants discussed the fan community's overwhelmingly positive reception to Lady Gaga's *Sound of Music* (1965) tribute at the 2015 Academy Awards Ceremony. This specific result was expected by the researcher, as the *Sound of Music* tribute was one of the most discussed moments of the singer's career on fan boards and fan sites. Furthermore, the study observed that participants believed that Lady Gaga gained respect from non-fans because *Cheek to Cheek* proved that she is more than a manufactured pop star. The idea that Lady Gaga proved that her talent is 'real' by stripping back her theatricality suggests participants believe the singer 'un-manufactured' herself throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era.

Despite Lady Gaga's significant shift in persona, image, and sound for *Cheek to Cheek,* participants in this theme believed that Lady Gaga was 'born' a jazz singer as they perceived 'Pop-Gaga' and 'Jazz-Gaga' to be the same artist. As these participants constructed a subcultural narrative that Lady Gaga represents particular values, regardless of her genre of music, they believed that 'Jazz-Gaga' represents the same values as 'Pop-

Gaga' which meant they continued to identify with the singer as being authentic. However, these responses suggest that participants believe that Lady Gaga has a fixed core or essence to her regardless of the music she releases, rather than perceiving her as entity with multiple contradictory identities.

A key finding in the data was that participants who re-evaluated their Lady Gaga fan-identity became open to diverse genres of music and are more receptive of the singer exploring future endeavours outside of pop music. These individuals' 'solidified' their Lady Gaga fan-identity because they developed a greater appreciation for the singer as she 'taught' them about jazz music. In contrast to the previous theme, participants in this chapter believed that *Cheek to Cheek* was a success in terms of career and image reinvention. Participants believed that *Cheek to Cheek* allowed Lady Gaga to appeal to new demographics, particularly mature audiences, as well as reinventing her brand after commercially and critically 'flopping' with *ARTPOP*.

5.3.3 Summary of Friends and Monsters:

There appeared to be an inconsistency in the results as some participants argued that *Cheek to Cheek* era divided the fandom while others argued that it had a positive vibe to it as fans became focused on the music. Despite this inconsistency in the results, the online Lady Gaga fandom was constructed as being a community and a real-life entity that is important to the way that fans understand themselves and others. This study observed the use of three forms of capital in the Lady Gaga fandom – digital social capital, pop capital, and cultural capital. Through the use of digital social capital and pop capital, 'Pop-Gaga' fans tended to impose the 'Pop Myth' ideology in the fandom by ignoring discussions relating to the *Cheek to Cheek* era, which marginalised 'Jazz-Gaga' fans. Despite the presence of the 'Pop Myth' in the Little Monster community, some 'Jazz-Gaga' fans constructed distinctions of low and high culture, as they exerted cultural capital over fans who did not enjoy *Cheek to Cheek*. The presence of populist and more traditional notions of cultural products in the Lady Gaga fandom suggests that there was a 'struggle' between subcultural ideologies during the *Cheek to Cheek* era. This finding highlights the conflicting ways in the construction of social rules and standards, which fans are required to follow in order to be 'allowed' to participate in the online Lady Gaga fandom.

5.4 Model of Authenticity:

Participants appeared to create distinctions of authenticity in the Lady Gaga fandom, as they constructed multiple, and often conflicting formulas of behaviour which Lady Gaga was 'required' to follow. Due to this observation, the researcher developed a model of authenticity in order to organise this study's data on the conflicting ways in which *Cheek to Cheek* was received by participants. The model of authenticity posits that participants assessed Lady Gaga's authenticity in relation to the three key criteria's – success, persona, and creativity. This model can be used to determine how participants resonate with certain aspects of Lady Gaga's music as authentic in relation to the three criteria's. However, determining how many of the criteria Lady Gaga's music must meet in order to be considered authentic is beyond the scope of this Master's thesis. Instead, this theory can only provide a possible explanation for why shifts in music direction can result in claims of inauthenticity.

The diagram below, figure 6, depicts the three criteria of authenticity:

Success
- Commercial success.
- Personal success.
- Reinvention.

Creativity:
- Self-Authorship.
- How fans experience sound/ musical aesthetic.
- Performance Persona.

Persona:
- 'Subcultural Authenticity'.
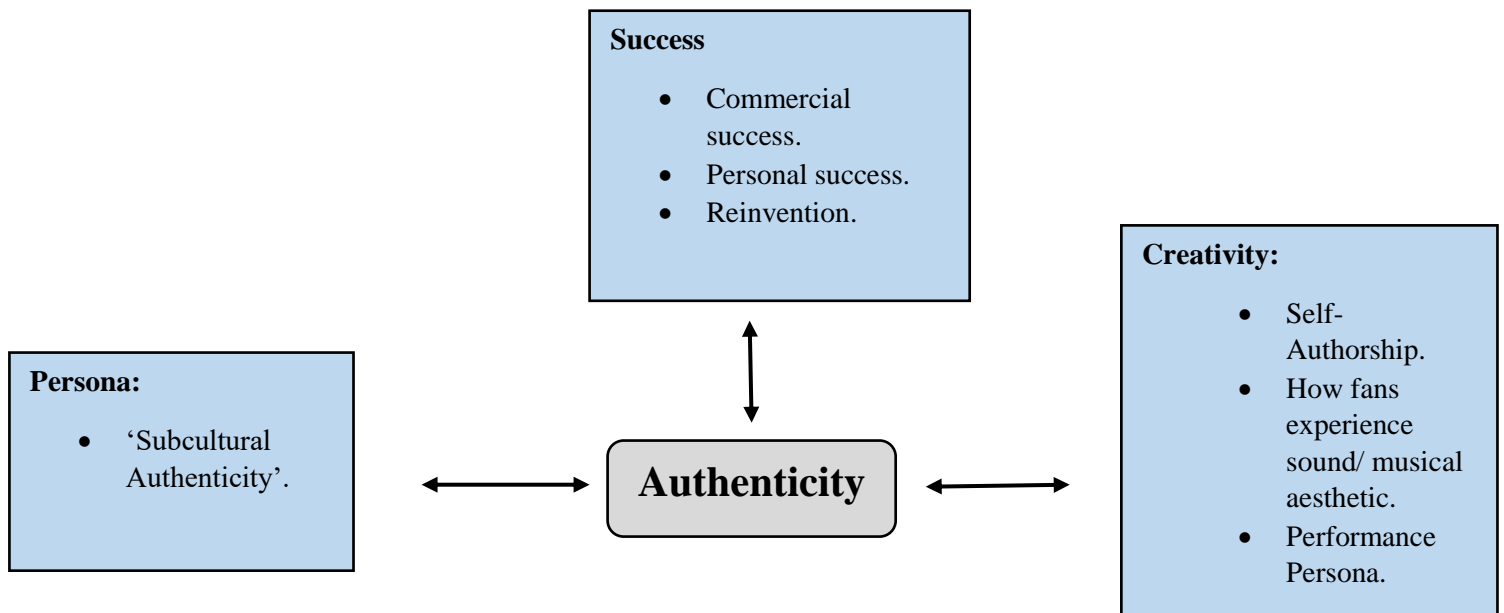
Authenticity

Figure 5.6: Model of Authenticity

The three criteria of authenticity overlap as they are inextricably linked in terms of how Lady Gaga fans received the release of *Cheek to Cheek*. This interrelatedness can be seen with the creativity and persona criteria's, as for some participants, their perception of Lady Gaga's persona also influenced their perception of her creativity. In particular, participants who discussed Lady Gaga's pop persona, 'Pop-Gaga', as being a social game changer were categorised under the creativity criteria as they perceived the singer's social activism as being distinctively innovative.

5.4.2 Success:

One of the key criteria of authenticity is the perception of Lady Gaga's success, whether it is commercial or persona/emotional success, or a successful reinvention. Regardless of participants' perception of what constitutes success, they saw it as being a key part of their fan-identity as it is a source of validation in their taste of music.

5.4.3 Persona:

According to Marwick and Boyd (2011), the practice of celebrities involves certain on-going features including the "construction of a consumable persona" (p. 140). The idea that celebrity's construct a consumable persona can be linked to Meyer's (2009) definition of the term persona, which is defined as a site of tension where an active audience either accepts or rejects the values that a celebrity image projects. This thesis will use Meyer's (2009) definition of the term persona, as participants constructed Lady Gaga's various personae, 'Pop-Gaga' and 'Jazz-Gaga', as either being authentic or inauthentic based on whether they identified with the values they perceive them to represent.

5.4.4 Creativity:

As Lady Gaga is perceived to be an innovative and avant-garde pop star by Little Monsters, her creativity was constructed as an integral aspect of her authenticity as an artist. Cohendet, Grandada, and Simon (2009) define the term creativity "as the capacity to select, rearrange, combine, or synthesize facts, ideas, images, or expertise in original ways" (p. 710-711), and argued that originality can be considered as a "sufficient condition for creativity" (p. 711). The idea that originality and creativity are interconnected can be seen with participants in this study, who perceived Lady Gaga's

originality to be a sign of her creativity, and therefore, her authenticity. However, in order for a cultural product to be considered creative, it must be accepted as a novel style by an audience (Hirsch, 1972). This idea that audience reception of a creative product can determine how original it is can be linked to this study, as it analysed the fan community's reception of *Cheek to Cheek*.

5.5 Conclusion:

The results chapter discussed the study's key findings and outlined how the data was organised. Firstly, this chapter explained how the quantitative data was collected and displayed, which was followed by a discussion of the quantitative data findings. Secondly, the chapter then outlined how the researcher organised the qualitative data under each of the three themes, which was followed by a discussion of the study's key and unexpected findings. Finally, this section discussed the construction of a model of authenticity in the Lady Gaga fandom and defined the three criteria of the model. It can be concluded that contrasting notions of authenticity and subcultural ideology in the Lady Gaga fandom resulted in conflict between 'friends and monsters'.

CHAPTER 6: MANUFACTURING THE 'OTHER'

> We don't care what people say, we know the
> truth – Lady Gaga, Bad Kids (2011).

6.0 Introduction:

Due to Lady Gaga's shift in sound and image for the *Cheek to Cheek* era, participants constructed 'Jazz-Gaga' as being inauthentic, as she was perceived as lacking aspects which they considered to be signs of 'Pop-Gaga's' authenticity. Manufacturing the 'Other' will begin by discussing the commercial success criteria of authenticity, and will analyse how although commercial success can be considered a simulacrum as it is an image without origin (Baudrillard, 1999), it held significant subcultural value for Little Monsters. The second section of this chapter, creativity, will analyse how 'Jazz-Gaga' was perceived to be inauthentic due to her lack of creativity in relation to Caves' (2000) and Jameson's (1992) discussion of innovation. This will be followed by the final criterion of authenticity, persona, and the construction of the 'monster' and the 'spectacle' as being key aspects of Lady Gaga's perceived authenticity. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a discussion on how the manufacture of *Cheek to Cheek* as an 'inauthentic other' allowed Little Monsters to live the fantasy that Lady Gaga is primarily a pop artist, despite the shift to jazz music.

