

CHAPTER 5.

THE DJ AS RELATIONAL LISTENER AND CREATOR OF AN ETHOS OF COMMUNITY LISTENING

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This chapter explores the concept of relational listening by examining the interactions between a Sunday radio show DJ, Mike Guerrero, and his listeners along the Borderland, including the author. By exploring the community engagement of members of the Borderland with the DJ, and listeners of “The Fox Jukebox,” the chapter highlights how relational listening fosters a sense of belonging across temporal and spatial boundaries. Through engagement with callers’ emotions and experiences, listeners reaffirm their connections to their communities and identities. The author’s personal experiences with her father, music, and “The Fox Jukebox” serve as a lens through which to explore the practice of relational listening and its transformative potential. While encouraged by DJ Mike, relational listening emerges as an impactful process that enables listeners to revisit memories and create new memories through music. By maintaining this culture of relational listening, DJ Mike sustains the community of the radio show, inviting new generations to participate in its communal experience as relational listeners. This process points back to the author’s early experiences with listening to music with her father, mother and grandparents, as she learned to be a relational listener.

Hi, Mike Guerrero reminding you to join me for The Fox Jukebox this Sunday. We’ll be in the studio eight full hours with your El Paso style classics. The hits from early years of rock and roll, the doo wop, the old school. Your requests, your dedications, birthdays, anniversaries, saludos, all that. And then we’ll play the best from the sixties, seventies, late eighties. A little bit of this, a little bit of that. We’ll throw it all in together and it becomes what it has been for the last twenty-one years. The Fox Jukebox on a Sunday afternoon.

– Mike G.

It's Sunday evening in Southern California and I'm moving between the kitchen where dinner is on the stove and the dining room where I plan Monday classes. Of the many pages open on the web browser of my laptop, one is a recording of a James Brown song in which he pleads "Please, please, please." I pause in the kitchen and sway to the slow beat of the song, my mind traveling back to the summer I turned thirteen, when the DJ, Steve Crosno, played James Brown every weekday during his lunchtime oldies hour radio show. The song was already familiar to me at thirteen, as I'd been listening to oldies with my dad for as long as I could remember.

I didn't have a lot in common with my dad, but the love of music was something we shared. Early on, he taught me to listen to music actively, to keep a beat, to pay attention to lyrics, to listen to the instruments in a song, and to attach songs to moments. While my mom often played music in the background of our lives, my dad listened to music intentionally and encouraged his kids to do the same. Each of my five siblings, Luis, Carlos, Gil, Kathryn, Eric, and I pause in the same way to take in music. We listen to each other as we share the reasons for loving a song and appreciate the stories that are sometimes attached.

The Fox is a station out of El Paso, Texas, that spans the Borderland comprised of two countries: the United States (U.S.) and Mexico; three cities predominantly: El Paso, Ciudad Juarez, and Las Cruces; and three states: Texas, Chihuahua, and New Mexico. Online, the station can be heard around the world. I listen to The Fox Jukebox, an oldies radio show on The Fox in an act of community listening, an "active, layered, and intentional practice," as it's described by Jenn Fishman and Lauren Rosenberg in their Introduction, "Community Writing, Community Listening" (1). For me, community listening means coming together to honor people, places, and memories through music. I think I have been listening in this way my whole life. I have listened with the purpose of connecting with fellow listeners through their stories and recollections surrounding the music that is the soundtrack of their lives while simultaneously creating my own soundtrack.

Tuning in to the music and giving attention to the listeners of The Fox Jukebox means that I attend to "not only the sensory, embodied experience of sound" that Steph Ceraso describes in "(Re) Educating the Senses: Multimodal Listening, Bodily Learning, and the Composition of Sonic Experiences," but also "the material and environmental aspects that comprise and shape one's embodied experience" through the emotions conjured by music and the memories that are tied to it for me (105). Taking in the sounds and songs of The Fox Jukebox involves what Ceraso describes as multimodal listening. It is, in her words, "a bodily practice that approaches sound as a holistic experience, making use of more than my ear" (105). As I listen, I access people that are out of reach, listening through my body, moving my body, and being emotionally moved as acts of remembrance of my past, my family, and my culture (Royster and Kirsch).

