Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 71 (2025), 63-89
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v71p63
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"I REMEMBER WHEN THE BEATLES CAME" A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Study of Women's Musical Oral Histories

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Abstract – Combining corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, this article examines the language used by American women of the Boomer generation to describe what it meant to listen to rock music in the late 1960s and 1970s. Drawing on their first-hand accounts, the study focuses on the realisation of stance through which participants construct meaning and negotiate their positioning within a historically male-dominated cultural space. The findings reveal that they employ emotionally rich and evaluative language to express personal investment and informed appreciation. This stance taking not only shapes their musical experiences but also serves as a means of resisting dominant, often stereotypical, models of fandom by foregrounding reflective, critical, and culturally significant forms of engagement. The study further demonstrates that incorporating corpus methods into oral history research can uncover specific linguistic patterns that might remain unnoticed in purely qualitative analyses. The article is relevant to the field of linguistics and may also be of interest to scholars in cultural studies, music studies, and memory studies.

Keywords: Corpus-assisted discourse studies; memory studies; musical discourse; oral history; stance.

1. Background and Aims

Popular music consumption is a significant site for processes of identification, affiliation, and belonging (Southerton 2011, p. 1). These processes extend beyond listening to include the ways individuals make sense of music through the stories they tell about it. From recalling formative years to expressing ideational affiliation, discourse *about* music not only reconstructs particular (private) accounts of personal experiences but also serves as a means of negotiating individuals' inclusion within specific social and cultural spaces and heritage configurations (Frith 1996; Connell and Gibson 2003; Lipsitz 1990; van Dijck 2006).

The intersection of music, (cultural) memory, and identity has been explored across a range of academic disciplines, including popular music studies, sociology and psychology (Bennett and Rogers 2016; Garrido and Davidson 2019), providing valuable insights into how individuals and communities construct, negotiate, and sustain their sense of self through

musical engagement. The complex relationship between music consumption, individual and collective identity formation operates through multiple mechanisms, from deeply personal emotional connections to broader social and cultural affiliations (Frith 1996).

The capacity of music to encode memories with emotional significance has been highlighted as a central feature in the creation of lasting associations between particular songs or musical experiences and key life events, be it a childhood memory, a significant relationship, or a pivotal event (DeNora 2000; Lippman and Greenwood 2012). For example, the music of one's formative years frequently becomes intertwined with personal narratives of growth, change, and self-discovery, creating musical biographical trajectories (Gramit 2016).

Musical identity extends beyond the individual engagement encompassing broader social and cultural dimensions, including affiliations, cultural values, gender and generational markers (MacDonald *et al.* 2002). Through shared musical experiences, people forge connections with others, but also enact agency and reclaim power, costructing their own discourses of "resistance, subversion, belonging, community, and hope" (Way *et al*. 2017, xv). For instance, rock music is commonly linked to forms of rebellion against traditional and conservative cultures (Moore and Carr 2020), while punk is frequently associated with class conflict (Leichtman 2010).

For all these reasons, music should be approached as a form of discourse, consistent with van Leeuwen's (2012, p. 319) argument that it is "an integral part of social, political and economic life" and a medium through which emotive allegiance is formed. The linguistic analysis of musical discourse can be a fruitful avenue through which to examine processes of perception and evaluation of the musical product (Aleshinskaya 2013). In line with this, and in the application of this theoretical perspective, this article examines lay discourse on music, drawing on audio-recorded interview data from American women of the Boomer generation. The questions to be answered are, thus, how participants describe the music-related practices they experienced and witnessed and account for their personal actions and opinions. Particularly, the analysis of a set of interviews, conducted in person and via digital platforms, aims at revealing how the participants discursively construct their musical preferences and recollections of key music consumption practices in late 1960s and 1970s New York City. The collected female-centred narratives are analysed through a corpus-assisted discourse analysis approach (Baker *et al*. 2008; Baker 2023; Partington *et al*. 2013). This mixed-method may prove particularly fruitful as the corpus processes can uncover linguistic patterns, which can then be analysed qualitatively (Biber *et al.* 1998; Friginal and Hardy 2013). This study focuses particularly on stance-making resources (Biber 2004) women employ to articulate musical experience and align with—or resist—prevailing narratives within a

cultural domain historically shaped by male dominance. It also intends to make a contribution to the enhancement of corpus methods in the study of inteview data, understood as repositories of both personal and collective memory (Fitzgerald 2022; Fitzgerald and Timmis 2024).

To consider women's participation in rock music culture, it is important to acknowledge both persistent representational gaps and the enduring influence of gendered stereotypes. In this regard, Bennett (2015, p. 20) argues that "the late 20th century popular music heritage is largely dictated through an Anglo-American axis of influence as a heritage project that is essentially white, middle class, middle aged and rockist." He further contends that this narrow framing has significant consequences, as it excludes "vast tracts of musical production, perfomance and reception from memory" (see also Connell and Gibson 2003, p. 4; Johnson 2013, pp. 96-97; 2018, p. 16).

Popular music female fandom has been explored across various academic disciplines. However, within music studies, this area has often been examined through relatively narrow frameworks, interpreting women's engagement with pop/rock music primarily through the lens of star-centred hysteria (e.g. Cline 1992; Ehrenreich *et al*. 1992; Larsen 2017; Lewis 1992). Such interpretations have effectively excluded women from serious consideration as discerning music consumers. Within the ongoing "masculinization" (Feldman-Barrett 2021, p. 5) of rock music discourse, their experiences have been often reduced to stereotypical representations of emotional excess or uncritical devotion.

More recent scholarship (Berman 2007; Bumsted 2024; Feldman-Barrett 2021; Hill 2016; Mangione and Luff 2017; Rhodes 2005) has begun to challenge these reductive perspectives found both in previous research as well as in media representations, while giving prominence to the voices of female fans. For instance, Rhodes (2005) devotes considerable attention to the rising phenomenom of the 'groupie' in the late 1960s and 1970s. Notably, this derisive term was used to refer to a particular kind of female fan commonly portrayed as being more interested in pursuing sexual relationships with rock musicians than in engaging with their music (see also Cohen 2013). Drawing on a range of sources, Rhodes examines the diverse, creative, and meaningful roles women have played in popular music—roles that have often been obscured by sexist narratives perpetuated by predominantly white, male music critics. These critics, lacking a nuanced understanding of women's engagement in rock culture, have historically held the power to determine which stories are told and remembered. In a now-infamous *New Statesman* essay, Paul Johnson derided Beatles female fans with open contempt: "Those who flock round the Beatles, who scream themselves into hysteria, whose vacant faces flicker over the TV screen, are the least fortunate of their generation, the dull, the idle, the failures" (quoted

in Ewens 2020, p. 15). Teenage girl fans have long been subject to such patronising portrayals in the press, and, as Grant notes, they are often perceived as "a mindless horde: one huge, undifferentiated emerging hormone" (quoted in Mills 2019, p. 207). This reductive historiography has been more recently challenged by Feldman-Barrett (2021) who examines first-hand accounts from Beatles' women fans revealing the expertise, discernment, and reflective engagement that have long characterised the band female fan base—well beyond the familiar tropes of 'hysterical' affect and consumerist behaviour.

