

The enduring appeal of “Forever Young”: A critical discourse analysis

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Abstract

This study applies critical discourse analysis (CDA) to Alphaville’s iconic song “Forever Young,” exploring how its lyrics have been recontextualized in contemporary social media trends. Recently, the song has gained popularity as a background for posts that honor deceased loved ones, celebrate moments of happiness, and highlight the contrast between youthful and aging appearances. This research aims to delve into the deeper meanings and societal implications embedded within the song’s lyrics, which span themes of youth, aging, and the desire for immortality. The study reveals how the song reflects and reinforces societal ideals about youth while marginalizing other life stages, especially old age, through three levels of analysis—micro-level (focusing on individual words and phrases), meso-level (considering the social context, and the song’s impact), and macro-level (examining broader societal discourses)—. It highlights the song’s exploration of the transience of life and the universal human longing for permanence. These themes resonate strongly with the prevalent social media trends that often celebrate youth and memorialize it in posts and tributes. The findings suggest that “Forever Young” serves as a personal reflection on the passage of time and a commentary on societal views of aging, vitality, and the unyielding pursuit of youth. It uncovers how the song has become a powerful cultural symbol, contributing to the ongoing digital conversation around the valorization of youth and the depreciation of the complexities associated with aging.

Keywords: *Alphaville, Critical Discourse Analysis, Forever Young, Social Media, Youth*

1. Introduction

In recent years, Alphaville’s song “Forever Young” has experienced a resurgence on social media platforms, often used as a poignant background for posts that commemorate loved ones, celebrate moments of happiness, or juxtapose images of youth and old age (Edwards, 2024). “Forever Young” was initially released in 1984 (Berman, 2024) and has since become a cultural touchstone, particularly for its exploration of the fleeting nature of life and the aspiration to remain youthful forever (uDiscover Team, 2022). In the current digital era, these themes have gained new relevance, as technological advancements and the rise of social media have heightened societal preoccupations with appearance and age. With their built-in filters and editing tools, social media platforms allow users to manipulate their digital identities, often in ways that emphasize youth and downplay signs of aging. De-aging filters, for instance, enable individuals to present themselves as perpetually youthful, echoing the sentiments expressed in the song (Hunter, 2023).

This trend necessitates a deeper understanding of how “Forever Young” is used in contemporary discourse, particularly in online spaces where the line between reality and virtual identity is increasingly blurred (Jordan, 2008). The urgency of this research lies in its ability to shed light on how such cultural artifacts reflect and reinforce societal values, particularly concerning aging and the pursuit of youth. By critically analyzing the song, this study aims to

offer insights into the deeper meanings embedded in its lyrics and how these meanings resonate with modern audiences.

The use of “Forever Young” in social media posts memorializing loved ones or celebrating youthful moments suggests that its lyrics continue to hold significant emotional and symbolic weight. As society grapples with issues related to aging, mortality, and the desire for eternal youth (Megan, 2023), it is essential to explore how cultural texts like songs contribute to and reflect these concerns. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides a valuable framework for examining the song’s lyrics at multiple levels—micro, meso, and macro—allowing for a comprehensive understanding of its discursive power (Fairclough, 1995).

This research aims to critically examine how the song’s lyrics engage with societal discourses around aging and youth. By conducting CDA, which consists of micro-level, meso-level, and macro-level analyses, this study aims to uncover how “Forever Young” interacts with and reinforces dominant societal narratives. The findings will have broader implications for understanding the role of music and media in shaping perceptions of aging and youth.