In this chapter, I posit that active listeners of The Fox Jukebox use music and opportunities to call in or communicate using social media as a way of relating with others. I argue that the listeners engage in “relational listening,” a new term I apply that suggests listeners acknowledge callers’ feelings and experiences as they enact community listening. Listening also takes place as a way of reasserting one’s identity with one’s community, in this case, a reminder to the self of belonging to a people and place.

When we engage in relational listening, it is like community listening in that it is personal, affective, and engaged. Relational listening requires that a giver and receiver show up as who they are in that moment, without set roles, as the caller can both give and receive from other callers, and listeners don’t ever have to be callers or givers. While there does not need to be a dialogue, nor does one trade something for another thing, those who choose to give of themselves do so without expectation, and those who show up to receive are integral to the interaction. Relational listening is a form of community listening that involves both transactions and transformations, although neither is required. The listeners of the show are not required to give anything in return, no matter how much they take away from the experience of listening. The callers, however, give something to the listeners of the show by calling in, while they don’t require anything in return. Relational listening also has the potential to be transformational, in that the listeners can use their experience to transform their memories and experiences attached to the music.

As an early relational listener, I think of the way I was taught to recognize when it was time to sit quietly while music was playing, giving other listeners a chance to feel, and talk about the music. There were opportunities to dance, sing, and have conversations, but relational listening required that I pick up on the cues for when it was time to behave accordingly. As a way of letting others know they are listening on The Fox Jukebox, listeners send saludos, or their regards, to others and impart deep sentiments expressed through the songs of their request and dedications. Most of the calls are motivated by celebration, remembrance, expressions of love, or attempts to repair a relationship using a song as an apology, all of which are performances of emotion, as well as enactments of relational listening. Reception is a key part of the practice of relational listening, as it is as important to listen to the DJ, the music, and to the callers of The Fox Jukebox whether one responds on air or not. Without the listening or the sharing, there would not be relational listening, as both sharing and listening are required for this to take place. The sharing and receiving are actions that enable The Fox Jukebox community to honor the past attached to the music while forming new memories and new collective relations. It also becomes possible to reframe the past by taking music from the past and attaching it to present moments. This is something I find myself doing, as oldies were often attached to

memories shared by my father, and slowly became songs attached predominantly to my new experiences with the music.

It's interesting to me that I feel closest to my dad when I listen to this radio show because it was not a show he listened to. Most of his listening came from his own music collection and mixes he made from individual tapes and CDs. We most often listened to radio shows on road trips and stayed silent between singing to be entertained by the DJ and listening to what the callers had to say. Casey Kasem, Wolfman Jack, and Dave Michaels of Dave's Diner radio show stand out most in my memory. There was something magical about being in the car on I10 West, pulling up to Los Angeles at 10:00 pm in the backseat with my little brother, Eric, while listening to a woman call into the show from Iowa while her children were asleep to talk about deeply missing her husband, knowing that the DJ would play a song that would help her feel less lonely, if only for the next three to five minutes. It was meaningful to me that I felt I was connecting to a stranger and was also part of the comfort being offered, although I was a stranger, hundreds of miles away.

Listening to The Fox Jukebox isn't just a way that I spend time imagining that I am connecting with other strangers, or with my 84-year-old dad through the music we both love. It is also the way that I travel digitally from southern California to Las Cruces, New Mexico - to the places and people to whom I belong, relate, and identify. By listening to The Fox Jukebox with other listeners from El Paso and Las Cruces, I spend time with many people who "get" me, other Chicanos, others who have attachments to music of the past, and to the Borderland. It is also how I tune back into the memories of myself and my children surrounding music. I conjure Van Morrison playing "In the Mystic," as my son, Jon, stands on the coffee table to dance with me, or the chill of my brother Luis's garage, where we stop to dance to "La Puerta Negra" on a winter morning, for no reason other than because it is what we do when that song plays, and we identify with the music as being part of our heritage.