6.1 Commercial Success:

The construction of the 'Pop Myth' can be considered as a conceptual framework; within this framework commercial success is one of the three criteria used by fans in order to determine Lady Gaga's authenticity. Muggleton (2000) states that individuals impose a conceptual ordering framework which allows them to select aspects that are relevant to their own interests; this is evident in the 'Pop Myth', which allows Little Monsters to select specific aspects of Lady Gaga which they consider to be authentic. A large number of Little Monsters were "sad or angry" about the *Cheek to Cheek* era as "her last pop record wasn't a smasher like the [sic] ones before it" (participant 30) which meant they

were "hankering for the return of the type of music which made her commercially successful" (participant 24) and they believed that she was unlikely to achieve massive album sales and smash hits on the radio "with a jazz album" (participant 49). Although these responses do not explicitly mention the presence of a 'Pop Myth' in the Lady Gaga fandom, they do indicate that some fans perceived pop music to be superior to jazz music because of its commerciality.

Subcultures can be considered as an expression of cultural values (Muggleton, 2000), which can be seen with participant 24, 30, and 49's responses as their "hankering for the return of" Lady Gaga's pop music indicates the perception of commercial success as being a subcultural value. The construction of this particular subcultural value allowed these participants to select aspects of Lady Gaga which they considered to be authentic – pop music. Subcultures can operate in opposition to the dominant culture, as they can establish a unique form of cultural sensibility through attitudes, values, and consumption practices and leisure activities (Muggleton, 2000). The perception among participants 24, 30, and 49 that Lady Gaga's commercially successful pop music holds subcultural value indicates that the Little Monster community operates in opposition to the dominant discourse of music authenticity, the 'Rock Myth', which asserts that pop music is inauthentic due to its blatant construction and commerciality (Tetzlaff, 1994; Gunders, 2012). Therefore, it can be argued that fans who 'subscribed' to the 'Pop Myth' developed particular values, behaviours, and practices that differed from the "prevailing set of norms" (Brake, 1985, p. 8), as participant 24, 30, and 49's preoccupation with commercial success held meaningful symbolism for them as they perceived it to be a crucial aspect of how they understood Lady Gaga and their fan-identity.

Due to the construction of this subcultural value, some fans considered anything outside of commercially successful pop music to be inauthentic, which meant that they perceived *Cheek to Cheek* and 'Jazz-Gaga' to lack subcultural value. In particular, this was evident with participant 49 who claimed that *Cheek to Cheek* was "not a real era" due to its perceived un-commerciality and lack of "pop bangerz" which the participant could "dance to in the car and be like yaaaaas mama". Enli (2015) argues that authenticity encapsulates what is considered to be real, genuine, and the truth, exemplified here by participant 49 with the use of the phrase 'not real' indicating they constructed *Cheek to Cheek* as being inauthentic. While authenticity is an evaluative concept that involves subjective judgements, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) argue that consumers do not find authenticity in the fake but are able to find elements of what is genuine, real, or true in

consumption experiences that others may perceive to be fake. However, participant 49's belief that *Cheek to Cheek* was not a 'real' era because of the lack of "pop bangerz" suggests that the individual was unable to find elements of genuineness or the truth throughout the jazz album era. As these participants were unable to identify with the (lack of) subcultural values throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era, they felt a sense of resentment towards Lady Gaga for releasing a jazz album.

The construction of commercial success as being a sign of authenticity, as well as participant 49's belief that 'Jazz-Gaga' is inauthentic while 'Pop-Gaga' is 'real' can be linked to Baudrillard's (1999) theory of the hyperreal. Baudrillard (1999) argues that post-modern individuals 'crave' the real which means they build off events and assign the truth through signifiers and images which results in the hyperreal – by constantly attaching cultural meaning to signs, individuals create the hyperreal which results in the loss of reality. By attaching subcultural value and cultural meaning to Lady Gaga's commercial success, participants 24, 30, and 40 produced the hyperreal and the loss of reality as they identified with the simulacra of the singer's success over the physical world, highlighting how their reality became replaced by sign systems. Baudrillard (1999) claims that contemporary society consumes these signs of status and identity as consumers have lost the ability to make the distinction between the natural and the simulation. Consequently, it can be argued that despite commercial success being an indicator that 'Pop-Gaga' appears to be 'real' to these participants, they have lost the ability to distinguish between the simulacra of subcultural value and reality.

Furthermore, this blurring between reality and simulacra can also be seen with the notion that Lady Gaga had previously achieved commercial success, as it can be considered a simulacrum itself. Baudrillard (1999) claims that when the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning – due to the artificial world of simulacra, people cling nostalgically to reality, truth, and reason. The idea that individuals cling to nostalgic notions of a physical reality can be seen with participants 24, 30, and 49, as they were "hankering for the return of the music which made her commercially success". Although Lady Gaga may have achieved significant commercial success in the past, these fans continued to identify with the singer's 'former glory' which resulted in the escalation of the true and lived experience. Through the construction of Lady Gaga's pop music as being commercially successful, it can be argued that participants 24, 30, and 49 have resurrected the singer's success from a simulacrum of that lived past. The 'resurrection' of this past success can be linked to Baudrillard's (1999) claim that simulation is the

active process of the replacement of the real as these fans believe that the singer was one of the biggest pop stars of the twenty-first century despite there being no origin behind this belief.

6.2 Creativity:

The notion that the 'Pop Myth' is a conceptual ordering framework is evident in the construction of the second criteria of authenticity in the Lady Gaga fandom - creativity. Participants created the subcultural narrative that Lady Gaga's pop music is creative in contrast to her jazz music, as the singer's song-writing was a core aspect of how fans identified with the singer. As Lady Gaga did not write music for *Cheek to Cheek*, fans missed the singer's "catchy, yet deep lyrics" (participant 54) which meant they believed the jazz album had "less meaning" and therefore, was "less her" (participant 1). Similarly, participant 56 was also critical of the release of *Cheek to Cheek*, arguing that it "didn't need much creativity" because it was "classy and straightforward". The reoccurring idea that *Cheek to Cheek* lacked the same level of creativity as Lady Gaga's pop albums due to her lack of song-writing involvement throughout these responses illustrates Blummer's (1969) claim that consumers usually develop common sensitivities and appreciations which influences their perceptions, judgements, and choices in cultural products. Blummer (1969) elaborated that this is why media consumers tend to make similar buying choices independent of each other, which can be seen with these participants as they developed a common taste for Lady Gaga's song-writing.

According to Bourdieu (1984), taste allows individuals to distinguish themselves, as it "classifies the classifier" in relation to other social subjects (p. 6) - this division allows individuals to make judgements of other individual's practices. Although Bourdieu (1984) discussed how the elite who had the educational and financial resources to access products associated with high culture and had a distaste for low culture, participant 56's statement that *Cheek to Cheek* "didn't need much creativity" indicates that some Little Monsters had a 'distaste for taste' as they disliked jazz standards. Participant 56's distaste for jazz standards can be linked to Jameson's (1992) claim that it is the cultural context which determines how a product and its originality is received. Although consumers typically like to argue that certain cultural products are better than others, their perception that one product is superior than another is rooted in their aesthetic preferences (Jameson, 1992). This can be seen with participants 1 and 56 as they contrasted *Cheek to Cheek* with Lady Gaga's previous pop releases in order to illustrate that the jazz album lacked the

same level of creativity as the singer's pop music, which highlights how pop culture adapts high culture's practices and institutions to fit the needs of the consumers of pop media texts.

The perception that *Cheek to Cheek* was less creative in comparison to Lady Gaga's previous pop albums highlights the difficulty in defining creativity and innovation. In particular, participant 31 argued that Lady Gaga's "take no prisoners approach to pop culture" meant that she was a "game changer", while participant 14 perceived the release of *Cheek to Cheek* as the singer "simmering down her life" which meant she stopped pushing the boundaries of social norms and standards throughout the jazz album era. Caves (2000) defines innovation as the recognition of a major breakthrough in the cultural industries as well as consumer's broad embrace of novel style which they perceive to be unusually distinctive. The use of term 'game changer' indicates that the individual perceived Lady Gaga as being innovative, as it suggests that the singer "paved a pathway of being crazy" (participant 14) which had a significant impact on the social norms and standards present in pop culture. Although innovation is usually seen as either being a technological change or a major breakthrough in the cultural industries in terms of a particular style or aesthetic (Caves, 2000), participant 14 perceived Lady Gaga as being innovative because of her push on social issues, which suggests that innovation can also be considered in relation to social activism. Furthermore, the notion that the creative industries can achieve innovation by discovering "a new class of artists" or by presenting artists to a previously unserved audience (Caves, 2000, p. 202), can be seen with participant 14 and 31 who perceived Lady Gaga's particular 'brand' of social activism as being distinctively innovative as the singer "taught a [sic] popular culture that it could be pushed to new boundaries".

However, it can be argued that participants 14 and 31 had a limited view of innovation, as they did not perceive Lady Gaga's shift to jazz as still pushing boundaries. Caves (2000) argues that any creative product which does not replicate previous products can be seen as an innovation. *Cheek to Cheek* can be regarded as a creative product because it marked a significant shift in terms of image and sound for Lady Gaga which had not been in keeping with her previous pop album releases. Secondly, as Lady Gaga's shift from pop to jazz music was a career shift rarely seen in contemporary pop music, she continued to push the social norms and expectations of pop stars through the guise of jazz music, and therefore, it can be argued that the singer did not 'replicate' the previous material she had released. Furthermore, Jameson (1992) claims that it is the cultural

context at the time which determines how a product and its originality is received. A crucial aspect of participant 14 and 31's perception of Lady Gaga as being a 'social innovator' was tied to her 'Pop-Gaga' persona which meant that anything outside of this persona was not perceived as being creative, highlighting how creativity and innovation are contentious terms based on how a consumer audience perceives a creative product.