Despite these significant contributions, the history of women's music reception remains under-documented and under-analysed, especially with regard to its discursive and linguistic dimensions. While existing research has extensively explored the social, cultural, and emotional aspects of women's engagement with music, relatively little attention has been devoted to the language women use to talk about (rock) music. This study therefore aims to fill a crucial gap in the literature.

To establish the theoretical and methodological frameworks, the article begins with a short introduction to the field of oral history, followed by an overview of previous linguistic research analysing oral history data. Subsequent to this foundation, the integration of corpus linguistics methods in oral history research will be outlined. The corpus design and analytical procedures employed in this study will then be described in detail. A considerable amount of space within this article is bound up with the discussion of the findings. The study concludes by identifying potential academic routes for future research at the intersection of corpus linguistics and oral history.

2. Oral History and Corpus Linguistics

Oral history is a research methodology that involves collecting and analysing spoken data, focusing on individuals' experiences, historical events, and cultural practices (e.g. Perks and Thomson 2016). While these testimonies serve as essential repositories for studying social lives, sensitive subjects, and significant events, their scope extends far beyond documenting narratives of trauma and conflict. Oral history is a research tool with virtually unlimited applications that equally values recovering neglected histories that are often absent, marginalised or unrecorded (Gluck and Patai 1991). As noted by Perks and Thomson (2015, p. 6), interviews with social and political elites have traditionally offered important insights alongside existing documentary sources. However, the greatest contribution of oral history lies in its capacity to document the experiences and perspectives of underrepresented communities and ordinary people who might otherwise have remained

"hidden from history." Present-day oral history is primarily seen as a way for individuals to tell their own life stories rather than as a method for collecting objective data in a structured, survey-like manner. As Grele argues, there has been "a shift from concern with data to concern with text" (cited in Summerfield 2016, p. 2). Contemporary research now prioritises the ways in which individuals construct and articulate their personal histories, rather than solely emphasising the factual content of their narratives.

In this regard, oral history functions as a versatile research method employed across a range of academic disciplines, each with its unique emphasis on either 'data' or 'text.' In the field of linguistic research, there has been an increasing interest in the examination of oral history data, recognising its potential to illuminate various aspects of language use across diverse areas of study (Roller 2015) such as applied linguistics (e.g. Pavlenko 2007; Schiffrin 2003), dialectology and sociolinguistics (e.g. Braber and Davies 2016; Denis 2016), as well as critical discourse studies (e.g. De Fina 2003; De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2015). This interest extends to both existing oral history collections and the development of new ones to support research in these fields.

The potential of corpus-based methods in oral history research is gaining growing recognition (Fitzgerald 2022; Fitzgerald and Timmis 2024). By providing a methodologically rigorous framework for data analysis, the integration of corpus techniques enhances the depth and consistency of linguistic investigations. Corpus processes, including keywords, collocations, and concordances, allow for the identification of recurring linguistic patterns across multiple oral history interviews, enabling a more systematic exploration of the language under examination. This approach not only offers a broader, quantitative-based perspective but also introduces a level of objectivity and replicability that is often difficult to achieve with traditional qualitative approaches. As a result, corpus linguistics helps to detect linguistic phenomena that might otherwise go unnoticed, enriching our understanding of how language reflects personal narratives, social dynamics, and historical contexts.

Corpus linguistics and oral history have been integrated in previous research, as outlined in Fitzgerald's (2022) comprehensive literature review. For instance, one earlier example of such methodological orientation is Sealey's (2010) study of the Millennibum Project, which is based on 144 interviews from individuals living in Birmingham in 2001. Applying corpus linguistics techniques, Sealey examined the dataset to identify discourse patterns and explore self-representation strategies. In a subsequent study using the same corpus, she analysed concordances of the phrase "I couldn't" to investigate the constraints on speakers' communicative goals (Sealey 2012). Another significant and more recent illustration of the intersection between corpus linguistics and oral history is Fitzgerald's latest study (2022),

which explores the linguistic construction of certainty. For this research, Fitzgerald compiled a corpus from the History Archive at the Irish Bureau of Military History. His study aimed to show what it may be obtained by combining corpus tools and competencies with oral history sources, addressing what Schiffrin (2003, p. 84) describes as a "dearth of linguistic analyses of oral histories."

The blending of corpus linguistics and oral history should also take into consideration the ethical concerns that arise when working with personal narratives and memory-based discourse (Fitzgerald and Timmis 2024). On the one hand, scholars face the challenge of preserving the authenticity and uniqueness of individual voices, ensuring that personal testimonies are not diluted or misrepresented in broader analyses. On the other hand, ethical considerations extend to issues of consent, privacy, and the complex interplay between public and private domains (Brookes and McEnery 2024). Participants may share deeply personal reflections, sometimes without full awareness of how their narratives might be used or interpreted in academic works. Other challenges are posed by the nature of spoken language itself. Oral histories are often characterised by non-standard varieties, incomplete sentences, lexical repetitions, hesitations, all of which complicate the process of transcribing and coding spoken data for corpus analysis. Furthermore, due to the complexity of retrieving spoken data, the size of oral history corpora is often much smaller than those typically used in corpus linguistics, which are more often based on vast collections of written data. Nevertheless, advances in transcription technologies and the increasing availability of digitised oral history collections are making it more feasible to compile and analyse oral history data.

3. Data and Methods

For the present study, interviews are proposed as both the data collection tool and as an object of analysis being an "efficient means of eliciting 'talk on topic'" (Nikander 2012, p. 400). This section presents the participants, the data and methodology used to analyse the linguistic articulation of rock music engagement among female fans from the Boomer generation. More specifically, Section 3.1 details the recruitment context and participant profiles, Section 3.2 describes the interview format adopted for this study, Section 3.3 presents the corpus and Section 3.4 outlines the analytical approach.

3.1. Participants

In this research, New York City was selected as the study site for its enduring significance in modern music history and its continued role as a focal point for the social and cultural value of music (Baker 2019). The data collection was carried out by the author between September 2019 and March 2020. The timing proved particularly fruitful, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the Woodstock Music & Art Fair, that was held August 15-18, 1969, in Bethel, New York. Woodstock is regarded as one of the pivotal moments in popular music history and 1960s counterculture. The anniversary served as a catalyst for a wide array of commemorative events and "heritage rock" (Bennett 2009, p. 478) projects, such as concerts, exhibitions, and public gatherings that celebrated the festival lasting impact on music and countercultural movements.