By investigating “Forever Young” through critical discourse analysis, this study seeks to uncover the deeper meanings of the song’s lyrics and their relevance to contemporary societal concerns. Through a multi-level analysis, the research will contribute to a better understanding of how cultural texts engage with and reflect dominant narratives about youth, aging, and mortality, offering increasingly pertinent insights in the age of social media.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explore the hidden meanings in Alphaville's song "Forever Young." We delve into the song's deeper layers by combining linguistic theories and cultural studies. The research framework is based on theoretical and practical knowledge from CDA, social media analysis, and cultural portrayals of youth and aging.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA, as defined by Norman Fairclough, explores how language reflects, reinforces, and challenges social power structures. It examines discourse at multiple levels (micro, meso, and macro), focusing on how language shapes and is shaped by social, cultural, and ideological contexts. In this research, CDA provides the foundation for analyzing “Forever Young” on various levels, including the linguistic (micro), societal (meso), and ideological (macro).

Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse (text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice) will be central to analyzing how the song's language reflects societal values about youth and aging. Empirical studies using CDA to analyze song lyrics have also shown that lyrics of songs often mirror cultural ideologies and power relations (Adams & Fuller, 2006), hence supporting the use of CDA in this research.

2.2 Appraisal Theory

Appraisal theory, developed by Martin and White, studies how language expresses attitudes, emotions, and social engagement. This theory is part of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which focuses on three main aspects: attitude, engagement, and graduation (J. R. Martin & White, 2005). This research uses appraisal theory to analyze the emotional and evaluative meanings conveyed in "Forever Young" through the lyrics' expressions of youth, aging, and immortality.

Research has shown that appraisal theory can be effectively used in discourse analysis to understand how emotional and evaluative language in texts influences readers' emotional responses. (Hood, 2010). Similarly, White (2015) showed how appraisal theory can influence

the audience's understanding of cultural texts, emphasizing its importance in analyzing the emotional aspects of "Forever Young."

2.3 Cultural Studies: Youth and Aging in Modern Society

The song "Forever Young" relates to cultural discussions about youth, aging, and the longing for eternal life. The idea of youth as a cultural ideal has been widely studied by Danesi (2023), who argues that modern society idolizes youth and stigmatizes aging, a phenomenon he calls "teen-aging." This study expands on his framework by examining how "Forever Young" lyrics reflect and reinforce these ideals, particularly in the context of current social media trends.

Research on social media and body image has shown how online platforms promote cultural ideals of youthfulness, which can lead to anxiety about aging. (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). This research builds on these findings to examine how the song's lyrics connect with the current digital age, where social media filters and youth-focused posts reflect and intensify society's concerns about aging.

2.4 Social Media and Self-Representation

The popularity of "Forever Young" on social media highlights the growing significance of self-presentation in online spaces. According to Marwick and Boyd (2014), social media platforms have become essential tools for shaping and portraying identity, with visual tools like de-aging filters enabling users to present a version of themselves that conforms to the cultural ideals of youth. Research by Marwick (2015) also emphasizes how social media intensifies societal pressures to look young and attractive, creating an online world where age is frequently hidden or disregarded. The study by Kurniadi et al. (2023) examines the context and ideologies surrounding Gita Savitri's Instagram social media posts about the "child-free" movement.

This theoretical framework helps the study analyze how "Forever Young" relates to current social media trends, which celebrate youth and either ignore or romanticize aging. Empirical evidence from Chua & Chang's study (2016) on social media's influence on self-perception and aging supports the analysis of how the song's lyrics reinforce these cultural ideals.

2.5 Research Hypotheses

This study proposes the following hypotheses, drawing on theoretical concepts and empirical research:

1. The lyrics of "Forever Young" reinforce societal values prioritizing youth and downplay aging.
2. The song's resurgence on social media platforms is linked to contemporary anxieties about aging and the digital desire to maintain youth through self-presentation.
3. The use of "Forever Young" in posts commemorating loved ones or celebrating youthful moments highlights the cultural tension between life's transience and the pursuit of permanence, as symbolized by youth.

This theoretical framework combines critical discourse analysis, appraisal theory, cultural studies, and social media research to explore how Alphaville's "Forever Young" reflects and reinforces societal discourses on youth, aging, and mortality. That CDA research is intertwined with other social studies is something common. However, how "Forever Young," once a famous song carrying ideas about adolescence, senescence, and impermanence, has reemerged with the same ideas in the modern era, particularly in social media, may offer a novelty in this research.