Moulard, Garrity, and Rice (2015) argue that consumers' perceptions of a celebrity's authenticity is driven by two main factors – the behaviour is unique to that person and is stable over time. As Lady Gaga went from writing her own music to covering jazz standards, and "moved from being in the headlines each week to simmering down her life", participant 14 believed that the singer changed what was considered to be unique and stable about herself. Moulard et al (2015) argue that "talent is defined as the perception that the celebrity demonstrates skill in his or her chosen field", as celebrities are 'required' to possess a special and rare ability that enabled them to earn their fame (p. 178). In this case, Lady Gaga's song-writing ability and creativity were perceived to be special and rare abilities which she had and which differentiated herself from her pop peers. When she shifted away from this image, there was a sense that she was "less Gaga", as the singer's song-writing and social activism were indicators of her authenticity.

Kellner (1992) argues that the postmodern identity tends to be more unstable and subject to change, as it is constructed from the images of leisure and consumption. In the postmodern world, individuals are theorised to be able to 'naturally' change their identity as it can be freely chosen and easily disposed of (Kellner, 1992). Despite Kellner's (1992) theory that the post-modern subject can change their identity, the observation that participants only considered Lady Gaga to be 'Lady Gaga' if she is perceived to be creative through a pop music frame suggests that participants believe she has a modern identity. Hall (1992) argues that although the modern identity is formed in relation to the socio-cultural world, the individual still has an 'inner core' that is the 'real' them. Participant 1 and 56's belief that Lady Gaga's music is only 'her' when she writes her own "deep meaning lyrics" suggests that they believe she has an inner core that is the 'real' Lady Gaga – a singer song-writer. This observation contradicts Kellner's (1992) claim, which highlights that despite the theory that post-modern individuals actively construct their identity, these participants still 'cling' on to the idea of a unified identity. However, Hall (1992) argues that "if we feel we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a 'comforting' narrative of the self about ourselves" (p. 277). This could explain why participants 1 and 56 constructed the narrative that Lady

Gaga's inner core is her creativity as an artist, as it provides them with a sense of security in how they identify with the singer.

The narrative that only 'Pop-Gaga' is creative, and therefore, authentic, suggests that 'Jazz-Gaga' is 'less' Gaga, which indicates that these participants constructed a distinction between these two personas in order to illustrate that any artistic endeavour outside of pop is inauthentic. Although Grayson and Martinec (2004) argue that creativity can be perceived as a sign of authenticity, these signs of authenticity are influenced by individuals' personal predilections. Even though song-writing appeared to be a critical aspect of how participant 1 identified with Lady Gaga as an artist, there is no purely objective criteria for determining whether a popular media text is authentic or not, and therefore, the construction of creativity as a sign of authenticity can be conceptualised as a simulacrum itself. According to Baudrillard (1999), simulation is dangerous because it suggests that behind reality, social contracts might be nothing but a simulation itself – it can be argued Lady Gaga as having a distinct identity as a creative artist is a simulation itself which means there is no 'real' Lady Gaga. However, for participants 1 and 56, the construction of creativity as a sign of authenticity provides them with a form of escape from the notion that there is no universal truth or Lady Gaga.

6.3 Persona:

The third and final criterion of authenticity which participants used to assess Lady Gaga's authenticity was her persona, 'Pop-Gaga', which had subcultural authenticity in the fan community as it was a critical aspect of how participants perceived the singer and their own fan-identity. The experience in subcultures is shaped in a variety of locales – although Hebdige's (1985) conceptualisation of locales specifically referred to place-based locations, the Little Monster community can be considered as its locale because it imposes its own unique structures and hierarchy of values. In particular, this hierarchy of values can be seen with the 'embrace' of the monster in the Lady Gaga fandom, as according to participant 14, the fan community was celebrated for their "fucked up thoughts" as "if you loved Gaga, you loved things which were unexplainable". Participant 14's response can be linked to the concept of the monster, which according to Cohen (1996), embodies a certain cultural moment and incorporates fear, desire, anxiety and fantasy. Monsters cannot be defined by society as they refuse to be classified, which can

be seen with Little Monsters as they were unable to be defined by cultural norms which meant they "were praised" by Lady Gaga for not conforming to "society's standards and norms" (participant 14).

The finding that the Little Monster community were united over their love for Lady Gaga and the unexplainable indicates that participant 14 placed a high level of subcultural value on Lady Gaga and the fan community as being monsters. Williams (2011) argues that post-subcultures focus on "perpetuating non-normativity" (98), which can be seen with the Little Monster community, as their embrace of things which were unexplainable suggests that participant 14 invested significant time in constructing an authentic 'monster' lifestyle outside of mainstream society. Although "authenticity claims serve to root people in identities that are meaningful to them", Williams (2011) argues that an authentic experience and an authentic identity are social constructions (p. 144). However, an authentic identity can become real through interaction, which can be seen with participant 14 as their interaction in a community of people with "fucked up thoughts" allowed the participant to understand their own identity, Lady Gaga, and the world around them despite the fact that their identity and sense of community are social constructions.

As the 'monster' and social activism aspect of 'Pop-Gaga's' identity were a key aspect of how participant 14 understood their identity, the singer had a level of subcultural authenticity prior to the release of *Cheek to Cheek*. Thornton (1995) argues that subcultural authenticity is "grounded in the performer in so far as s/he represents the community" (p. 30). Participant 14 compared the release of *Cheek to Cheek* to "watching a friend go to a new school and doing all of these new activities, and you're just like, what am I doing with my life". The participant's response indicates a sense of alienation from Lady Gaga, as they could not identify with the singer's shift from 'Pop-Gaga' to 'Jazz-Gaga', which indicates that Lady Gaga had lost some form of subcultural authenticity throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era. Furthermore, Lady Gaga's 'loss' of subcultural authenticity can be linked to Botting's (1999) claim that in the post-modern world, the "breakdown of modernity's meta-narratives discloses a horror that identity, reality, truth, and meaning" are the effects of imagination and perception (p. 172-173). Due to her loss of subcultural authenticity, participant 14 had to "re-learn to love Gaga' and face the 'horror' that Lady Gaga changed, further highlighting the loss of the narrative that 'Pop-Gaga' is Lady Gaga. Therefore, the shift to jazz music disclosed the horror that the singer's identity is not rooted in an objective reality, but instead, has been constructed by fans.

Rudin and McHugh (1987) define parasocial relationships as a friend-like and intimate relationship between an individual and a "mediated persona" (p. 279). Participant 14's use of the term "friend" indicates that the individual had formed a parasocial relationship with Lady Gaga, as they believed that they had a close connection to the singer. Furthermore, participant 14's statement that the release of *Cheek to Cheek* was similar to "watching a friend go to a new school" reinforces the participant perceived closeness with Lady Gaga, as they believed they knew and understood 'Pop-Gaga' in the same way as "their flesh and blood friends" (Ballantine & Martin, 2005, p. 199). However, Auslander (2004) argues that individuals will never know the person behind an artist's persona as it is a highly valued simulacrum with layers of performance, including the real person and the celebrity image. Therefore, participant 14's belief that they knew the 'real' Lady Gaga highlights the irony of parasocial relationships as the singer's identity is not rooted in a physical reality, and consequently, the individual identified with the simulacrum of Lady Gaga, rather than the person behind the personae.

Moulard et al (2015) posits that a celebrity's true self and motivations are unobservable to the consumer, which means that individual's assess a celebrity's authenticity based on his or her behaviour. This can be seen with participants who believed that Lady Gaga had certain values such as "outlandish behaviour" (participant 27) and social activism, as although they may never meet the singer's true self, they attributed authenticity to Lady Gaga based on her behaviour. However, as these behaviours are images that are not rooted in a physical reality, it can be argued that participant 14 attached cultural meaning to 'Pop-Gaga's' social activism and the sense of belonging he or she felt towards the fan community. By assigning meaning to the sense of belonging participant 14 felt in regards to the Little Monster community resulted in the loss of reality, as it suggests that the social belonging which they felt was a simulation in itself, and therefore indicates the horror that the Little Monster identity does not exist in a physical reality despite feeling 'real' to the participant.

Debord (1994) argues that individuals live in a media-saturated consumer society organised around the production and consumption of images, commodities, and staged events. Participants identified with the 'spectacle' of Lady Gaga's "big pop performances" (participant 4), as she used to "slay all the other pop girls at award shows" (participant 49) due to her "energetic choreography and outlandish stage behaviour" (participant 27). The finding that participants missed Lady Gaga's theatrical live performances can be linked to the 'Baudrillard Effect', which Thornton (1995) argues is

the expectation of a spectacle when musicians perform live as concerts only feel 'real' to pop music audiences if a performance matches its television reproduction. This expectation can be seen with participants 4, 27, and 49 as they perceived the lack of props, dancing, and instruments throughout the *Cheek to Cheek Tour* as a sign that 'Jazz-Gaga' is inauthentic because her jazz performances lack the "fullness" (participant 32) of her pop performances. The notion that Lady Gaga's performance only has "fullness" if it meets certain criteria, such as dancing and props, indicates that fans constructed certain expectations which she was 'required' to follow. The construction of these fan expectations can be linked to Debord's (1994) claim that when the real world becomes images, images are transformed into real beings. Although participants' production of a criteria of persona authenticity is an image itself, this image was transformed into a 'real entity' as it holds significant cultural meaning to Little Monsters, as it allows them to make sense of Lady Gaga, despite the irony that the world is no longer directly perceptible to them.

Debord (1994) was critical of the society of the spectacle, arguing that because spectacles "fascinate the denizens of the media and consumer society" (p. 2), individuals lost the ability to make a distinction between the image and reality. However, Debord (1994) did not consider that individuals are active in their participation in the construction of a society of spectacle, as Little Monsters' missed the "hype of her [Lady Gaga] doing something unexpected" as well as participant 4's use of the term 'spectacle'. The use of the terms spectacle and hype suggests that participants 4 and 39 had a degree of awareness that Lady Gaga actively constructed her image and personae, and emphasises Grayson and Martinec's (2004) claim that consumers no longer perceive "fantasy and reality as meaningful categories because they recognise that all 'realities' are subjectively constructed and evaluated" (p. 306). Therefore, Little Monsters are not cultural dupes who have been lured in by the commercialism of pop music but instead, enjoy their role in the consumption of music. The idea that consumers are aware that all realities are subjectively constructed could explain why participant 4 still identified with the spectacle as being authentic, as the participant was able to find aspects of the genuine and the real within a world of images and signs. However, this does not provide an explanation for why participant 4 did not identify with jazz music – as the perception of authenticity is rooted in taste, it could be argued that participant 4 perceived the *Cheek to Cheek* performances as being inauthentic because it was outside of Pop-Gaga despite the fact that Lady Gaga's shift from pop to jazz can be considered a spectacle in itself.