These events not only rekindled public interest in the festival's legacy but also provided unique opportunities for participant recruitment among members of the Boomer generation, comprising those born between 1946 and 1964, came of age alongside the rise of rock music and have since engaged with its shifting cultural and social meanings across the decades. More specifically, prospective female participants were approached during various events, including the Woodstock 50th Anniversary celebration at Morrison Hotel Gallery on August 9, 2019 (attended by Woodstock co-founder Michael Lang and official photographer Henry Diltz), and concerts featuring artists such as Arlo Guthrie, Joan Baez, Bob Weir (The Grateful Dead), and David Crosby (Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young). Additional recruitment occurred at performances by other influential figures, including Patti Smith, The Eagles, and The Rolling Stones. Within this context, a purposive sampling strategy (Bryman 2008) was employed to recruit participants, ensuring the collection of rich, experiential data grounded in their active involvement in the local music scene during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. The participant network expanded through snowball sampling (Noy 2008), as existing contacts facilitated connections with additional qualified speakers. All individuals were subsequently contacted personally, with interview arrangements finalised via email. The final sample comprised 16 women aged 63–71 at the time of the interview, from diverse backgrounds, including both white and non-white educated female participants, all of whom had spent significant portions of their young and adult life in New York City. This diversity ensured representation across a range of socioeconomic contexts within the chosen urban setting, while maintaining the focus on women from the Boomer generation with a strong connection to the city. The participants responded to the interview questions with varying degrees of detail. Accordingly, the length of the interviews differed, ranging from 40 to 65 minutes. The encounters took place in

participants' homes, in public spaces, or via online platforms (e.g., Skype). It is important to point out that, from a discourse analytic perspective, participants are not treated as directly representative of a demographic category in the way that statistical research typically assumes. Instead, the aim is to compile a sufficiently large corpus to identify recurring discursive patterns for a more detailed examination (Nikander 2012, p. 404).

Although the content of the interviews was not inherently sensitive, participants were still provided with detailed information about the study's objectives, methodologies, and potential implications, ensuring transparency in data collection and analysis. To mitigate the potential risks associated with the retrospective nature of memory-based discourse, ethical considerations were taken into account, particularly with regard to informed consent, data anonymisation and interpretation.

3.2. The Narrative Interview

The narratives of personal experiences that form the focus of this work can be characterised as "interactional events" (De Fina 2009, p. 237) and have been conceptualised within the (often oral) 'life stories' research tradition (De Fina 2003), drawing on the idea of 'counter-narrativity' (Bamberg and Andrews 2004) in relation to the prevailing cultural construction of female fandom. Through life-story elicitation questions, such as "Can you tell me about the first concert you ever been to?," participants were encouraged to recount specific experiences and anecdotes. During the interview, the interviewer engaged with speakers by demonstrating active listening and occasionally commenting briefly on their responses, similar to the dynamics of natural conversation:

> 1. Interviewer: Alright, let's go back a bit—can you tell me about the most memorable concert you've ever been to?
> 2. Speaker 1: First concert?
> 3. Interviewer: A concert that felt particularly special or memorable to you.
> 4. Speaker 1: Well, probably when my father took us to the Troubadour when we were 10 years old to listen to folk music back in the Sixties. And I got to go into a nightclub with my dad and we had folks and pretzels and it was like, Oh my God and then going back to the Troubadour as an adult, I flashed on that memory. It was, oh yeah, it was 50 years ago. So that was really memorable because of the, my first time in a, in a nightclub, I saw Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, old blues men like blues a lot, uhm, and he also took us to a concert […] like Gordon Lightfoot, which was a Canadian kinda […]
> 5. Interviewer: Yeah, I know him!
> 6. Speaker 1: We went, uh, my dad took us to my sister and I to Gordon Lightfoot concert at the Santa Monica Civic in the Seventies. So that was also very cool cause we were the big kids, you know, we were, I was probably 11 that time. So, uhm, then after that I said my musical path split from my dad and I went more into Rock.

This extract illustrates a moment of interactional negotiation, where the participant initially seeks clarification ("First concert?") in response to the interviewer's prompt. The interviewer then reformulates the question to better align with the participant's frame of reference, prompting a detailed and emotionally rich narrative. This process highlights the co-construction of meaning within the interview setting, as the participant moves from uncertainty to reflective storytelling. The interviewer's minimal yet supportive input ("Yeah, I know him!") further encourages elaboration, underscoring the conversational and collaborative nature of the data generation process.

Such interview format has been widely employed in discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and discursive psychology (e.g. De Fina 2003; Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann 2000; Sirhan 2014). In the case under observation, it proved particularly effective, as it fostered a comfortable and open environment that encouraged participants to share detailed, personal narratives, leading to deeper insights into their music-related lived experiences.

Regarding the interviewer's role in shaping the narrative and guiding the discussion, Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann (2000) argue that while interviewers are expected to remain attentive yet unobtrusive, they inevitably contribute to the conversation. Through verbal and non-verbal cues—such as backchannelling, maintaining eye contact, and providing feedback—they facilitate the continuation of the narrative. Furthermore, the structure and phrasing of their questions influence how participants frame and present their stories, thereby contributing to the overall meaning and flow of the conversation. Given the author's prior acquaintance with the participants, which was facilitated through previous informal encounters, the interviews naturally took on a conversational tone, making it intuitive to engage with and respond to the narrators when appropriate.

This type of semi-structured interviews facilitated an in-depth exploration of participants' musical preferences, experiences, and perceptions of cultural authority, capturing a diverse range of perspectives. Questions addressed how participants define their musical tastes, the role of music in their personal and social lives, significant memories associated with particular songs, artists, or events, and their views on cultural authority in music, including the influence of media, peers, and specific genres.

3.3. Corpus

It is important to note that transcription is widely recognised as an interpretive act rather than a neutral or mechanical process. Far from being a mere facsimile of speech, a transcript constitutes a constructed representation

of spoken interaction, shaped by the researcher's theoretical lens and analytical aims (Braun and Clarke 2013, p. 239; Ochs 1979, p. 44). As Wengraf (2001, p. 130) notes, transcripts are better understood as "processed" data, reflecting the selective and purposeful nature of transcription decisions. Features such as prosody, emphasis, laughter, and other paralinguistic elements (e.g., throat-clearing) were not transcribed, as they were not deemed relevant to the aims of the present analysis. Transcription was conducted with the objective of producing data suitable for a corpus-based study, which has different requirements from conversation analysis (Braun and 2006, p. 17), a detailed verbatim account was considered adequate to retain the necessary information for interpretation. Transcription was carried out using the software *oTranscribe.*[1] However, prior to inclusion in the corpus, the transcripts underwent a cleaning and editing process to ensure suitability for analysis. This primarily involved removing sensitive and extraneous information, retaining only the interview content—both questions and responses. The final dataset comprises 65,504 words, drawn from a total of 16.3 hours stemming from 16 audio-recorded and orthographically transcribed interviews.