3. Research Method

3.1 Activity Design

This study employed a qualitative approach rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to delve into the underlying meanings within the lyrics of Alphaville's "Forever Young." The research is structured across three analytical levels: micro, meso, and macro.

Linguistic features such as clause structures, modality, and appraisal were examined at the micro level. The meso level focuses on the societal and institutional contexts shaping the song's discourse. At the macro level, the analysis explored the broader ideological and power structures embedded in the song's lyrics.

The research aims to uncover how "Forever Young" reflects and reinforces societal values about youth, aging, and mortality, especially in light of its resurgence on social media. The song was analyzed concerning contemporary cultural discourses and trends surrounding aging, youth, and self-representation in digital media.

3.2 Scope/Object

This research examined the lyrics of Alphaville's "Forever Young" across three levels of analysis. At the micro level, the study focused on the linguistic features of the lyrics, such as clause structures, modality, and appraisal. At the meso level, the research explored the cultural and societal implications of the song, particularly the influence of social media on its re-emergence. At the macro level, the study delved into the broader ideological and power structures embedded in the lyrics, including societal values related to youth and aging.

The scope of this research is limited to the song's lyrics and their interaction with societal and cultural discourses. The study also examined social media trends and their influence on the song's re-emergence.

3.3 Main Materials, Tools, and Place

This research primarily analyzed the official lyrics of Alphaville's "Forever Young." Linguistic tools such as clause complex analysis, modality analysis, and appraisal theory were employed for micro-level analysis. Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse (text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice) served as the overall analytical framework for this study. This research, furthermore, was conducted using online tools and resources, as the object of study is digitally accessible. No physical setting was needed for this research.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

The first step in gathering data was to obtain and confirm the accuracy of the official lyrics for "Forever Young" from trustworthy sources (Gold et al., 2007). This step ensured the accuracy of the next analysis.

The second stage focused on a detailed linguistic analysis of the lyrics. A clause complex analysis was conducted to categorize clauses as paratactic or hypotactic based on their syntactic relationship. A modality analysis was also performed to identify and analyze modal verbs and expressions that conveyed probability, usuality, obligation, and inclination.

The final stage of data collection involved an appraisal analysis of the lyrics. The lyrics were examined for effect, judgment, and appreciation. This analysis focused on emotional and evaluative meanings in the song's lyrics.

3.5 Analysis Techniques

The analysis was conducted at three levels, each corresponding to a different aspect of critical discourse analysis. At the micro-level, a detailed linguistic analysis was done, involved

a clause complex analysis to categorize clauses as paratactic or hypotactic. Additionally, a modality analysis was conducted to identify and classify modal verbs and expressions into modalization (probability, usuality) and modulation (obligation, inclination). Finally, an appraisal analysis was used to categorize affect, judgment, and appreciation, focusing on how emotions, evaluations, and values are expressed in the lyrics.

At the meso-level, the analysis focused on the social media context of the song's re-emergence. It involved examining how social media trends, such as de-aging filters, relate to the song's themes of youth and aging. At the macro level, the analysis investigated the broader ideological and power structures embedded in the lyrics, eventually exploring how societal values regarding youth and aging were reproduced and reinforced through the song's discourse.

The findings from these three levels of analysis were then synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of how "Forever Young" operates at multiple levels of discourse, reflecting and reinforcing societal values related to aging and youth.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Micro Level Analysis

4.1.1 Clause Complex Analysis

The following tables summarize the clause complex analysis of the "Forever Young." These tables contain relevant clauses, their mood types, and the taxis, providing a structured overview of the complex clause analysis of the lyrics.