6.4 *Cheek to Cheek* as the 'Other':

Maitland (2002) argues that the negotiation of otherness is the practice of our everyday life – othering can be defined as the starting point where something will be analysed. Individuals' anxieties of otherness and their struggle to make sense of the difference around them impacts the othering process (Maitland, 2002). The negotiation of otherness was prevalent in the Lady Gaga fandom as fans manufactured *Cheek to Cheek* as an 'inauthentic other' as a way to 'avoid' re-evaluating their fan-identity. In particular, participants dismissed the jazz album as a side project "rather than a proper era" (participant 49), which meant that they "didn't really re-evaluate" (participant 39) their identity as Lady Gaga fans. The use of the term 'side project' indicates that *Cheek to Cheek* was 'othered' by these participants - as they constructed it as being of less quality than Lady Gaga's pop albums, and as being an inauthentic other in the singer's wider discography, it allowed them to make sense of Lady Gaga's shift in music.

Hinerman (1992) posits that a key part of what it means to be a fan is fantasising as it allows individuals to negotiate troubling situations by allowing them to suture their identity together when they feel vulnerable, dissatisfied, or threatened. By constructing *Cheek to Cheek* as an inauthentic other, it allowed fans to believe the fantasy that Lady Gaga is still a pop star despite the release of *Cheek to Cheek*. Participant 39 stated "I didn't feel the need to do any re-evaluation mostly because I kept my time busy listening to her old stuff" - by engaging only with the singer's pop discography, participant 39 was complicit in constructing and believing the fantasy that Lady Gaga is a pop star. Laplanche and Pontali (2003) argue that fantasy is a term used to refer to imagination, or can be seen considered as a product of imagination. Fantasy can appear to be fiction, or the nature of its construction remains to be shown/ hidden (Laplanche & Pontali, 2003). Although it cannot be conclusively determined if these participants are aware that their fantasy that Lady Gaga is only a pop star is fictional, the consistent use of the term 'side project' throughout participant responses indicates that this fantasy is hidden to them, as they only consider Lady Gaga's pop music as being an 'authentic' part of her discography.

According to Laplanche and Pontali (2003), the world of fantasy is located between the subjective and the objective, as although the external world is gradually lost during the fantasising process, an individual's perception asserts that there is a reality. Although the notion that Lady Gaga is primarily a pop-star is subjective, participant 39's assertion that *Cheek to Cheek* is a side project suggests that through the individual's perception, 'Pop-

Gaga' is the only 'true' Gaga. Despite the balance between these two contradictory notions of fantasy and reality, the individual gains satisfaction through illusion (Laplance & Pontali, 2003). Laplance and Pontali (2003) elaborated that there is a close relationship between fantasy and desire, as fantasy represents the particular urges and feelings of an individual – this can be seen with the finding that several participants chose to only engage with Lady Gaga's pop music, as it gave them satisfaction and the assurance that the singer is a pop artist. By believing in this fantasy, it arguably allowed participants to negotiate the threat that *Cheek to Cheek* posed to how they understood Lady Gaga and their own identity as a fan.

6.5 Conclusion:

Although pop music fans are often constructed as being cultural dupes, respondents proved this to be misconception as they were active in the manufacture of 'Jazz-Gaga' as being inauthentic due to the lack of pop music, creativity, and subcultural authenticity present throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era. This chapter discussed how participants' placement of subcultural value onto commercial success highlights how subcultures construct a unique form of cultural sensibility (Brake, 1985). Despite providing participants with meaningful symbolism, this research argued that commercial success and the placement of subcultural value on commercial success are simulacrum. Afterwards, this chapter discussed how participants perceived Lady Gaga as being a creative artist through her song-writing and social activism, while also analysing these signs of authenticity in relation to Baudrillard's (1992) theory of simulation and simulacra in order to highlight that the singer is not rooted in an objective reality. This was followed by the final criteria of authenticity, persona, and how participants constructed the 'monster' and the 'spectacle' as being critical aspects of Lady Gaga's subcultural authenticity. In conclusion, the manufacture of *Cheek to Cheek* as an inauthentic other allowed Little Monsters to live the fantasy that Lady Gaga is still a pop-star.

CHAPTER 7: "IT'S ALL THE SAME GAGA ANYWAY":
The construction of identity and the 'real' in the Lady Gaga fandom.

I live halfway between reality and theatre at all times. And I was born this way.

- Lady Gaga

7.0 Introduction:

Despite the significant transformation in Lady Gaga's sound and image for the *Cheek to Cheek* era, participants still identified with aspects of 'Jazz-Gaga' which they perceived to be authentic. 'It's all the same Gaga anyway' will begin by discussing the persona criterion of authenticity, and will analyse the construction of subcultural identification and values in the Little Monster community in relation to Baudrillard's (1999) theory of simulation and simulacra. This will be followed by a critical exploration of theories about modern and post-modern identities, highlighting contradictions in the findings around the construction of the Lady Gaga fan-identity. The second section of this chapter, creativity, will discuss how Lady Gaga was seen as being innovative by pushing fan expectations of her as an artist, as fans perceived the singer to 'un-manufacture' herself throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era. Despite the perception among participants that 'Jazz-Gaga' and 'Pop-Gaga' are "all the same Gaga anyway", they constructed the jazz album era as a reinvention.

7.1 Persona:

Similar to participants in the first analytical chapter, Manufacturing the 'Other', participants sorted in this chapter used Muggleton's (2000) conceptual ordering framework in order to determine aspects of Lady Gaga which they considered to be authentic. Muggleton (2000) contends that individuals impose a conceptual ordering framework which allows them to select aspects that are relevant to their own interests; this notion can be linked to the creation of subcultural identification and discourse in the Lady Gaga fandom. Subcultures establish a form of cultural sensibility through attitudes, values, consumption practices, and leisure activities which can be considered as lifestyle groupings (Muggleton, 2000). The Lady Gaga fandom has constructed a discourse around

Lady Gaga's authenticity as there are certain values and attitudes which fans identify with because they represent the 'real' Lady Gaga. However, unlike participants in the previous chapter, participant 23 stated that they did not feel alienated by the transition in genre because they always "identified with Gaga as a strongly independent, hardworking, and compassionate songwriter". Similarly, participant 46 argued that fans have been supportive of the *Cheek to Cheek* era because "changing her music style doesn't necessarily change who she is as a person that people could identify with overall".

This discourse around subcultural identification meant that despite releasing a jazz album, Lady Gaga was still constructed as portraying the values of work ethic, independence, and compassion. Unlike participants in the previous chapter who had expressed feelings of alienation from 'Jazz-Gaga' because they perceived *Cheek to Cheek* to be uncreative and "less her" (participant 1), participants 23 and 46 believed that the key qualities of Lady Gaga's pop music was still present in the jazz music, which meant they continued to identify with the singer. Fan identification with Lady Gaga because she represents specific values can be linked to the notion that the singer's image is connected to values and specific forms of identity as it has been "saturated with ideology" (Kellner, 1992, p. 157). Participant 23 and 46's manufacture of subcultural values around Lady Gaga's identity can be seen as an ideological construct which allows them to become enculturated, and learn the appropriate values and behaviours which Lady Gaga must follow in order to be considered authentic by Little Monsters (Kellner, 1992).

 However, the identification of significant features is undeniably an expression of value, which means that value free and objective accounts of phenomena are impossible (Kellner, 1992). This idea that the identification of values is a subjective process can be linked back to Muggleton's (2000) idea that individuals create a framework to understand the world. The subcultural discourse that Lady Gaga represents particular values such as being "independent, hardworking, and compassionate" (participant 23) regardless of her persona can be linked back to Muggleton's (2000) theory of a conceptual ordering structure, as these values allowed participants 23 and 46 to understand the singer's transition in genre. Beverland and Farrelly (2010) put forward the notion that authenticity encapsulates what is considered to be genuine, real, and or true. Individuals do not find authenticity in the fake, but are able to find elements of what is real in consumption experiences or objects which may to be perceived as being unreal or false (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). It is possible that participants 23 and 46 were able to find aspects of what they considered to be real in Lady Gaga's jazz persona, her values of independence and

compassion, which meant they were still able to identify with the singer as being authentic and real.

Additionally, Muggleton's (2000) notion of a conceptual framework can be applied to the Little Monster Community's construction of the subcultural narrative that Lady Gaga has always been a jazz artist since the beginning of her career. Within this subcultural narrative, participants created a criterion to determine Lady Gaga's persona authenticity based on the singer's behaviour, which can be linked to Moore's (2002) theory that particular acts and gestures are interpreted by an engaged audience as signs of authenticity. In particular, participant 31 who, when asked if they felt alienated by the *Cheek to Cheek* era, responded "not at all. She has mentioned several times she was in a jazz band growing up", and claimed that fans love Lady Gaga's live covers of jazz songs, such as *Orange Coloured Sky* (1950). Participant 34 echoed participant 31's sentiment that jazz 'appears' to be a 'natural' part of Lady Gaga's identity, admitting "I always knew Gaga would at some point in her career release a jazz record".

The construction of the subcultural narrative about Lady Gaga's career as a jazz artist can be linked to Enli's (2015) notion of mediated authenticity. Enli (2015) defines the term as the communicative process where distinctions of what is considered authentic depends on the symbolic negotiations between the participants in the communication. Although a core aspect of the negotiation of mediated authenticity is the perception of spontaneity, it is a paradox as performers are expected to 'act natural' while also being compatible with a particular criterion of expected behaviour (Enli, 2015). As Lady Gaga had expressed her love for the genre multiple times prior to releasing *Cheek to Cheek*, whether it was performing jazz covers or revealing that she had grown up in a jazz band, participants 31 and 34 perceived the singer to be 'herself'. It can be argued that the construction of this narrative around Lady Gaga as an artist 'allowed' the singer to release a jazz album, which meant 'Jazz-Gaga' was perceived to be authentic as the singer followed participant 31 and 34's formula in terms of how she should perform and act.

Furthermore, participant 28's claim that Lady Gaga was "born a jazz singer" suggests that there is a 'real' Lady Gaga, which can be linked to Baudrillard's (1999) theory around the sense of the real. As people feel 'lost' in an artificial world of simulacra, or images that have no origin other than their meaning, people cling to truth, reality, and reason. Baudrillard (1999) claims that this desire for reality results in the production of the real and the referential, as society builds off of events and assigns the truth through images which results in the loss of reality. Participants 23 and 46 constructed the perception that

'Jazz-Gaga' is the 'real' singer by assigning the 'truth' to signs such as Lady Gaga covering jazz songs like *Orange Coloured Sky*, which has resulted in the hyperreal and the loss of reality. This is because the 'real' singer has been lost underneath a system of signs and images, as the simulacra of Lady Gaga has become more 'real' to these fans than reality itself (Baudrillard, 1999; Bishop & Phillips, 2009). Hall's (1992) claim that individuals only have a unified identity if they "construct a comforting story or narrative of the self about ourselves" (p. 277) can be connected to the 'collapse' of reality between the two Lady Gaga personas. It can be argued that fans have constructed this identity narrative that Lady Gaga "was born" as a jazz artist (participant 28) in order to comfort themselves that despite the shift in genre, there is a core aspect to the singer.