Kevin Adonis Browne writes in the Introduction to *Tropic Tendencies*, "A Jour Ouvert," that identification is "a fundamental carnivalesque process because it functions as an articulation of collective agency and cultural intention... as the expression of a realistic desire for successful participation in contemporary society and the benefits promised by it" (7). It's important to me that I identify with my home and those who live in the Borderland, mostly because I think it's a way of remembering who I am, and that although there is distance between me and my family, I need to pause to remember that there are people who love me, and to remind myself through music that they are not forgotten.

Using The Fox Jukebox to connect with home is common for its listeners. An online listener who is seeking a way of feeling close to home posted to a message board for The Fox Jukebox, on April 1, 2021, "I get to listen to my hometown,

although I live in New Jersey and feel like I'm home. Thanks." Another listener shares on July 3, 2021, "We love...the oldies every Sunday. We have been in Tucson, Arizona and now in Ft. Worth, Texas. We love all of our gente from Chucotown. Can't get enough of this music. Much love from the...family in Ft. Worth!!! El Paso strong, por siempre. We love you all. God bless all of us. Take care and stay safe!!!" ("The Fox"). This act of looking and listening toward home and sharing the connection by calling or writing in reflects the strong context for personal exchanges that Mike, the DJ of The Fox Jukebox, has built through relational listening. Relational listening is taking place in that this caller not only remembers where they came from and wants to connect with home and one's people, but they want to impart love, blessings, care, and a reminder that if one is listening, they are part of a family by virtue of shared place, and a shared love of music. The Fox Jukebox also creates the possibility for the long-distance caller to feel that they are still part of their community and can still create memories surrounding the music that is attached to a particular place and time.

Kevin Adonis Browne also writes of a particular social formation, which, for him, is comprised of Caribbean people." The Fox Jukebox and the Borderland, as social formations, are made up of Hispanics, predominantly. There is not one way to belong in or to the Borderland, to identify with, or to participate in this space. Similarly, The Fox Jukebox is its own carnival, as the listeners do not all listen for the same reasons. The Fox Jukebox's DJ, Mike's audience uses The Fox Jukebox as a place for listeners to don their masque, not as a way of hiding "but to display and be displayed" (23). On this radio show, the caller is not seen, but can "be seen" through the words they leave on social media, the website or through calling in. This invisibility of sorts can be important to situations in which citizenship or lack of confidence are issues, as well as for the sake of anonymity, where a caller has a need but does not want to be tied to the request. Browne further notes that those involved in carnival want to "engage in forms of individual and collective activity that will allow them to navigate the currents of other discourses – power for instance, or politics – if not change course altogether to their benefit...being seen requires action..." (28), a form of epideixis or "vernacular epideictic rhetoric" (24). The radio show allows for the listeners to act in such a way that they do not need to be seen, but can still be a part of a group, belong to something, and push against physical and language borders, as well as the confines of nostalgia by creating new memories.

I listen on this Sunday to take part in the carnival I've created in my home, to be moved by the lamentations across sound waves, to join with people and places, and to spend time with my father who lives seven hundred miles away, using the memory and the music of the Borderland. By listening this way, I connect with my community and across generations in a way that creates a bridge that

has become more necessary as he and I have both gotten older. Listening in this way creates the possibility for me to be a part of my father's life without being physically present in the Borderland where he lives.

THE BORDERLAND AND ITS LISTENERS

It is important to note that the border of which I write is the geographical area that Gloria Anzaldúa describes as “una herida abierta,” the wound “where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture” (3). The geographical area is marked by trauma, such as disease and raids by Apaches and Spaniards that have left a mark on the descendants of the Piro-Manso-Tiwa tribe in Las Cruces and the Tigua tribe in El Paso that reside in the Borderland to this day. This space is complicated with a history of nationality, race, ethnicity, and class, for instance, and important to this history is the value of calling attention to the places in which there is solidarity and unity. Anzaldúa also writes of the Borderland, “On one side of us, we are constantly exposed to the Spanish of the Mexicans, on the other side we hear the Anglos’ incessant clamoring so that we forget our language” (1029). This region faces numerous civil and social problems, such as those of the right to citizenship, the lowest wages in the United States, and long-held arguments over who has rights to the water in the Rio Grande River.