3.4. Corpus Methods

In this study, corpus linguistics is employed as a complementary approach alongside discourse studies methods (Baker *et al*. 2008; Baker 2023; Partington *et al*. 2013). Corpus linguistics facilitates empirical analysis of texts. In doing so it "draws conclusions from attested language use, rather than intuitions" (McEnery and Gabrielatos 2006, p. 34). To identify these linguistic patterns, the present analysis makes use of three techniques that have become established in corpus research; namely, keywords, collocation, and concordance analysis (Brookes and McEnery 2020), all of which are accessed via Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff *et al.* 2014).

To obtain the keyword list, the focus corpus was contrasted against the spoken component of the *Open American National Corpus* (OANC). The OANC was selected as a reference corpus for its broad coverage of general spoken American English data produced from 1990 onward, providing a comprehensive and representative baseline for contemporary language use. Its diverse range of spoken contexts ensures that the reference corpus captures common lexical patterns across various domains, making it an ideal comparison for identifying distinctive lexical features in the home corpus. This approach helps highlight significant lexical items specific to the narratives of American women, while minimising bias from any particular genre or topic. A minimum threshold of 5 occurrences was chosen due to the

[1] See: https://otranscribe.com.

relatively small size of the dataset. With a limited corpus, setting a higher threshold would eliminate too many potentially relevant items from consideration. Significance was calculated using log-likelihood, with an alpha of 0.0001.

After generating the keyword list, words were analysed in context and assigned to semantic fields. This qualitative classification process involved examining concordance lines for each keyword to understand its usage patterns and contextual meanings within the interviews. The categorisation framework was developed inductively from the data, with initial broad semantic domains being refined through multiple readings.

4. Results and Discussion

This section opens with a presentation of the keywords that form the basis of the current analysis. Then, attention will focus on a smaller set of words to better address the research aims.

4.1. Identifying Keywords

The initial list of the top 100 keywords was refined to a final set of 71 lexical items. This narrowing process was necessary because findings included both the first and last names of artists or the names of bands. To ensure consistency and avoid redundancy, these instances were treated as single items. Additionally, keywords that appeared in the interviewer's questions were excluded from the final set, as they were not considered part of the interviewees' lexical choices. Keywords were then grouped into two main semantic categories as shown in Table 1:

Category	Subcategory	Keywords
MUSIC PRODUCTION & PERFORMANCE	Individual artists	*Mitchell, Dylan, Presley, Joplin, Ronstadt, Jagger, Springsteen, Kristofferson, Dion, Stevie, Baez, Gaye, Clapton, Morrison, Elton, Raitt, Garland*
	Bands	*Beatles, Allman Brothers, Kinks, Everly Brothers, Eagles, Rolling Stones, Crosby Stills, Nash & Young, Tusk, Grateful Dead*
	Music creation	*songwriter, composer, lyric, song, musically, studio*
	Performance elements	*singing, sing, performer, musician, pianist, drummer, guitar, dancer*
	Music genres	*motown, folk, soul, rock*
MUSIC CONSUMPTION & PERCEPTION	Distribution	*Spotify, YouTube, jukebox, online*
	Venues/places	*New York City, Philadelphia, Jacksonville, California, Tanglewood, Miami, Brooklyn,*

		Bethel, venue
	Listener experience	*great, nostalgia, compelling, trigger, sexy, gender, always, sometimes, boys*
	Fan culture	*groupie, documentary, scrapbook*

Table 1
Top 71 keywords grouped into semantic categories.

This initial quantitative examination provides evidence of a notable gender distribution among referenced artists, with significant representation of female performers (*Mitchell*, *Ronstadt*, *Joplin*, *Baez*) alongside their male counterparts (*Dylan*, *Jagger*, *Kristofferson*, *Springsteen*). Keywords such as *motown, folk, soul, rock* reflect participants' engagement with a diverse range of musical genres. The lexical choices extend beyond individual performers and bands to encompass various dimensions of musical engagement, including production modalities (*songwriter*, *composer*), consumption practices (*Spotify*, *jukebox*), and evaluative language (*great*, *sexy*, *compelling, trigger*) that tend to express the emotional and sensory engagement with music through descriptions of powerful listening experiences. The usage of *gender* suggests that some discussions involve perceptions of masculinity and femininity in relation to music consumption practices. The keyword *boys* also refers to gendered ways of engaging with music. Words such as *always* and *sometimes* function as hedging or approximation strategies that shape the speaker's stance on their experiences. The co-occurrence of digital platforms alongside analog references suggests intergenerational technological adaptation rather than replacement. References to physical and symbolic spaces, such as *Tanglewood*, *Bethel* (site of the Woodstock Festival), or *Jacksonville*, underscore the significance of live music events and iconic locations as sites of cultural participation. Finally, regarding fan culture, explicit references to *groupie*, *documentary*, or *scrapbook* tend to indicate engagement with fandom practices, either through self-identification as a fan or through discourse on how audiences interact with musicians. While these terms do not appear frequently, their presence suggests varying degrees of fan involvement, from casual admiration to dedicated fandom that involves collecting memorabilia or engaging with music-related media.

Following a general overview of the keywords identified in the corpus, the analysis narrows its focus to two specific words (*great*, *The Beatles*) which serve as entry points for a more in-depth exploration of emerging discursive patterns. In addition, these words are also statistically significant according to corpus linguistics criteria for keyword analysis (Baker 2004).

4.2. Stance-Making

The in-depth analysis of the keywords engages with the literature that conceptualises stance, a notion which Biber defines as "the linguistic

mechanisms used by speakers and writers to convey their personal feelings and assessments" (2004, p. 109). While closely related to evaluation (Martin and White 2005), stance is a more formalised concept. It is carefully considered and refined over a period of time, rather than being instantly adopted. These operations are particularly relevant to the case under study as affective stance is used for evaluation and positioning in fan discourse over time (Biri 2023). In this context, fans' relationship with music operates in the domain of *affect*, where emotional responses and embodied experiences shape their engagement with songs, artists, and musical memories.