The observation that Lady Gaga has a core aspect of her identity can be linked to Hall's (1992) definition of the modern identity as the awareness that although individuals have an inner core, it is formed and modified in the interaction between self and society. The belief that Lady Gaga is a, "independent, hardworking and compassionate" (participant 23) individual who was born as a jazz artist and "grew up" performing jazz music suggests that fans believe there is an inherent quality to the singer's identity as an artist. Hall (1992) argues that although individuals, such as Lady Gaga, have an inner essence that is the 'real' person, "it is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds outside and the identities which they offer" (p. 276). Furthermore, Schwartz et al (2011) posits that multiple aspects of identity can exist, and these aspects of identity will be more or less salient depending on the social context. The theory that there are multiple aspects of identity can be seen with participant 33's response:

> "It marks a point of maturity in her career where the reinvention isn't just a brand new image but an extension of who she already is as a person. In this case, her affinity and connection to older music which has already been shown with her love for classic rock and classical music and now in this case, standards and jazz".

Participant 33 posited that *Cheek to Cheek* gave Lady Gaga the opportunity to showcase her affinity for jazz music, which suggests that the fan constructed different aspects of Lady Gaga's identity – she is also 'Rock-Gaga', 'Classical-Gaga', and 'Jazz-Gaga'. These different aspects of the singer's identity are more or less salient depending on the social context as an individual's identity is modified depending on their interaction with the social world (Hall, 1992; Schwartz et al, 2011). Lady Gaga 'extended' her identity by releasing a jazz album which allowed her to portray the jazz aspect of her identity. However, despite having multiple persona's, participant 33's response indicates that she

still has a core aspect to her identity – her connection and affinity to older music. The notion that Lady Gaga has a core aspect to herself suggests that participants in this study have constructed the singer's identity around modernist perceptions of identity as a way for them to process the change of music (Hall, 1992). Instead of deciding that Lady Gaga had to change, like participants in the previous chapter, they decided that jazz music was another aspect of herself.

Contrastingly, participant 1 stated "I know she will be constantly shifting throughout her career as that is the nature of the chameleon Lady Gaga". Participant 1's use of the term chameleon suggests that the inner essence of Lady Gaga's identity is to be undefined as she has multiple identities, and therefore, it can be argued she has a post-modern identity which is "constituted theatrically through role playing and image construction" (Kellner, 1992, p. 150). In contrast to the modern identity, the post-modern identity is fragmented and is no longer thought of as being composed of a single identity, but of several often contradictory identities (Hall, 1992). It could be argued that the singer's different personae are contradictory identities as she is a simultaneously a pop and a jazz artist who also is a fan of rock and classical music. These different identities are formed in relation to how Lady Gaga is represented in the cultural systems which surround us, as she assumes a particular persona depending on the album or live performance (Hall, 1992). While the post-modern identity has been framed as one which is not unified coherent self (Hall, 1992), Lady Gaga's one defining trait is her ability to be undefined by her fans as she is constantly evolving as an artist.

Kellner (1992) argued "many of the postmodern theories privilege popular culture as the site of the implosion of identity and fragmentation of the subject" (p. 144), which means identity should no longer be thought as being composed of a single identity, but instead, of several contradictory or unresolved identities (Hall, 1992). The idea that individuals can have unresolved identities is exemplified by participant one who, despite describing Lady Gaga as a chameleon, perceived 'Jazz-Gaga' as inauthentic because she did not write the music on *Cheek to Cheek*. Participant one's contrasting responses indicates that there is an inconsistency and a conflict in his or her identification of Lady Gaga's persona and the artist itself. Kellner (1992) posits that the "subjective identity itself is a myth" because "it is an illusion that one really is a substantial subject, that one really has a fixed identity" (Kellner, 1992, p. 143). It can be argued that that the conflict participant one experienced is a lack of core identity which highlights the issues of the construction of identity in the postmodern age.

Although a reoccurring theme in fan-identity scholarship is the idea that individuals are instrumental in constructing their identity around the media texts they consume, and are active in the production of communities of like-minded individuals (Duffett, 2013; Abercrombie & Longhurtst, 1998, and Jenkins, 2006), these discussions of fan-identity tend to regard it as being a singular and unified entity. Remarkably, this study observed that participants have a multi-faceted Lady Gaga fan-identity, as the diversification in the singer's image arguably also diversified the Lady Gaga fan-identity. Several participants who enjoyed *Cheek to Cheek* re-evaluated their fan-identity as they developed a deeper appreciation for genres outside of pop music. This can be seen with participant 30 who stated "I guess I have more appreciation for different genres because of the fact that I am a fan of Lady Gaga". Similarly, participant 23 stated:

> "I have re-evaluated my identity as a Lady Gaga fan throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era, as I have found that I am more appreciative of her diversity and knowledge of musical genres. I feel that I am appreciative of both of her eras, and I reflect that in my identity as a Little Monster".

Participant 23's response indicates that they reconstructed his or her fan-identity in relation to Lady Gaga's transition to jazz music, which means the individual is no longer a fan of just 'Pop-Gaga', but is also a fan of 'Jazz-Gaga'. The participant's re-evaluation of their fan identity highlights how identities should be seen as "ongoing processes (and achievements) rather than as a sort of sociological system" or as a finished product (Lawler, 20134, p. 10). Grossberg (1992) discussed how audiences and texts are continuously remade as their identity is reconstructed by relocating their place within different contexts. "The audience is always caught up in the continuous reconstruction of cultural contexts which enable them to consume, interpret, and use texts in specific ways" (Grossberg, 1992, p. 54). It can be argued that the release of *Cheek to Cheek* shifted the cultural context of the Little Monster community, as participants re-constructed their fan-identity in order to reflect the diversification of Lady Gaga's image. The re-construction of the Lady Gaga fan-identity can be linked to the postmodern identity, which tends to be unstable and subject to change as it is produced from the images of leisure and consumption (Kellner, 1992). This is because consumers are "confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities" that they could, at least temporarily, identify with (Hall, 1992, p. 27).

As participants constructed their fan-identity around the simulacra of Lady Gaga, it can be argued that their fan-identity is unstable and subject to change. The notion that the

Lady Gaga fan-identity is subject to change can be seen with participant five, who stated that due to *Cheek to Cheek*, they evaluated their response to Lady Gaga depending on the genre, and change their behaviour so it is appropriate for the social context. The participant gave the example that when they watch Lady Gaga performing a pop song, like applause, they react like "yaaas bitch! Snatch her weave! Woo!", whereas when ft is a jazz performance "I just sit, watch, and enjoy her vocals". Participant five's response illustrates that it may be 'natural' to change identities, as the individual actively constructed their behaviour around the singer's image, which also highlights that there are multiple fan-identities and practices which Little Monsters could identify with.

7.2 Creativity:

Participants who enjoyed the *Cheek to Cheek* era tended to perceive 'Jazz-Gaga' as being authentic and creative in two ways; firstly, she was seen to be innovative, and secondly, she was perceived to 'un-manufacture' herself for the album by toning down her image and showcasing her vocal talent. In the previous chapter, Lady Gaga's creativity was a crucial aspect of her perceived authenticity among participants who preferred 'Pop-Gaga', and as she did not write her own music or push boundaries of social norms throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era, she was seen as inauthentic. In contrast, participants in this chapter perceived 'Jazz-Gaga' to be creative as she pushed boundaries of expected behaviour for pop stars. Although both groups of fans perceived Lady Gaga's ability to push boundaries as a crucial aspect of her identity as an artist, they created different distinctions of creativity.

Blummer (1969) argued pop media producers seek to catch styles that are popular in contemporary pop culture, which means consumers are unwittingly agents "of a fashion consuming public whose incipient tastes the buyers are seeking to anticipate" (p. 280). Media producers who are able to 'anticipate' the tastes and needs of their target audience by predicting future popular styles tend to be perceived as innovative (Blummer, 1969). Cohendet, Grandada, and Simon's statement that creativity is usually aimed at changing the existing rules of use was exemplified by Lady Gaga, who challenged fans' perceptions of her as an artist and audience expectations of the type of music which a pop star should release. Furthermore, the singer subverted trends which are popular in contemporary popular culture by releasing *Cheek to Cheek*; participant 55 theorised that jazz music is

typically perceived as being out of 'style' among "the main pop culture consumers (teens and young adults)".

As Lady Gaga was perceived to be 'going against the grain', participants perceived the singer as a highly creative individual because she showcased her talent in a way she rarely had before. In particular, participant 23 praised the singer for shifting from pop music, which she had been previously associated with, to a completely new genre as it demonstrates "an incredible amount of musical talent and knowledge". Similarly, participant 55 posited that because Lady Gaga "was willing to damage the momentum of her pop career to pursue her own interests", the singer proved that she is "the intensely creative and talented individual we all loved her for". However, Cohendet et al (2009) posited that "no matter how talented individuals may be, creativity can only be fully expressed in the joint efforts of a wide community of agents, who frequently cooperate in a dense network of collaboration" (p. 709). While participants in this study tended to primarily attribute the creativity displayed throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era primarily to the singer, product 'Lady Gaga' does not exist as a single entity, but instead has been created in collaboration with the Haus of Gaga, a team of producers, managers, and music professionals with the purpose of selling *Cheek to Cheek* to a mass audience.

The Rock Myth privileges artists who are perceived to show their skill and talent, as they are constructed as signs of an artist's genuineness and authenticity (Gunders, 2012). Although the Little Monster Community is a pop music fandom, the study observed the construction of singing talent as a sign of authenticity and genuineness that pervades the Rock Myth was evident among participants. As Lady Gaga stripped back her "Gaganess" for the album, she was able to display her "pure unadulterated talent" without "using any crutches or costumes" (participant 12). Participant 39 argued that Lady Gaga "got to showcase her true talent" throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era, which meant she "gained a lot of new respect for her talent from the elderly public" as they "had yet to be exposed to her real skills". Similarly, participant 56 also discussed how they were proud of Lady Gaga for releasing *Cheek to Cheek* because it proved that her talent is genuine, and therefore "can't be questioned". The observation that participants believed that Lady Gaga proved her talent is 'true' throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era exemplifies how fans have constructed notions of authenticity based on talent, as it indicates genuineness and a sense of the real.