Table 1. The Clause Complex Table

Clause	Mood Type	Parataxis/Hypotaxis	Relationship
Let's dance in style, let's dance for a while	Imperative	Paratactic	Coordination (and)
Heaven can wait, we're only watching the skies	Declarative	Paratactic	Coordination (and)
Hoping for the best but expecting the worst	Declarative (non- finite)	Paratactic	Coordination (but)
Are you gonna drop the bomb or not?	Interrogative	Paratactic	Alternative (or)
Let us die young or let us live forever	Imperative	Paratactic	Alternative (or)
We don't have the power but we never say never	Declarative	Paratactic	Coordination (but)
Sitting in a sandpit, life is a short trip	Declarative (non- finite)	Paratactic	Coordination (,)
The music's for the sad men	Declarative	Single Clause	-
Can you imagine when this race is won	Interrogative	Hypotactic	Projection (mental process)
Turn our golden faces into the sun	Imperative	Single Clause	-

Praising our leaders, we're getting in tune	Declarative (non-finite)	Paratactic	Coordination (,)
The music's played by the, the mad man	Declarative	Single Clause	-
Forever young, I want to be forever young	Declarative	Paratactic	Coordination (,)
Do you really want to live forever?	Interrogative	Single Clause	-
Forever, and ever	Declarative	Paratactic	Coordination (and)
Some are like water. Some are like the heat	Declarative	Paratactic	Coordination (,)
Some are a melody, and some are the beat	Declarative	Paratactic	Coordination (and)
Sooner or later, they all will be gone	Declarative	Single Clause	-
Why don't they stay young?	Interrogative	Single Clause	-
It's so hard to get old without a cause	Declarative	Single Clause	-
I don't want to perish like a fading horse	Declarative	Single Clause	-
Youth's like diamonds in the sun	Declarative	Single Clause	-
And diamonds are forever.	Declarative	Paratactic	Coordination (and)
So many adventures couldn't happen today.	Declarative	Single Clause	-
So many songs we forgot to play	Declarative	Single Clause	-
So many dreams swinging out of the blue	Declarative	Single Clause	-
We'll let 'em come true.	Declarative	Single Clause	-
Forever young, I want to be forever young	Declarative	Paratactic	Coordination (,)
Do you really want to live forever?	Interrogative	Single Clause	-

Table 2. The Clause Complex Summary

Mood Type	Number of Clauses	Parataxis	Hypotaxis
Declarative	21	14	1
Interrogative	5	1	1
Imperative	3	3	0

Table 2 above summarizes the distribution and relationships between the song's various mood categories. It shows fourteen out of twenty-one clauses are declarative with a high predilection for parataxis, depicting coordination without subordination. Parataxis can also be found in one of five interrogative sentences: one is hypotaxis, and three are simple clauses emphasizing direct questioning. The speaker's direct instructions or invitations without subordination are reflected in all the imperative sentences connected by parataxis.

When most of the clauses in a text are paratactic, it suggests that the text is composed of clauses that are placed side by side with equal status, often connected by coordinating conjunctions (like "and," "but," "or") or just separated by commas, hence the following characteristics: simplicity and clarity (Hogue, 2017), equal weight to ideas (Halliday & Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen, 2004), immediacy and impact (Jarrin, 2021), and open interpretation (Lutzkanova-Vassileva, 2015)

4.1.2 Modality Analysis

Table 3. Modality Analysis Table

Modality Type	Subcategory	Example Clauses	Realization
Modalization	Probability	"Hoping for the best but expecting the worst"	Implied uncertainty about the future.
		"Sooner or later, they all will be gone"	High certainty expressed with "will."
		"Do you really want to live forever?"	Questioning the possibility of eternal life.
	Usuality	"We never say never"	"Never" indicates the absence of usuality.
		"So many adventures couldn't happen today"	Implies the unusuality or rarity of these adventures.
Modulation	Obligation	N/A	Little to no direct realization of obligation.
Modulation	Inclination	"I want to be forever young"	Strong personal desire for eternal youth.
		"Let us die young or let us live forever"	Willingness to accept one of two extreme outcomes.