The home corpus contains many instances of evaluative language articulating the emotional and aesthetic dimensions of music appreciation. Speakers frequently draw on positively charged adjectives and intensifiers (e.g. "great," "adorable," "unbelievably good," "so interesting") to express inscribed evaluation (Martin and White 2005, p. 61)—that is, explicitly stated judgments and emotional responses—used to articulate the affective and aesthetic dimensions of musical experience. Figure 1 shows a sample selection of concordances of "great" as a lemma (91 hits) across the corpus:

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	ⓘ	', yeah, so we, all the wood, they put on all the shows and they were really	great	and there were very talented. The counselors, some of them were very tal
2	ⓘ	ıy Bennett's and um, Frank Sinatra, you know, I think a lot of their music is	great	, but it didn't like get me excited or anything, you know. I mean, I remembe
3	ⓘ	it was like, you know, this is really kind of revolutionary and this guy has a	great	voice and you know, he really was making waves and making statements a
4	ⓘ	ən all the Motown, you know, the The Supremes, all that stuff, really, really	great	. And Bob Dylan, who at first I didn't like because I didn't like his singing. B
5	ⓘ	ld come on And she was like, what is this? Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's great. It's	great	. Little generational split, but. Yeah, I think maybe it was John's father or pc
6	ⓘ	ɔicky about people who are good musicians. So the, the music might have	great	lyrics, but if the music itself isn't good or if the singer's voice is off, then I'm
7	ⓘ	very, very strong women who are not just, um, getting supported for being	great	musicians, but they're also, you know, taking control of their financial affair
8	ⓘ	ıg and and a lot of that kind of stuff and that kind of excitement, which was	great	. You know because you get all caught up in that and that that just adds yo
9	ⓘ	ŋg. And, you know, Dead lyrics are very poetic. You know, Jerry Garcia's a	great	poet. And I think that once I probably went to my, I remember coming up to
10	ⓘ	ɪ, you know, think, reconsider. And you know, The Allman Brothers are the	greatest	band ever. They are a great band, but you know, they don't. It just doesn't

Figure 1
Sample concordance output for "great" in the corpus.

In the Extract below, the evaluative language is both factual and subjective in describing a specific concert the speaker attended and in presenting her feelings about the music:

> (1) It the first time I saw him, I think Hunky Dory had already been out, I think it was the Ziggy Stardust show. So he started the show by coming, there was like a kind of a crane, the cherry picker kind of truck thing in on the stage. And it came down as if he was like Major Tom. And then he was in it and his feet were dangling over the audience while he was singing. So it was **very spectacular**. Bowie was a spectacle and a theater. Right. **So he wasn't just standing like The Beatles**. I mean, even though they make **great** new movies and music, **amazing** stuff that was **different**. Right. They were standing there playing their instruments and then Bowie was like, "Oh no, I'm putting on a show". And he was, you know, gender fluid and sexual, sexual and **fascinating**. And the show was **incredible**. Every song was **tight**. His band was **amazing**. Mick Ronson was **great** on the guitar and Trevor Bolder was

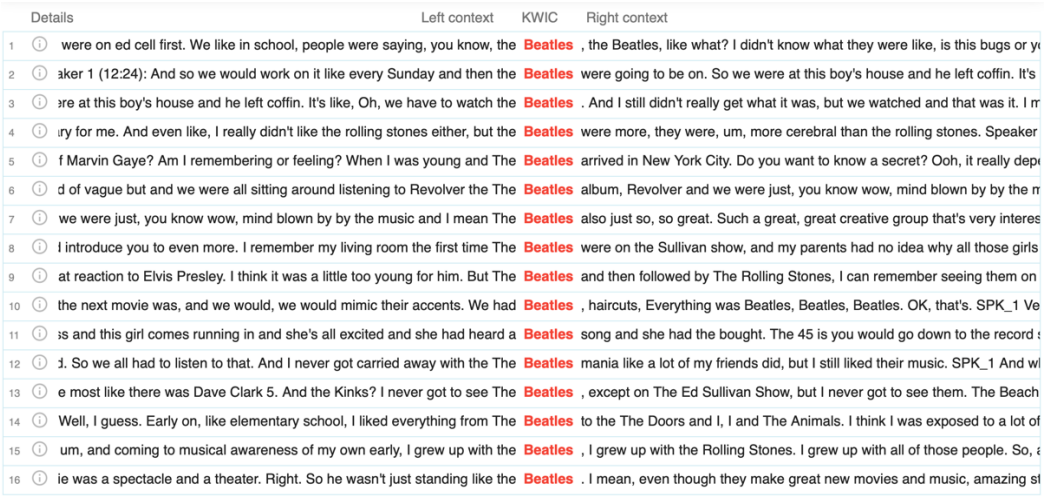
> **amazing** on the base. He was just, and he, **he commanded your time and energy and brain while you were with him, like you weren't anywhere else**. If you're like a person who you usually think, "Oh, tomorrow I have to go to the store and get dinner or something." No, **you weren't thinking anything**. **You were just there** and you were **transcended** into his mind.

The speaker relies heavily on positively charged adjectives (e.g. "spectacular," "amazing," "great," "incredible," "fascinating," "tight") as well as on grammatical structures ("So he wasn't just standing like The Beatles") to construct a vividly emotional and immersive account of a David Bowie performance. Particularly, the speaker conveys a powerful emotional reaction, using affective terms ("transcended") and describing a state of complete absorption ("he commanded your time and energy and brain," "you weren't thinking anything," "you were just there"). This description highlights an almost out-of-body experience, framing the performance as a moment of heightened consciousness and emotional intensity.

This kind of imagery is also used in other accounts. In the Extract below, for instance, the speaker talks about The Beatles' arrival on the US scene, constructing it as a sort of collective emotional awakening, evoking a kind of communal rapture ("totally entranced"). This stance portrays musical experience as both emotionally transformative and socially unifying:

> (2) **Until everything changed** when I became a teenager in the 60s and it was like, oh, **going somewhere else**. **The whole world was changing**. You know, **The Beatles came and everybody was just totally entranced.** I've learned every word to every song of, you know, especially "Sergeant Peppers," because all of us did it, you know. And I went to summer camp. We would like walk into town singing every on that album and with, you know, I had a little transistor radio that at night I would. Tied under the covers so that my parents didn't know I was awake and I'd have the little earpiece in and I'd listen to the rock stations that were starting in New York at that time. And all night long I'd stay up all night listening to. I think it was WNEW.