Issues centered on the politics, the past, and power struggles between the U.S. government and Mexico are put aside by callers of the show. The show is about family, good times, get-togethers, delicious food, and love for the Borderland and its music. It is also about opportunities to reconnect, such as when the callers do so, for the sake of letting their family in the Borderland know they are thinking of them. The callers share which high school they went to, the side of town they live on, the places they frequent, and the names of their loved ones, both romantic and those of their parents, siblings, and children.

This Borderland is its own unique family, comprised of more than 80% of residents who identify as Hispanic or Latino, and is made up of a rich culture that celebrates Mexican and Indigenous heritage. It is home to universities, numerous historic sites, Ft. Bliss Army base, and art influenced by Mexican and American cultures. El Paso also has its own style of oldies made up of songs by artists such as Fats Domino, Otis Redding, Smokey Robinson, and Marvin Gaye. These details are important because The Fox Jukebox is a radio show where Borderland residents can express their relationships to these identifiers, regardless of on which side of the border they reside or if they communicate in English, Spanish, or both languages at the same time. As relational listeners who engage in community listening, the

listeners of The Fox Jukebox are active parts of the radio show, co-creators integral to maintaining it as a space to which others return week after week.

RELATIONAL LISTENERS AS SHOW CO-CREATORS

Relational listeners are involved in the activity of co-creating the show by making requests, sending dedications, and sharing their stories that take place inside and outside the Borderland that are ultimately tied to the music. These relational listeners build local community by taking in the interactions, ads, media, and nods to businesses as a form of participation throughout the course of a Sunday by layering music, call-in interactions, advertisements, and participation across numerous media, for instance. By participating in this way, the relational listeners gain a place to which they belong, knowing that the music, language, and Borderland cultural references are familiar and consistent.

There are frequent occasions for the DJ to express gratitude to listeners who feed him and invite him to events around El Paso. Eating and sharing meals is an activity integral to community making in the Borderland. The relational listeners of The Fox Jukebox have found ways to integrate eating and feeding others into their practice. Mike frequently gives a shout-out to Marco's Pizza, saying, "In the house, hooking us up. Thank you, Marco's Pizza, for stopping by with your delicious salads, subs, and pizzas" (August, 2019) and contributes consistent nods to the Tropicana Café through photos posted to social media. Where the business aspect of the show is concerned, in addition to the social, Mike acknowledges the show's sponsors. This is the business of the radio show, but also a solidification of the community as he celebrates local dishes, employees, and sides of town with which the listeners identify and relate.

Both on social media and on the air, Fox Jukebox listeners leave messages entirely in English, Spanish or in Spanglish. While listening in June 2021, a man leaves a message on the station website in both Spanish and English, recognizing his father as a listener and as a chance to say hello to his family in Texas, as well as to let anyone reading the message that his father is the best in the world.

My dad is a huge fan and the most loyal listener...Saludos a mi familia Tejada!! I still listen too, all the time, desde Austin, Texas! Happy Father's Day al papá mas fregon del mundo who listens from Juarez Chihuahua!! Please play the "When I See You Again" song!! Dedicated to my dad...can't wait to see you papi! Best Radio Station!!! ("The Fox")

This is just one example of a listener displaying moves between English and Spanish, using slang and formal language. He does not leave the actual name

of the song, but a description of it, knowing that the DJ will know the song to which he refers. The message sender uses “papi,” and “dad” to describe his father in English and Spanish, and from this message, we learn of this fan’s loyalty but also of his affections for his Borderland community and his father. Every part of the radio show, from the listeners to the social media platforms, is important to maintaining this space as a consistent home for listeners to return to. The radio show makes time and space travel possible, even if it is only through the airwaves, with the DJ guiding the journey.