		"I don't want to perish like a fading horse"	Strong aversion against a particular outcome.
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The use of modality in "Forever Young," described in Table 3, can be understood by examining how probability, usuality, obligation, and inclination are expressed in the lyrics. Probability refers to the likelihood of something happening. The song uses modal verbs and phrases to suggest uncertainty or speculation, such as "hoping for the best but expecting the worst." Usuality refers to the frequency of an event. Phrases like "we never say never" indicate the absence of usuality, while "so many adventures couldn't happen today" implies unusuality. Obligation, furthermore, refers to how much someone is required to do something. The song has little to no direct obligation statements, focusing more on desire and possibility than duty, while inclination refers to the willingness or desire to do something. Expressions of desire or intent, like "I want to be forever young," frequently realize inclination in the song.

In summary, a song with more instances of probability and inclination often deals with themes of uncertainty, hope, and desire, creating a reflective, aspirational, and emotionally resonant experience for the listeners.

4.1.3 Appraisal Analysis

Table 4. Appraisal Analysis (Attitude-Affect)

Affect Type	Description	Examples from Lyrics	Number of Occurrences
Positive Affect (Happiness)	Expressing joy, desire for eternal youth, celebration of life	"Forever young, I want to be forever young"; "Dancing in style."	4
Negative Affect (Unhappiness)	Expressing sadness, fear of aging, melancholic reflections	"Hoping for the best but expecting the worst"; "Perish like a fading horse."	3
Insecurity	Reflecting fear, anxiety about the future, uncertainty	"Expecting the worst"; "Are you gonna drop the bomb or not?"	3
Security	The desire for safety, and certainty in being "forever young."	"I want to be forever young" (desire for the security of eternal youth)	2

Dissatisfaction	Discontent with aging, the transient nature of life	"It's so hard to get old without a cause"; "So many dreams swinging out of the blue."	2
Satisfaction	Idealization of youth, contentment in being "forever young."	"Youth's like diamonds in the sun."	2

As described in Table 4, the song "Forever Young" uses a range of emotional expressions (affect) to explore the complex feelings surrounding youth, aging, and mortality. Positive emotions like joy and the celebration of life are juxtaposed with fears, insecurities, and dissatisfaction related to the inevitable passage of time and the desire to hold onto youth.

The song primarily conveys positive affect (happiness and desire) and insecurity, emphasizing a strong yearning for eternal youth and anxiety about aging and mortality. Negative affect and dissatisfaction are also significant, adding to the song's melancholy tone. There are fewer instances of security and satisfaction, suggesting that while the desire for eternal youth is prominent, the song also recognizes the insecurities and dissatisfaction with life's fleeting nature. This analysis reveals the song's emotional complexity, balancing joy and fear, desire and anxiety, making it celebratory and reflective.

Table 5. Appraisal Analysis (Attitude-Judgement)

Judgment Type	Description	Examples from Lyrics	Number of Occurrences
Capacity	Evaluation of capability or vitality associated with youth	Implied or through the idealization of youth	1
Tenacity	Determination to remain young	"I want to be forever young"	3
Normality	Evaluation of youth as extraordinary	"Youth's like diamonds in the sun"	2
Veracity	Reflection on the truth of life and mortality	Implied through existential questions	1
Propriety	Ethical reflection on the potential for destruction	"Are you gonna drop the bomb or not?"	1

From the point of view of judgement in Table 5, the song "Forever Young" mainly addresses social esteem, emphasizing the appeal of youth and the determination needed to sustain it.

Although it briefly considers social sanction, especially regarding the ethical consequences of life-threatening actions, these aspects are less emphasized than the song's focus on the exceptional worth of youth and the resolve to maintain it. This analysis highlights how the song assesses life and youth through societal expectations and personal aspirations.