As these Extracts already show, it soon becomes evident that the frequent nominal references to prominent musical performers and bands serve as evaluative cues. A band that is mentioned in all the interviews is *The Beatles* (41 hits). To provide a representative sample of the corpus data, the following concordance lines (Figure 2) are retrieved from each document included in the corpus:



	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1		were on ed cell first. We like in school, people were saying, you know, the	Beatles	, the Beatles, like what? I didn't know what they were like, is this bugs or y
2		aker 1 (12:24): And so we would work on it like every Sunday and then the	Beatles	were going to be on. So we were at this boy's house and he left coffin. It's
3		re at this boy's house and he left coffin. It's like, Oh, we have to watch the	Beatles	. And I still didn't really get what it was, but we watched and that was it. I m
4		ry for me. And even like, I really didn't like the rolling stones either, but the	Beatles	were more, they were, um, more cerebral than the rolling stones. Speaker
5		f Marvin Gaye? Am I remembering or feeling? When I was young and The	Beatles	arrived in New York City. Do you want to know a secret? Ooh, it really dep
6		d of vague but and we were all sitting around listening to Revolver the The	Beatles	album, Revolver and we were just, you know wow, mind blown by by the m
7		we were just, you know wow, mind blown by by the music and I mean The	Beatles	also just so, so great. Such a great, great creative group that's very interes
8		I introduce you to even more. I remember my living room the first time The	Beatles	were on the Sullivan show, and my parents had no idea why all those girls
9		at reaction to Elvis Presley. I think it was a little too young for him. But The	Beatles	and then followed by The Rolling Stones, I can remember seeing them on
10		the next movie was, and we would, we would mimic their accents. We had	Beatles	, haircuts, Everything was Beatles, Beatles, Beatles. OK, that's. SPK_1 Ve
11		s and this girl comes running in and she's all excited and she had heard a	Beatles	song and she had the bought. The 45 is you would go down to the record
12		. So we all had to listen to that. And I never got carried away with the The	Beatles	mania like a lot of my friends did, but I still liked their music. SPK_1 And w
13		e most like there was Dave Clark 5. And the Kinks? I never got to see The	Beatles	, except on The Ed Sullivan Show, but I never got to see them. The Beach
14		Well, I guess. Early on, like elementary school, I liked everything from The	Beatles	to the The Doors and I, I and The Animals. I think I was exposed to a lot of
15		um, and coming to musical awareness of my own early, I grew up with the	Beatles	, I grew up with the Rolling Stones. I grew up with all of those people. So,
16		ie was a spectacle and a theater. Right. So he wasn't just standing like the	Beatles	. I mean, even though they make great new movies and music, amazing st

Figure 2
Sample concordance output for "Beatles" across corpus documents.

Predictably, The Beatles emerge as a shifting cultural phenomenon fulfilling a range of discursive functions within the corpus. As the examples below will further illustrate, the band operates as a chronological marker, a touchstone for generational and individual identity, and a medium for expressing agency in relation to music preferences:

> (3) **I remember in junior high school**, when you were alone in your room doing your homework, you had the radio on and if you heard a song that you knew your friend liked, you would call her and […] it was very shared. […] I loved all the Phil Spector stuff. I didn't know that it was the Wall of Sound. I just liked the sound. Now I, you know, know more about it. **And then when the Beatles came**, um, we, like **in school, people were saying**, you know, **the Beatles, the Beatles**, like what? **I didn't know what they were like, is this bugs** or you know, because **they weren't here, but a film of them performing was on one of the late night shows**. **I forget who it was**. So some of my friends had seen it and they said, and they're going to be on the **Ed Sullivan**. **And so I was, I was, I was in I think Eighth Grade and we were in English class**. We had a group project where like four or five of us girls and boys. And we had to put on an oral report about *Silas Marner*. And so we would work on it like every Sunday **and then the Beatles were going to be on**. So we were at this boy's house and it's like, "Oh, we have to watch the Beatles". **And I still didn't really get what it was, but we watched and that was it.** I mean, it was maybe, you know, **it was partly being with these other kids and you know, someone saying this is important**, but it was, and then, you know, you heard them on the radio and I mean then at through high school, "did you see them?" Once I saw them like, oh, well **I just thought they were adorable and I loved** the, you know, **their music** and that they sang like a whole range of things, songs that they wrote.

It is generally postulated (Pelletier 2015) that when telling their stories, speakers place themselves and the events of their lives on a public timeline

rather then on a purely personal one. As Extract 3 exemplifies, the speaker situates her Beatles-related recollections within both collective and personal chronologies, employing temporally anchored expressions that foreground subjective experience within specific historical events (e.g., "I remember when the Beatles came," "So some of my friends had seen it and they said, and he's going to be on Ed Sullivan. And so I was, I was, I was in I think Eighth Grade and we were in English class"). The initial encounter with the band marks an emotionally charged, transitional moment between unfamiliarity ("I didn't know what they were like, is this bugs") and the formation of fandom ("Once I saw them like, oh, well I just thought they were adorable and I loved the, you know, their music").

Most speakers also reveal an evolution in how they relate to The Beatles, and, more generally, to music over time. Initial attraction focuses on immediate sonic appeal, while later appreciation encompasses production knowledge:

> (4) **Now many years later**, we we actually know a guy who wrote a big biography of The Beatles, which was very interesting and that had **a lot of detail about the production of the songs**. It's it's **even more interesting** because you see what the contributions of the different people are. You know it didn't just come to John, Paul and, whatever, Ringo and George didn't just go in the studio and had it all together. There were there was **a lot of input and arranging** that was going on by other people with the product is just unbelievably good and **so interesting**.

This progression from casual listening to informed appreciation enables speakers to show accumulated cultural capital and agency in their musical preferences. In another interview, the comparative framing of The Beatles as "more cerebral" than the "raw" Rolling Stones establishes the speaker's critical evaluation:

> (5) I really didn't like the Rolling Stones either, but the Beatles were more, they were, um, **more cerebral** than the Rolling Stones. The Rolling Stones were kind of **raw** and you know, **like sort of sexy or you know, "Under My Thumb" and that kind of stuff.** And you know, the Beatles were like, um, about like their mind and it was, you could go anywhere with their music. **I felt like the Rolling Stones were like, they have their message and it's not for me**, you know, and **even like the way they play**. Then the jumping around on the stage.

Particularly, through this evaluative stance, the speaker positions herself with values associated with refinement, introspection, and sophistication. Moreover, her distancing from the Rolling Stones' "raw" masculinity and stage presence ("they have their message and it's not for me... even like the way they play") further underscores a refusal to align with dominant masculine-coded musical expressions ("like sort of sexy or you know,

"Under My Thumb" and that kind of stuff"). Instead, she appears to articulate a preference for the interpretive openness and cerebral aesthetics associated with The Beatles, thereby positioning herself—at least implicitly—as an informed and autonomous listener. This stance contrasts with the majority of mainstream writing and discussions on music, where women are often portrayed primarily in relation to men—as muses, groupies, or fangirls—while their own experiences, ideas, and arguments tend to be dismissed or overlooked.