The observation that participants constructed notions of Lady Gaga's authenticity around the 'genuineness' and 'realness' of her talent can be linked to Enli's (2015) claim that

authenticity is a dominant tendency of contemporary culture as we have an obsession with the real, the genuine, and the authentic. "Paradoxically, in the context of the media, authenticity is generally seen to be positive and audiences seemingly appreciate raw and unscripted moments" (Enli, 2015, p. 2). While images in the media have been highly constructed, audiences still perceive celebrities who appear to be genuine as authentic, which is a paradox as they will never actually know the real celebrity (Enli, 2015). As Lady Gaga stripped back her "GAGAness" (participant 7) for the jazz album, she was able to let her vocal ability take centre stage, which was perceived as a sign of authenticity and meant that she "set herself apart from all of the other pop stars" (participant 47) by proving that she was more than "just another manufactured pop star incapable of versatility or demonstrating actual vocal talent" (participant 37). These responses suggest that Lady Gaga 'un-manufactured' herself by proving she could actually sing, and can be linked to Enli's (2015) claim that authenticity is an evaluative process which involves subjective judgements and is used in opposition to what is considered to be fake or false.

Despite participant claims that 'Jazz-Gaga' is authentic because she is more than a manufactured pop star, the singer's persona throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era was still highly manufactured, which means there is no 'real' Lady Gaga. According to Bishop and Phillips (2009), although reality is shown, it is never actually present as we construct a notion of what is real, or at least an image of the real, even if it may not actually exist outside of that perception. Thompson's (1992) notion that culture is now dominated by simulations, or objects and discourses which have no apparent origin or foundation, is evident in the Lady Gaga fandom, as the discourse that artists who have vocal talent are genuine and 'un-manufactured' is not rooted in a physical reality. Instead, this fan constructed discourse exemplifies how signs get their meaning from their relations with each other, rather than from some independent reality (Thompson, 1992). As reality has been replaced by sign systems, such as Lady Gaga's vocal ability, simulation determines what is considered real, and has meant that fans have arguably lost the ability to distinguish between the natural and the simulation (Baudrillard, 1999).

7.3 Commercial Success:

The final criteria of authenticity, commercial success, posits that participants in this chapter believed Lady Gaga's reinvention throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era was a sign of success as they believed it was needed in order to rebuild the singer's brand. According

to Elliot (2013), "celebrities are constantly on the brink of obsolescence" and "appearing out of date", which means they need to periodically reinvent their image in order to maintain public interest (p. 34). Participant 12 argued that *Cheek to Cheek* allowed Gaga to mend her image after ARTPOP, which "basically alienated Gaga to the public", while participant 16 claimed that fans are "grateful as it appears to have helped repair the broken image she got after the ARTPOP era". Similarly, participant 33 also observed that fan reception to the jazz album was more positive after they realised it was a success; "now that they saw the positive effect that it has had on her image and public perception of her, the community has definitely been more positive towards the era".

Nunn and Biressi (2010) posits that the scandalised celebrity can return to public favour after being cast out from idealised status by rebranding themselves. This idea that celebrities can regain public interest by reinvention themselves can be seen with these responses as they indicate that *Cheek to Cheek* was perceived to be a success in terms of reinvention because Lady Gaga 'returned' to public favour. It can be argued that participant 12 and 16's discussion of Lady Gaga's reinvention is a sign that they are, to an extent, aware of the singer's manufacture as they perceive the celebrity image as something which can be (re-) constructed. Although audiences may claim a celebrity to be inauthentic if they become aware that a celebrity's image is manufactured, these participants did not perceive Lady Gaga's reinvention as a sign of inauthenticity. Instead, it is possible that they saw Lady Gaga's rebranding with the release of *Cheek to Cheek* as an important aspect of continued success within the media, rather than as a sign of inauthenticity.

However, the finding that participants were aware of, and supported Lady Gaga's reinvention with *Cheek to Cheek* is inconsistent with the observation that participants perceived the singer to have an authentic, real, and fixed identity. This inconsistency in the findings highlights how fandom is a nebulous experience – the contradictions are part of the process of fans shifting along with Lady Gaga. Furthermore, this seemingly contradictory finding can be linked to Grayson and Martinec's (2004) theory that "consumers no longer see fantasy and reality as meaningful categories because they recognise that all 'realities' are subjectively constructed and evaluated" (p. 306). It is possible these participants did not perceive Lady Gaga's reinvention as inauthentic because there are numerous realities which are constructed and subjective to the individual. Although these participants are arguably aware to an extent that Lady Gaga's celebrity image is not rooted in reality, but in the meaning they ascribe to the image it

means, they do not perceive the reinvention to be a sign of the singer being fake as there is no 'real' Lady Gaga. Furthermore, this finding can be linked to Rose and Wood's (2005) argument that although authenticity is desired by consumers, they revel in the ironic mixture of the factitious and spontaneous – it can be argued that they enjoy discussing *Cheek to Cheek* as a reinvention while also believing that 'Jazz-Gaga' is spontaneous and natural because Gaga has always been a jazz singer.

7.4 Conclusion:

While it appears participants in this chapter had a broader conception of Lady Gaga as an artist, they still constructed a formula of authenticity which the singer was expected to follow in order to be considered the 'real' Lady Gaga. A key part of this perceived authenticity was the subcultural values which participants had constructed alongside Lady Gaga – this chapter discussed how 'Jazz-Gaga' was perceived to represent specific values, she was considered authentic. This was followed by an analysis of the construction of the narrative that Lady Gaga was born a jazz artist, which was discussed in relation to postmodernist theory about the 'real' and identity. The second chapter then explored the diversification of the Lady Gaga fan identity in relation to postmodern theory, arguing that participants' fan-identity is unstable and contradictory. This was followed by a discussion of the perception of creativity in the Lady Gaga fandom; the singer was perceived to be innovative by 'un-manufacturing' herself as Lady Gaga proved her talent is 'true'. Finally, this chapter discussed inconsistencies in the findings, as the construction of the *Cheek to Cheek* era as a reinvention for Lady Gaga suggests that the singer's different persona's "aren't all the same Gaga anyway".

CHAPTER 8: FRIENDS AND MONSTERS

"When I die, they'll say Lady Gaga was special, but her fans, her Monsters, they were really something" – Lady Gaga.

8.0 Introduction:

The release of *Cheek to Cheek* polarised the Little Monster community, as fans received the album in contrasting and contradictory ways which meant there was a divide in the Lady Gaga fandom. This analytical chapter, 'Friends or Monsters' will explore the construction of taste relation to Bourdieu's (1984) habitus concept in order to discuss the presence of 'appropriate' tastes and behaviours in the Little Monster community. Subsequently, the use of three separate types of capital – pop, digital social, and cultural capital – in the Lady Gaga fandom, and how participants adapted Bourdieu's (1984) original cultural capital concept within a popular media fandom setting. The construction of taste as and the perception that the Lady Gaga fandom was divided will both be critically discussed in relation to Baudrillard's (1999) theory of simulation and simulacra. Afterwards, this chapter will discuss how the Lady Gaga fandom can be regarded as a simulation and an imaginary community that does not exist in the physical world, which will be followed by an analysis of conflicting and contrasting fan practices present in the Little Monster community throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era.

8.1 Distinctions of taste in the Little Monster community:

Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus is a perceptual structure which guides individual's perception of the social world by organising practices, or the perception of practices, into logical classes. Consequently, through habitus individuals unconsciously internalise the objective social conditions which they belong too and develop the appropriate tastes and practices for their social position (Bourdieu, 1984). The development of appropriate tastes and practices can be see with participant 30 who regarded Lady Gaga's pop albums as being more creative than *Cheek to Cheek* which "lacked excitement", and participant 51 who missed the singer's "GAGAness" throughout the jazz album era. Participant 30 and 51's belief that *Cheek to Cheek* lacked excitement indicates that they disliked the jazz

album. Coppa (2014) argued that joining a fan community impacts how individuals perceive themselves and their social world. The Lady Gaga fan community can be seen as a habitus, as participant 30 and 51's position in the Little Monster community impacted how they perceived Lady Gaga, as they internalised and developed a taste for 'Pop-Gaga' and framed *Cheek to Cheek* as being "unworthy of discussion" (participant 41) because it was a jazz album. Participant 41's use of the phrase "unworthy of discussion" highlights how the social structures present in the Lady Gaga fandom meant only pop music was perceived as being an appropriate taste in music in the Little Monster fan community, and anything outside of this is perceived to lack the same kind of value as Lady Gaga's pop-oriented material.

Bourdieu (1984) posits that individuals who have cultural value have legitimate taste, which he argues is the taste for cultural products that are typically associated with high culture such as the ballet or opera. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1984) was particularly critical of popular music, arguing that popular songs were devalued by their popularisation, and therefore, devoid of artistic ambition and integrity. However, the observation that participants perceived *Cheek to Cheek* to be "unworthy of discussion" (participant 41) because it lacked "excitement in terms of her behaviour" and "her extremity" (participant 30) indicates that some fans were critical of the jazz album because they perceived it to be 'devoid' of Lady Gaga's theatricality and creativity. Consequently, it can be argued that participants 30 and 41 considered *Cheek to Cheek* to have less value than Lady Gaga's pop album releases. Fiske (1992) posits that Bourdieu neglected to consider the importance of taste in distinguishing groups in popular culture. Furthermore, Fiske (1992) elaborated that popular culture adapts official culture's institutions and practices. The construction of Lady Gaga's pop-oriented albums as being superior to jazz highlights the contrast between pop culture and high culture. While Bourdieu (1984) considered 'artistry' to be a sign of cultural value, participants 30 and 41 considered excitement and creativity to hold a form of cultural capital and therefore, indicates that Bourdieu (1984) underestimated the value and creativity of popular culture and popular media texts like Lady Gaga.

Fiske (1992) was critical of Bourdieu for failing to consider the importance of taste in distinguishing social groups in popular culture as fans are active users of cultural capital. The devaluation of *Cheek to Cheek* as being challenging to "actively discuss" as "not every fan bought it" (participant 41) emphasises how the jazz album was constructed as being of lower quality than pop music which made discussions around the album difficult.

This observation demonstrates how Little Monsters appropriated Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital into 'pop capital', as participant 41's response indicates that *Cheek to Cheek* has less cultural value as a large number of fans did not buy the album nor do they want to engage in discussions about it. The use of pop capital highlights Fiske's (1992) claim that popular culture adapts official culture's institutions and practices under a popular setting. While some fans believed that Lady Gaga's pop music had more cultural value than jazz music, the finding that *Cheek to Cheek* was difficult for Little Monsters to discuss indicates that similar to the elite in Bourdieu's (1984) original conceptualisation of cultural capital, Little Monsters still developed a 'legitimate' taste in the Lady Gaga fandom.