Table 6. Appraisal Analysis (Attitude-Appreciation)

Appreciation Type	Description	Examples from Lyrics	Number of Occurrences
Reaction Impact	- Emotional response to the concept of eternal youth	"Forever young, I want to be forever young"; "Do you really want to live forever?"	4
Reaction Quality	- Positive evaluation of youth's attributes	"Youth's like diamonds in the sun."	2
Composition - Complexity	Reflection on the balance of hope and fear, simplicity, and depth	"Hoping for the best but expecting the worst."	2
Valuation Value	- High valuation of youth and eternal life	"Youth's like diamonds in the sun."	3

The song "Forever Young" deeply explores the concept of youth through appreciation, highlighting its emotional significance, complexity, and inherent value. The lyrics idealize youth, underscoring its appeal and the intense emotions it evokes. The song's straightforward yet profound structure reflects the depth of its themes, making it relatable and intellectually stimulating for listeners.

Table 7. Appraisal Analysis (Engagement-Mongloss/Heterogloss)

Engagement Type	Examples from Lyrics	Description
Monogloss	"I want to be forever young," "Youth's like diamonds in the sun."	Direct assertions or unchallenged statements reflecting a singular perspective.
Heterogloss	"Hoping for the best but expecting the worst," "Do you really want to live forever?"	Acknowledgment of alternative perspectives or possibilities.

The song "Forever Young" combines direct expression of desire and idealized concepts with moments that encourage reflection on the complexities of eternal youth and death. Using heterogloss, representing different voices or perspectives adds depth to the song by exploring

existential questions. Monogloss, on the other hand, reinforces the main theme of longing for an idealized state. This balance between assertiveness and introspection makes the song relatable to listeners with similar hopes and doubts.

Table 8. Appraisal Analysis (Engagement-Expansion/Contraction)

Engagement Type	Subcategory	Examples from Lyrics	Number of Occurrences
Dialogic Expansion	Entertain	"Hoping for the best but expecting the worst"; "Do you really want to live forever?"; "Why don't they stay young?"	3
Dialogic Expansion	Attribute	None	0
Dialogic Contraction	Disclaim	"We don't have the power, but we never say never."	1
Dialogic Contraction	Proclaim	"I want to be forever young"; "Youth's like diamonds in the sun."	2

The song "Forever Young" mainly uses Dialogic Expansion, which introduces possibilities and questions to encourage different viewpoints. It is done through Entertain, which presents alternative perspectives. However, the song also uses Dialogic Contraction, which involves making strong statements or assertions. It is done through Proclaim, particularly when expressing strong desires or values related to youth. Disclaim, used less often, involves denying or rejecting certain ideas or limitations. The combination of expansion and contraction reflects the song's exploration of complex emotions and desires related to eternal youth.

Table 9. Appraisal Analysis (Engagement-Expansion-Contraction)

Graduation Category	Subcategory	Examples from Lyrics	Number of Occurrences
Force	Intensifiers	"Forever young"; "All will be gone."	3
Force	Mitigators	(None prominently identified in the song)	0

Focus	Sharpening	"Youth's like diamonds in the sun"; "Diamonds are forever"	2
Focus	Softening	(None prominently identified in the song)	0

The song "Forever Young" mainly uses intensifiers and sharpening techniques to express a strong and focused desire for eternal youth. These techniques make the desire for youth seem more precious and enduring. The song uses few mitigators or softening techniques, emphasizing clear and strong statements about life, youth, and permanence. This use of graduation, which refers to the use of intensifiers and sharpeners, reflects the song's overall tone of certainty and longing for a constant, ideal state.

The micro-level Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of "Forever Young" analyzes how language contributes to the song's message and emotional impact. The song's use of declarative clauses and parataxis creates a sense of simplicity, clarity, and directness. By presenting clauses side by side with equal importance, connected by coordinating conjunctions, or simply placed next to each other, the song delivers its ideas with immediacy and impact. Furthermore, using imperative and interrogative clauses without subordination reflects the speaker's direct communication style, reinforcing the song's straightforward narrative.