Speakers also provide evidence of how Beatles fandom facilitated social integration and identity formation, as shown by the abundant descriptions of communal activities ("we would mimic their accents," "we had Beatles haircuts," "we were all sitting around listening to *Revolver*"). These shared experiences established in-group boundaries, particularly visible in the favourite-member discourse ("Some people love John"). This collective identification extends to physical artifacts of fandom ("I still have the cards that came with bubble gum") and imitative behaviours ("Everything was Beatles, Beatles, Beatles"). Notably, speakers use The Beatles as a point of cultural differentiation, both generationally ("my parents had no idea why all those girls were going so crazy") and within peer groups ("I never got carried away with the Beatles mania like a lot of my friends did"). As noted in the above Extract, this discursive positioning enables narrators to assert musical competence while simultaneously marking individual perspective and evaluative stance. The example that follows offers an additional evidence of the subjective construction of music-related meaning in regard to The Beatles:

> (6) **I don't remember watching them on TV**, but **I do remember** that there's something had this song, "She Loves You." Yeah, yeah, yeah. And **I remember driving with my mother in the car**. Yeah. And that would come on and she was like, "what is this? Yeah, yeah, yeah" and I said "It's great. It's great." **Little generational split**, but…and then "I Want to Hold Your Hand." **They were just, you know**. Again I keep using the word **exploding**, but you know just would **grab you so much** and then **I can remember at some point going to a party** in the city must have… It's kind of vague but and **we were all sitting around listening to *Revolver* the**…The Beatles album, *Revolver* and we were just, you know wow, **mind blown** by by the music and I mean The Beatles also just **so, so great**. **Such a great, great creative group**.

In this account, the temporal expression ("at some point going to a party in the city") sequences events and anchors musical memories within a personally meaningful chronology. This is particularly evident in the shift from the non-remembering ("I don't remember watching them on TV") of a pivotal moment in American pop culture—such as The Beatles' first live U.S. television appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show on February 9, 1964, to a series of short anecdotal sections ("I remember driving with my mother in the

car," "It's kind of vague but and we were all sitting around listening to *Revolver"*) to better reflect her own experience (Pelletier 2015, p. 343). As in Extract 4, by drawing a clear contrast between her own enthusiastic reception of The Beatles' song ("It's great. It's great") and her mother's bewildered response ("what is this? Yeah, yeah, yeah"), the narrator constructs an in-group versus out-group dynamic, demarcating generational boundaries. Moreover, the reported dialogue serves as a performative act, dramatising the generational divide and emphasising the narrator's affiliation with the musical tastes of her peer group, thus reinforcing her self-positioning within a specific cultural context. Throughout the account, the narrator's alternation between individual ("I") and collective ("we") pronouns plays a crucial role in constructing this sense of communal belonging. The scene "we were all sitting around listening to *Revolver*" represents a shared moment of musical appreciation and indicates that record listening functioned as a collective social practice. Later in the story, she asserts her expertise by referencing a personal connection to an external source of authority ("we actually know a guy who wrote a big biography") for those informed arguments, positioning herself as a knowledgeable participant in music-related discourse. This transformation from casual consumption to active fandom echoes Fiske's (1992) notion of "productive fandom," wherein the acquisition of specialised knowledge and language marks the evolution of the individual from mere consumer to culturally informed participant.

As the keywords extraction reveals, speakers refer to a range of artists and bands. These references are not always employed to convey positive evaluations. Rather, in some instances, performers are mentioned in order to express negative stances, which contribute to the construction and negotiation of the speaker's identity within the discourse. For instance, *The Allman Brothers* (11 hits)—who are generally regarded as one of the pioneering bands in Southern rock, a genre commonly associated with hypermasculinity (Lechner 2018, pp. 123-124) as well as *The Rolling Stones* (23 hits) are sometimes mentioned by participants as music they are not interested in, or at least not interested in anymore. The following extract features a speaker recounting an episode from a later stage of her life, while simultaneously offering retrospective insight into her earlier—and still ongoing—engagement with music:

> (7) I'm going to tell you a story because it's like a really interesting story that when I was, I mean, **I've always gone to see shows**. When I moved to **New York**, I used to go see. All **the new wave shows and punk shows**, and I mean Washington has a really good music scene, but New York of course has the best one. But after, you know, I had my kids and I got divorced and I was trying to date every guy I would meet, like the guys I would meet, I would always say what do you have on your iPod? Like that would be how I would define somebody**. And so many of the guys that I met would have like live**

> **Rolling Stones shows or. You know, Allman Brothers or fish jam bands or that kind of thing. And it just doesn't interest me at all**. It just, I like, **I've always listened to**, you know, like **indie stations**. And of course now I listen, you know, to radio online a lot. I listen to California stations and NPR stations and, you know, rocks like alternative stations. **But every guy I was meeting was so interested in classic rock and it was so boring to me**. And I met one guy that I dated for a while. And really, I think the thing that drew us to each other is when we first met, we looked at each other's iPods and he was like, wow, I've never seen anybody else that has Calexico on their iPod. And I looked at his and he had great stuff too. And I think that was really the thing that drew us to each other. We didn't really end up, you know, going out for that long, but those were the days. Like the early 2000s when Craigslist was big and people would actually put like things in the personal ads on Craigslist. And I put an an ad, you know, on Craigslist and I it was in, you know, the dating site. I think I was 50. And I said, is there any guys like my age with kids divorced that don't listen to classic rock? Because **I find it really boring and really dated**, and I'm really interested in a guy like my age who listens to music that's more cutting edge than that.

In this account, the speaker positions herself in opposition to male peers who adhere to "classic rock" distancing herself from mainstream and masculine-coded taste which is negatively evaluated as stale cultural consumption ("I find it really boring and really dated"). In contrast, she constructs an alternative identity through references to active and ongoing engagement with live music ("always gone to see shows") and alternative media consumption ("listened to indie stations"). The relocation to New York is not merely framed as a spatial adjustement, but rather as a symbolic transition into a culturally elevated and musically vibrant environment ("New York of course has the best one"), which contributes to the speaker's self-construction as a more cosmopolitan and discerning musical subject.

4.3. Pronouns

To complement the analysis, the present article has also given attention to which pronouns rank most frequently in the corpus (Table 2). The use of pronouns is particularly relevant to oral history materials as pronouns contribute to the meanings conveyed by speakers (Fitzgerald 2022; Fitzgerald, Timmis 2024):

	Pronoun	Frequency
1	*I*	3,710
2	*you*	2,215
3	*it*	1,334
4	*we*	564
5	*my*	511
6	*they*	389
7	*me*	341

8	*she*	318
9	*he*	316
10	*your*	166

Table 2
Top ten pronouns ranked by frequency.