Bourdieu (1984) argues that any legitimate work imposes "the norms of its own perception" and "defines it as the only legitimate mode of perception" (p. 28). Through this 'imposition' of legitimate work and taste, individuals are 'required' to conform to a certain disposition and competence (Bourdieu, 1984). The use of pop capital in the Lady Gaga fandom indicates that Little Monsters who preferred the singer's pop material tried to frame it as being a legitimate form of taste. By ignoring the release of *Cheek to Cheek* in order to demonstrate their status within the Lady Gaga fan community, participants tried to present 'Pop-Gaga' as being the only 'legitimate' Lady Gaga. As a result, "blog posts and discussions still largely pertain to" Lady Gaga's earlier works as "fans only wish to talk about the pre-Cheek to Cheek Era", which has resulted in the jazz album being marginalised. Through pop capital, Little Monsters produced distinctions of taste in order to legitimise pop music as being superior to jazz through creating in and out groups in order to exclude individuals who wanted to engage in fan forum discussions relating to *Cheek to Cheek*.

Furthermore, Little Monsters excluded fans who they perceived to have 'inappropriate' taste through the use of digital social capital. Bourdieu (1984) originally theorised that social capital exists in the social relationships between individuals, and it consists of the social obligations that come with those relationships. Jullen (2014) posited that because the internet has produced a unique form of habitus, this form of capital is transformed into digital social capital. Through digital social capital, digital inhabitants create specific parameters, rules, and structures that excluded and included others from participating in an online culture (Jullen, 2014). This idea of exclusion through particular rules and parameters can be seen with participant 23 who stated that "some fans chose to acknowledge her Cheek to Cheek Era" while "others chose to effectively ignore" the

album in favour of Lady Gaga's earlier, pop-oriented material. Similarly, participant 34 also felt a sense of isolation from the fan base as the majority of online Little Monsters held on to the cliché phrase "Gaga go back to pop! It's where you belong".

Online communities were traditionally theorised to be democratic spaces free of social hierarchies as digital inhabitants were joined together by choice rather than accident (Jullen, 2014). Similar to online communities, fandom was also initially theorised to be united as when fans join a fan community, they adopt particular norms, behaviours, and values associated with being a fan of a particular pop media text. However, the use of digital social capital in order to exclude Little Monsters suggests that online communities and fandoms are not united, as there are a range of conflicting norms, behaviours, and values present in the Lady Gaga fan community. Participant 23's statement that "fans only wanted to talk about Gaga's pop music" on fan boards and fan sites indicates that through digital social capital, Little Monsters constructed specific parameters around appropriate online discussion topics in the Lady Gaga fandom. The isolation which participant 23 experienced throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era indicates the presence of social hierarchies within the Lady Gaga fan community as the individual experienced a form of exclusion from other fans. Furthermore, participant 23's perception that they were unable to voice their opinion of *Cheek to Cheek* highlights how the Little Monster community transformed similar exclusion and inclusion practices performed in offline interactions into the online world. individuals.

Shuker (2013) argues that fans can gain 'popular music capital' by "developing a knowledge of selected musical traditions, their history, and their associated performers" (p. 167). By 'exploiting' their knowledge of details such as styles, trends, record companies, and biographical details of artists, fans can gain social prestige and self-esteem (Shuker, 1998; Fiske, 1992). Participant 47 stated that the "mature fans appreciated" *Cheek to Cheek* and "understood what an honour it was for Lady Gaga" to work with a "legend like Tony Bennett". The use of the terms: mature, understood, honour, and legend indicate that participant 47 believed that Lady Gaga fans who are older have more knowledge of music, and therefore, they have more prestige than fans who lacked a critical appreciation of *Cheek to Cheek.* In spite of being a popular media fandom, participant 47's response suggests that distinctions of high and low culture were still present in the Little Monster community, as the individual believed that younger fans lacked the musical knowledge 'required' to participate in fan discussions throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era.

Additionally, the presence of distinctions of low and high culture in the Lady Gaga fandom highlights how taste distinguishes individuals and "classifies the classifier" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 6). In particular, one of the most notable ways in which taste can distinguish individuals is through cultural capital, which produces titles by attributing status to individuals, either positive or negative. Cultural capital can reveal an individual's social position within a fandom, as through cultural capital, individuals are assigned to hierarchically ordered classes (Bourdieu, 1984; King, 2010). The use of cultural capital to classify the classifier can be seen with participant 34 who perceived fans who claimed "Gaga should go back to pop!! It's where she belongs!" as young and immature. Participant 34 elaborated, stating that younger fans are "egotistical" and want to "enjoy their teenager days by partying" which indicates that the participant held a negative perception of this group of Little Monsters. Furthermore, participant 34's response can be linked to Shuker's (1998; 2013; 2014) claim that music has traditionally been a crucial dimension of the process of social groups differentiating and distancing themselves from others as a way of declaring their social status perception. Participant 34 produced distinctions of taste by separating themselves from the younger Little Monsters, which suggests that the individual believed they had more cultural capital than fans who had a "myopic view" of Lady Gaga as an artist.

The first analytical chapter, Manufacturing the Other, discussed how participants constructed the 'Pop Myth' as a way to assert *Cheek to Cheek* as "less her" (participant 1) because it "didn't need much creativity" (participant 56). Despite the construction of this myth in the first analytical chapter, participant 34's dismissal of 'Pop-Gaga' fans as being "young and immature" indicates that there is an alternative point of view in the Little Monster community. Joncovich (2002) posits that "subcultural ideologies are fundamental to fan cultures because without them, fans cannot create the sense of distinction" (p. 308). Consequently, subcultural debates can distinguish fans from other audience members as well as other fans of the same popular media text (Jancovich, 2002). The subcultural struggle over appropriate taste can be seen in the Lady Gaga fandom, as participant 34 and 47 exerted cultural capital over 'Pop-Gaga' fans because they "understood what an honour it was for Lady Gaga" to work with Tony Bennett, while other participants felt isolated from the community as "discussions still largely pertain to her [Lady Gaga] earlier works" (participant 23). These findings highlight how *Cheek to Cheek* "massively divided the fan community" (participant 30) as both groups of fans used their taste in music to classify the other as having inappropriate taste in music.

8.2 Loss of reality:

The construction of taste, and the idea that particular cultural products hold more value and 'legitimacy' than others can be considered as a simulacrum rather than being rooted in an objective reality. According to Baudrillard (1999) and Bishop and Phillips (2009), individuals inscribe cultural meaning to signs, and through this attribution of meaning to images, individuals engage in a panic-stricken production of the real, which results in hyperreality and the loss of reality. This attribution of meaning to simulacrum can be seen with participant 26 who argued that "jazz is more of an art form than pop" while in contrast, participant 30 expressed discontent with the release of *Cheek to Cheek* due to the lack of "catchy pop songs you can bop to" on the album. These responses indicate that participant 26 and 30 inscribed contrasting and conflicting cultural meanings to the simulacrum of Lady Gaga and her music in order to either construct jazz or pop music as being superior to the other. By attributing meaning to signs, both participant 26 and 30 produced the hyperreal and the loss of reality which illustrates how the discourses that *Cheek to Cheek* is either more creativity or "less her" (participant 1) have no firm origin or foundation in a referential reality (Thompson, 1992). Therefore, it can be argued that the production of taste in the Little Monster community is not rooted in an objective structure, but rather, is a simulacrum of cultural value instead.

Little Monsters perceived *Cheek to Cheek* to be "quite polarising in terms of fans' reception during the era" (participant 29), which meant that the fandom was divided. However, Baudrillard (1999) argues that reality has been replaced by sign systems which means the simulation determines what is considered to be real. The division in the fan community can be seen with participant 23's response, as the individual felt alienated from the fan community as "blog posts and discussions still largely pertain to Lady Gaga's earlier works" instead of the *Cheek to Cheek* era. Participant 23's response indicates that they perceived there to be a divide in the Little Monster community based on anecdotal evidence and their own experience on Lady Gaga fan forums and fan sites. Consequently, it can be argued that participant 23 attached cultural meaning meaning to signs such as blog and forum posts, which resulted in the production of the hyperreal and the loss of reality. Therefore, it can be argued that the belief that there was a divide in the Lady Gaga fan community is a simulacrum in itself, as this division is not rooted in an objective or physical reality, but instead, is based off images and signs.

Furthermore, this blurring between reality and simulacra can be seen with the notion that participants feel a sense of belonging in the Little Monster community. Baudrillard (1999) claims that when the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning, as due to the artificial world of simulacra, people cling nostalgically to reality, truth, and reason. Consequently, there is an escalation of the true and lived experience, which means that the past has been resurrected from a simulacrum of that lived experience (Baudrillard, 1999). Participant 14 discussed notions of missing the "sense of belonging" present in the Lady Gaga fandom during the singer's pop album eras, as since the release of *Cheek to Cheek,* Lady Gaga stopped "making those new pushes which we feed off as fans". The participant's response indicates that they clinged nostalgically to the notion that Lady Gaga constructed a "wonderful community", as it allowed the individual to continue to identify with the Lady Gaga fandom as being 'real'. However, participant 14 'resurrected' the idea that there was a sense of belonging present in the Little Monster community from a simulacrum of that lived experience. Therefore, it can be argued that participant 14's nostalgia for a specific period of time in the Lady Gaga fandom resulted in the escalation of the true and lived experience, despite it not being rooted in the physical world.

Day (2006) argued that communities are imagined by its members as it has no existence outside of individual's perception of it. While participants believe that they belong to a community of other Lady Gaga fans, it only exists because they want to believe in it, and therefore, it can be argued that the Little Monster community is a simulation (Day, 2006). According to Thompson (1992) culture is now dominated by simulations, which are objects and discourses that have no firm origin or foundation, and therefore, signs get their meaning from their relations with each other rather than an independent reality. The finding that Lady Gaga created a community of fans who were "celebrated for their fucked up thoughts" (participant 14) is a simulation, as the discourse that Little Monsters belonging to a community does not exist in an independent reality. As simulations are the active process of replacing the real and the lived experience, they threaten the difference between the true and the imaginary (Baudrillard, 1999; Thompson, 1992). As the Little Monster community is simulated, it threatens the boundary between reality and image, and the false and the true, as it has no referential reality other than the meanings and signs which fans like participant 14 attach to it.