The use of modality, especially in expressions of probability and inclination, highlights themes of uncertainty, hope, and desire. Phrases like "hoping for the best but expecting the worst" emphasize the speculative nature of the song. At the same time, statements expressing desire, such as "I want to be forever young," highlight the emotional aspirations at the core of the lyrics. This focus on inclination rather than obligation creates a reflective and aspirational tone. Furthermore, the emotional complexity is further developed through contrasting affective expressions, where joy and celebration of youth are juxtaposed with fears of aging and mortality, balancing a sense of optimism with anxiety.

The use of judgment and appreciation in the song emphasizes youth as an idealized state, highlighting its societal and emotional value. The song praises youth through social esteem, recognizing its importance and the determination needed to maintain it. Although some ethical considerations are briefly mentioned, the focus remains on the personal and societal desire to hold onto youth. The song's simple structure reflects its profound themes, offering a relatable yet intellectually stimulating exploration of youth's emotional and cultural significance.

In summary, a micro-level CDA shows how linguistic features, such as parataxis and modality, along with affective, judgmental, and appreciative stances, combine to present youth as a desirable but temporary ideal filled with hope, desire, and anxiety.

4.2 Meso-level Analysis

Table 10. Meso-level Analysis

Aspect	Description	Examples/Analysis
Genre and Conventions	Focuses on the genre of the song and its conventions, including thematic elements typical for the genre.	- The song is a pop ballad with common themes of nostalgia, desire for eternal youth, and reflection on life and mortality.
Audience and Accessibility	Examines the target audience and the song's appeal to them through language and structure.	- Appeals to a broad audience by addressing universal concerns and emotions.
Social Context and Cultural Significance	Looks at how the song reflects and engages with broader societal values, norms, and cultural concerns.	- Reflects cultural obsession with youth and the fear of aging.
Institutional Influence	Considers the music industry's role in shaping and promoting themes that resonate with societal values.	- The music industry often promotes emotionally resonant and marketable themes, such as the idealization of youth.
Power Relations and Ideology	Analyzes how the song's content might reinforce societal power dynamics or ideologies, particularly those related to age, beauty, and value.	- Represents youth as the ideal state, possibly marginalizing other life stages. - Perpetuates that youth is synonymous with life and value, reflecting broader societal norms.

We can understand the song's interactional and organizational aspects at the meso level, as seen in table 10, to understand its relationship to social and cultural contexts. As a pop ballad, "Forever Young" employs themes of nostalgia, the desire for eternal youth, and reflections on life and mortality, which are common in the genre and contribute to its emotional appeal (Chou & Lien, 2014). The song's language and structure are designed to be accessible and emotionally resonant, appealing to a wide audience by tapping into universal emotions and concerns.

The song reflects a broader cultural obsession with youth and the fear of aging, prevalent in many societies. The music industry promotes and reinforces these themes through songs like "Forever Young," emphasizing marketability and broad appeal (Meier, 2017). The cultural significance of the song lies in its ability to resonate with universal human experiences and concerns (Liu et al., 2024), where, in this case, it mirrors societal values and norms about aging.

Like many other popular songs, this song represents youth as an ideal state (Bennett, 2008), and it potentially marginalizes other life stages, such as old age (Cruikshank, 2013). This reinforcement of societal norms values youth over age and beauty over experience. The lyrics perpetuate that youth is synonymous with life, energy, and value while aging is something to

be feared. Analyzing "Forever Young" at the meso level provides insight into how the song operates within and contributes to broader social discourses and institutions.