These results are both expected and complement the previous keyword analysis. Particularly, the high frequency of the first-person pronoun "I" reflects the strongly personal and subjective nature of oral history narratives, where speakers position themselves centrally in recounting experiences. The prominence of "you" suggests a conversational orientation, addressing the interviewer while primarily functioning as a discourse marker in the pattern "you know." The presence of "we" indicates moments of collective identification, signalling shared experiences or group belonging. Meanwhile, lower frequencies of third-person pronouns such as "he", "she," and "they" point to the relatively limited focus on external individuals, reinforcing the self-oriented and relational character of the accounts. By examining the verbal collocates that appear to the right of first-person singular pronoun, the analysis reveals that participants frequently use verbs that convey self-legitimation as they attempt to establish their credibility and authority, on the topic. These verbs fall into three broad categories.

First, knowledge or expertise markers—such as *know*, *understand*, *remember*, *realize*, and *recognize*—position speakers as informed and reflective individuals. Through these verbs, narrators lay claim to cognitive authority, often grounded in memory, comprehension, or insight. Second, opinion and assessment verbs—including *think*, *believe*, *mean*, *guess*, and *appreciate*—enable speakers to frame their personal viewpoints as meaningful contributions. Even when hedged, such as with *guess*, these expressions function as evaluative tools, reinforcing the speaker's interpretive role. Finally, verbs reflecting experience-based authority—like *see*, *watch*, *listen*, *go, experience*, *grow, read*—signal a direct or evolving relationship with the topic, drawing on sensory perception, lived experience, or formal learning. Together, these collocational patterns illustrate how oral history participants strategically assert epistemic authority, positioning themselves as both credible witnesses and active meaning-makers. The Extracts below are both telling examples of these stance-making processes:

> (8) I'll tell you that another concert that I thought was fantastic and I was really surprised to find this one was John Mellencamp. One year I couldn't figure out, and this was when I was married to my second husband. I couldn't figure out what to get him for Christmas and there was a concert right around Christmas and so I got us really good tickets and I didn't even… We weren't huge fans of his. It was just that **I knew** it would be a decent show and well, it turned out to be a fantastic show. It was one of the best shows I've ever been

> to and and. Fantastic! **I learned** the difference of a band that does a lot of rehearsing. **I mean**, a lot of rehearsing. It really shows on stage. Some bands just get up and play and they're good. But you know, this was so professional, so professional and interestingly enough, another thing. One time **I went** to a show, a John Fogerty show and I fell in love with the drummer. I was like, God, I love that drummer. I don't even, I'm not a drummer person. But this guy, I was like Oh my God, you know **I** could just **watch** him and forget the everybody else. So that that turned out to be Kenny Aronoff.
>
> (9) I never joined a fan club and I didn't do scrapbooks and stuff. I just bought records. I **listened** to records on my own constantly, because I was a big reader. And so I spent a lot of time in my room **listening** to music and reading. So there was a lot of that. And I had a pretty eclectic collection. So I just **listened** to whatever I had, you know, I did the old stack them all up on the on the spindle, on my, on my little portable stereo and just. Let them all play. No particular rhyme or reason. Just stack them all up and let them go.

As these examples show, the accumulation of action and cognition verbs reinforces a sense of self-directed experience and judgment, demonstrating how first-person narration, paired with verb choices, becomes a key resource for self-legitimation in oral history discourse.

5. Conclusions

This study has explored how women linguistically construct and reflect on their musical engagement through emotionally rich, evaluative language. Drawing on a corpus of first-hand interviews with American women belonging to the Boomer generation, the analysis has shown that affective stance is not only central to the way participants recall and discuss their musical experiences, but also functions as a powerful tool for positioning themselves as listeners, fans, and cultural participants.

The corpus results indicate a strong presence of positively charged adjectives and intensifiers (e.g. *great, amazing, spectacular, incredible, so interesting*), used to inscribe emotional responses and aesthetic judgments explicitly. Frequent nominal references to key artists—most prominently The Beatles—act as evaluative cues, functioning as markers of personal taste, cultural belonging, and generational identity, embedding personal memories in broader historical events and reinforcing a sense of collective awakening or shared transformation. Negative evaluations serve to position speakers against dominant taste cultures, reinforcing identities aligned with alternative, cosmopolitan, or critically engaged listening practices.

Pronoun patterns reveal the centrality of the self in these narratives (*I* being the most frequent word in the corpus) alongside moments of collective identification signalled through *we*. The collocational profile of *I* with verbs of cognition (*know, remember, understand*), opinion (*think, believe,*

appreciate), and experience (*see, listen, go*) highlights how speakers assert epistemic authority, legitimising their perspectives as knowledgeable and reflective rather than purely affect-driven.

Overall, stance is not merely an expression of uncritical devotion; rather, it reflects a combination of emotional investment and informed, knowledge-driven appreciation. In doing so, these accounts challenge dominant discourses of female music fandom that often privilege male-centric, hyper-committed models of fan identity. The women's narratives foreground a quieter, affectively grounded form of engagement that is no less meaningful or culturally significant. By resisting reductive stereotypes—such as the screaming teenage fan or the obsessive memorabilia collector—the discourse of these participants redefines what it meant to be a fan in the 1960s and 1970s, highlighting reflective, embodied, shared, and intellectually engaged forms of musical appreciation.

In this way, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of music reception, one that recognises gendered diversity in how cultural participation is expressed. It also underscores the importance of linguistic resources in shaping how affect is articulated and negotiated. The integration of corpus-based methods with close reading of illustrative extracts has been particularly productive in demonstrating how linguistic patterns are enacted in personal accounts, and vice versa, how lived narratives give depth and meaning to the statistical findings.

Ultimately, the narratives analysed here invite a reconsideration of what it means to be a fan, revealing a spectrum of engagement that is personal, affective, and discursively complex. While the findings of this study offer valuable insights into the discursive construction of musical engagement among Boomer-generation women, they cannot be taken as fully reflective of a broader generational history. As such, the study does not aim to generalise but to illuminate how affective stance and evaluative language function in personal recollections of music. Future research could expand this approach by contrasting female and male oral histories in both their affective and evaluative dimensions, in order to better understand how gendered forms of engagement with rock music are linguistically constructed.

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Acknowledgements:
I would like to sincerely thank all the women who generously shared their personal stories and reflections for this study. Without their willingness to participate and contribute their voices, this work would not have been possible. I would also like to express my gratitude to Andy Bennett for his invaluable insights and guidance along the years.

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