8.3 The Little Monster Fan-Identity:

When individuals join a fan community, they use the lifestyles, values, behaviours, and practices associated with that fandom in order to construct and understand their own identity (Coppa, 2014; Duffett, 2014; Duffet, 2013; Jenkins, 2006). Stein and Busse (2009) argue that fan communities create their own norms, rules, and expectations which can impose limits on appropriate fan behaviours. The construction of appropriate fan behaviours in the Lady Gaga fandom meant that Little Monsters "matured throughout the Cheek to Cheek era" as there was more of an emphasis on Lady Gaga as an artist "instead of cheap fights with other musicians" (participant 38). Similarly, participant 59 noticed that since the release of *Cheek to Cheek*, fans "are more focused on what really matters: music". While commercial success and chart obsession was perceived to be a key fan practice throughout Lady Gaga's pop album eras, the fandom constructed the subcultural narrative that fans should "focus on the music" during the *Cheek to Cheek* era. According to Brake (1985) and Hebdige (1999), subcultures form a unique subcultural sensibility which is typically in contrast to mainstream culture. The finding that fans stopped engaging in "cheap fights with other musicians" (participant 38) indicates that the Lady Gaga fandom developed a cultural sensibility unique to other pop music fandoms which impacted the values and behaviours of Little Monsters.

Furthermore, the construction of focusing on music rather than "cheap fights" (participant 38) with other pop music fans indicates how in a post-modern image culture, cultural texts offer a wealth of subject positions which help to structure individual's identity (Kellner, 1992). Kellner (1992) elaborated that because the post-modern subject bases his or her identity around images of leisure and consumption, post-modern identities tend to be more flexible and unstable. As Lady Gaga had shifted to jazz music, it meant that the appropriate and inappropriate forms of behaviour and style which 'Jazz-Gaga' fans had to follow changed in order to reflect the singer's shift in image and sound. Therefore, it can be argued that instead of having a modern identity, or an inner core (Hall, 1992), Little Monsters have a post-modern identity which means that their values and behaviours shift in relation to Lady Gaga. However, participant 49 argued that the fan community wants Lady Gaga to have "massive album sales" and "smash hits on the radio", as when a pop-star is perceived to be 'flopping', fans of other artists "will tear you down". While participant 38's response indicates a shift in the fan community, participant 49 highlights the construction of conflicting and contradictory fan practices in the Lady

Gaga fandom, which further suggests that Little Monsters have post-modern identities, as there are numerous values, behaviours, and practices which they can identify with. Consequently, the construction of the Lady Gaga fan-identity, as well as fan-identity in general, can be considered a complex process as not all fans adopt the same values, behaviours, and tastes, as there are multiple and fleeting identities which they could at least temporarily identify with (Kellner, 1992; Hall, 1992).

8.4 Conclusion:

The final analytical chapter explored the construction of taste in the Lady Gaga fandom in order to discuss how through the use of pop, digital social, and cultural capital, Little Monsters excluded others which resulted in a large number of participants who felt isolated from the community. This was followed by a discussion of how the construction of taste can be considered a simulacrum, as the idea that jazz or pop music has more value than the other is not rooted in an objective reality. Similarly, the final analytical chapter also discussed how the Lady Gaga fan community can be considered as simulation, as participants clung to nostalgic notions that it was a community of "people with fucked up thoughts" (participant 14). Finally, this chapter concluded that the presence of contrasting fan practices in regards to Lady Gaga's commercial and persona success indicates that the Lady Gaga fan-identity does not have an 'inner-core' as Little Monsters engage in a contrasting range of flexible and temporary identities, values, and fan practices.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

"I am the excuse to explore your identity. To be exactly who you are and to feel unafraid. To not judge yourself, to not hate yourself" - Lady Gaga.

9.0 Introduction:

The release of *Cheek to Cheek* had a significant impact on how participants perceived Lady Gaga, the Little Monster community, and their fan-identity as it was received in often contrasting and conflicting ways. An online questionnaire with a mixture of qualitative and quantitative questions was implemented in order to gain an insight into how participants received the album. To analyse the data, a thematic analysis was employed; during the analysis, the data was organised into three key themes – Manufacturing the Other, 'It's all the same Gaga anyway' and Friends and Monsters. This concluding chapter will outline what the researcher originally hoped to achieved, the main findings discovered throughout the research process, a discussion of the limitations of this study, and areas for potential research.

9.1 What the researcher hoped to achieve:

The researcher hypothesised that Lady Gaga's transition in image and sound for the *Cheek to Cheek* era alienated Little Monsters, however, the data proved the researcher's hypothesis to be incorrect, as 64 percent of participants did not re-evaluate their fan-identity in comparison to 36 percent who did. Of those participants who re-evaluated their fan-identity, only 23 percent became less of a fan in contrast to 27 percent who 'solidified' their fan-identity and 50 percent who became open to a diverse range of musical genres. Although the researcher believed that a large number of fans 'jumped ship' throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era, it can be speculated that the incongruity between the hypothesis and this research finding was due to a vocal minority of fans who were not representative of the fandom as a whole.

9.2 Main findings:

The researcher observed that participants developed contrasting and often conflicting notions of Lady Gaga's authenticity, as 'Pop-Gaga' fans perceived the album to lack the singer's "GAGAness" (participant 7) while 'Jazz-Gaga' fans believed that Lady Gaga was born as a jazz artist. Due to this finding, the researcher developed a model of authenticity based on three key criteria in order to explain the contrasting ways in which fans negotiated Lady Gaga's authenticity throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era; these criteria included: 1) persona; 2) creativity; and 3) success. The researcher discussed the construction of this model of authenticity in relation to Baudrillard's (1999) theory of simulation and simulacra as well as post-modern identity theory (Hall, 1992; Kellner, 1992) in order to critically discuss how Little Monsters' perception of Lady Gaga and their fan-identity is not rooted in the physical world, but in images. This approach allowed the researcher to explore seemingly contrasting findings in chapter 6 and 7. Participants in the first analytical chapter developed a unique cultural sensibility in opposition to the mainstream discourses of pop music authenticity (Brake, 1985, Tetzlaff, 1994; Gunders, 2012) as they subscribed to the 'Pop Myth' ideology which posits that pop music is superior to other genres. In contrast, participants in the second analytical chapter 'imposed' a conceptual ordering framework in order to select aspects of 'Jazz-Gaga' which they considered to be authentic as it allowed them to continue to identify with the singer (Muggleton, 2000). These conflicting findings highlight Hall (1992) and Kellner's (1992) claim that the post-modern identity is fluid and flexible, as there were a number of identities, values, and practices which Little Monsters could identify with throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era.

Furthermore, *Cheek to Cheek* divided the Lady Gaga fan community, as participants received the album in contrasting ways. In particular, some participants expressed notions of alienation and isolation on Lady Gaga fan boards and fan forums as they enjoyed *Cheek to Cheek*. Little Monsters who believed in the 'Pop Myth' appropriated Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital into 'pop capital', which is a unique form of cultural capital used to exclude participants who enjoyed *Cheek to Cheek*. However, the study observed that there were still distinctions of high and low culture in the Little Monster community, as other participants believed jazz to have more cultural value over pop music. These contradictory findings indicate that the construction of taste and cultural capital itself can be considered as a simulacrum, as participants assigned meaning to Lady Gaga's music.

9.3 Limitations:

This research had a number of limitations in terms of sample size; firstly, only 60 fans participated in the study, and secondly, an online questionnaire was used which meant the sample size was limited to fans who frequently use Lady Gaga fan sites and fan boards. Consequently, the sample size and results may not provide a comprehensive representation of how the Lady Gaga fandom received the *Cheek to Cheek* era as fans who do not participate in the online fan community did not have the opportunity to complete the survey. Despite this limitation in terms of sample size, this thesis still provides a broad discussion of how the release of *Cheek to Cheek* impacted how Little Monsters perceive themselves.

Another limitation was the scope of this project, as the results only captured the Lady Gaga fan-identity over a short period of time. It would have been valuable if the research examined whether the Lady Gaga fan-identity evolved over a longer period of time as it could have provided a more detailed insight into how fandoms change over time, and how this change impacts how individuals perceive their fan-identity. Finally, another limitation of this project was the model of authenticity; it was difficult to ascertain how many of the criteria Lady Gaga's music had to meet in order to be considered authentic, as it was beyond the scope of this master's thesis.

9.4 Areas for future research:

Remarkably, this thesis observed that Little Monsters remained 'loyal' to Lady Gaga despite feeling alienated from either the fan community or the singer herself. Firstly, due to fan division in the Little Monster community, some 'Jazz-Gaga' fans felt alienated from the fandom which meant they stopped posting on fan boards and forums throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era. However, these participants still identified with Lady Gaga; this particular finding questions the notion that a key aspect of an individual's fan-identity is feeling connected to a community of like-minded individuals (Duffett, 2013; Jenkins, 2006), and provides a unique insight into how individuals conceptualise their fan-identity. Additional research is needed in order to explore the relationship between an individual's identification with the fan community and the object of their fanship, and whether this relationship impacts their fan-identity.

The majority of 'Pop-Gaga' fans still identified with Lady Gaga despite perceiving the singer to be inauthentic throughout the *Cheek to Cheek* era, as they constructed the subcultural discourse that the jazz album was a side project, and not the 'real' Lady Gaga. While this thesis critically explored the re-evaluation of the Lady Gaga fan-identity in relation to Baudrillard's (1999) theory of simulation and simulacra and Bourdieu's (1984) habitus, further research could develop on this study's findings with reference to Jameson's theory of consumer capitalism in order to investigate Lady Gaga as a product within the Little Monster community. More research is needed in order to determine if and why shifts in musical direction impacts individuals' fan-identity, however, this thesis has provided a model of authenticity which can be extrapolated as a theoretical foundation for explaining fan alienation.

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APPENDIX I: GLOSSARY

A number of slangs, words, and phrases present in the Lady Gaga have been used throughout this thesis including:

Bangerz: Refers to catchy pop-dance songs.

Bop: Dance-pop/ electronic music which listeners are able to dance and sing along too.

C2C: An acronym for *Cheek to Cheek* (2014), Lady Gaga's collaborative jazz album with Tony Bennett.

Gagz: A nickname for Lady Gaga used by Little Monsters.

The *Cheek to Cheek* era*:* The *Cheek to Cheek* era is wider than just the jazz album, as it encompasses everything related to *Cheek to Cheek*. This includes the album itself, album artwork, music videos, promotion and advertisement (such as TV, radio, and print interviews), promotional photo shoots, live performances, and fashion.

Weave: A hairstyle created by weaving together pieces of hair into a person's hair.

Yaaas: A word used to express extreme excitement and admiration for someone or something.