3 Macro level Analysis

Table 11. Macro Level Analysis

Aspect	Description	Examples/Analysis
Social and Cultural Context	Examines how the song reflects societal norms, values, and cultural concerns related to youth and aging.	Obsession with Youth: Reflects a cultural obsession with youth and the fear of aging.
		Cultural Reflection: Mirrors societal concerns about aging and mortality, emphasizing the universal desire to preserve youth.
Power and Ideology	Analyzes how the song reinforces or challenges dominant ideologies and power structures, particularly those related to age and consumer culture.	Reinforcement of Ageism: Idealizes youth, potentially marginalizing older age groups.
		Consumer Culture: Reflects consumerist ideologies, where industries profit from promoting youthfulness through products and media.
Institutional and Societal Implications	Considers the role of societal institutions, such as the music industry, in shaping and perpetuating the song's themes.	Music Industry's Role: The music industry perpetuates the idealization of youth by promoting relatable, marketable content.
		Societal Impact: The song influences societal attitudes towards aging and youth.

Table 11 shows how "Forever Young" was analyzed at the macro level. At this level, we must consider how the lyrics interact with broader societal and cultural contexts and the power dynamics and ideologies they might reinforce or challenge. The song reflects a cultural obsession with youth and the fear of aging, which is particularly prevalent in Western societies. The idealization of youth and the desire to remain young forever highlight societal preferences for vitality, beauty, and the carefree nature often associated with youth (R. Martin, 2012).

The desire for eternal youth is an ancient theme, evident in Herodotus's tales of rejuvenating waters (Klapisch-Zuber, 2015) and Ponce de Leon's quest for the Fountain of Youth (Peck, 1998). This enduring fascination was reignited in the 1980s with the release of "Forever

Young," and it continues to resonate today (DiNardo, 2024). The song's recent popularity on social media platforms reflects society's ongoing admiration for youthfulness.

This song can be seen as a cultural artefact that mirrors societal concerns about aging, mortality, and the fleeting nature of life. It taps into universal human desires to preserve youth and avoid aging, a recurring theme in literature, film, and music. The song might reinforce ageist ideologies that value youth over age and experience by idealizing youth and expressing a desire to stay young forever. It reflects a broader societal trend where older individuals are often marginalized or devalued in favor of younger, more vibrant generations (Weir, 2023).

Furthermore, the song reflects the consumerist culture that promotes youthfulness through products, media, and lifestyle choices (Lupton, 1994). This ideology often ties to the economic interests of industries like fashion, beauty, and entertainment, profiting from the desire to maintain a youthful appearance like the phenomenon of 'Sephora Kids' (Taylor, 2024). The music industry plays a significant role in perpetuating the idealization of youth by producing and promoting songs that resonate with these themes. The industry's focus on marketable, relatable content means songs like "Forever Young" are not just artistic expressions but also commercial products designed to appeal to a wide audience. The widespread popularity of such songs contributes to shaping societal attitudes towards aging and youth, influencing how individuals perceive their own aging process and the value they place on different stages of life.

5. Conclusion

The song "Forever Young," seen from the micro-level analysis, utilizes specific linguistic structures to evoke a powerful, clear longing for youthfulness that resonates universally. Through declarative statements, parataxis, and modal choices, the song achieves a straightforward and emotionally charged delivery, emphasizing the uncertainties of life, the hopeful pursuit of youth, and the idealization of youthful qualities. This structure makes the themes accessible and evocative, engaging listeners with familiar sentiments of hope, longing, and existential reflection.

According to the hypotheses, the finding also suggests that "Forever Young" glorifies youth and strongly connects with current cultural trends. Its frequent presence on social media taps into society's broader anxieties about aging and the pursuit of permanence. On a cultural level (meso and macro levels), the song reinforces society's emphasis on youth and its reluctance to embrace aging, aligning with age-based stereotypes and preferences. By idealizing youth and largely disregarding other life stages, the song highlights society's tendency to value youthfulness, a trend further promoted by the music industry. Thus, "Forever Young" acts as a significant cultural symbol, reflecting collective concerns and aspirations while emphasizing the enduring appeal of youth in the public mind.

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