There are numerous moving parts to a radio show, from the sponsors who keep the show going to the DJ who makes sure that listeners return each week. The Fox Jukebox is a place where community listening is encouraged, with an emphasis on kinds of remotely mediated relationality. In the sections that follow, I talk through some examples of Mike, the DJ of The Fox Jukebox, as an active participant in the listening process and will explore the significance of the roles he fills as a fellow relational listener, community builder, digital rhetorician, guide, and curator of memory for the Borderland.

MIKE, DEL CHUCO

As a lifelong resident of El Paso, Mike knows Borderland inhabitants, as well as of the music of The Fox Jukebox, and upholds the values of the Borderland, which some might refer to as, someone who is adept at “keepin’ it real” (Brown and Lewis). He is a graduate of an El Paso high school, and a former student of an El Paso college. Mike belongs to the Borderland in the way that Art Laboe belonged to California and their “Killer Oldies,” honoring the language and cultures of the Borderland, which are important markers of regional identity, as well as of Mike’s role as a relational listener. When callers share their feelings or experiences as residents of the Borderland, Mike understands where they are coming from, and most of what they share does not need explaining because of this.

He stays true to the genres of music expected by his listeners and to the Spanish and English languages used in the Borderland. As a local Chicano, Mike injects border jargon into his announcements to include shortening of names for schools, e.g., “Jeff,” for “Jefferson High School,” or to refer to neighborhoods such as San Juan to denote the neighborhood surrounding the San Juan Bautista Catholic Church. Mike also expresses sentiments of thanks in Spanish, saying “Muchas gracias,” and calls El Paso “El Chuco,” a name of endearment pointing back to the history of zoot suit-wearing pachucos in the area (Martinez). These injections of border jargon locate the listeners as part of a family or group to which they belong through sharing the love of music and language that is all their own. The ethos Mike is constructing is dependent on relational listening

that confirms that one belongs to their community, and sharing language is an active way of belonging to this group in a way to which not everyone has access.

Mike's word choices are in line with that of the colloquial or "old school" Chicano (although he is often chided for the way he pronounces his last name with an anglicized accent). His knack for switching between English and Spanish aligns him with border residents, showing that he is an insider and reaffirms their language and way of being. For example, when inviting listeners to a free, large event held in El Paso in early June of 2022, Mike announced, "Just one of the incredible local bands we will be featuring LIVE on stage this Saturday, June 4th at Raves Club, Dulce Mal. Bring your dancing shoes and partner, and get ready to get your cumbias on with these beautiful talented ladies and their amazing band. Si se vale bailar." Words and Spanish phrases used commonly in association with music such as, "bailar," or with requests, such as "gracias" or "por favor," are often used in conversations between Mike and callers. By peppering messages with Spanish words and phrases, Mike maintains an ethos of home place. Similarly, questions such as, "¿Como estas?" or "¿Que paso, Mike?" come across the air too often to track and are accepted as popular greetings regardless of how many times Mike has let callers know that he is, "Bien, bien." The ethos of home place maintained by Mike gives people a familiar place to belong and to return to, as the self that they are at any given time is welcome. Because the homeplace is static, listeners are free to change, are free to form new memories around the music and join the listening community as strictly listeners. This is possible because the music never changes, nor does the language or rules for relational listening.

By playing the music that the listeners have attachments to, as a Chicano community, as well as staying true to the artists valued by the community, Mike is and remains a central figure of his listening community. He does not stray from the comfort that his consistency offers his listenership by keeping it real but also keeping it old school. Playing music that draws on Chicano style, oldies songs, or "the classics," he keeps relevant popular references to this genre to include the terms "low rider music," "golden oldies," and simply "oldies." He proclaims, however, that the music he plays is El Paso-Style Oldies, saying, "I'll be spinning some Friday night oldies, old school!" based on the location of the station and the style of music that El Pasoans of a certain generation prefer. The term "El Paso-Style Oldies," was coined by the late DJ Steve Crosno and "covers everything from Sunny and the Sunliners' 'Carino Nuevo' to 'Angel Baby' by Rosie and the Originals: slow ballads that you can dance to, usually cheek to cheek" (Renteria). Mike honors artists such as Little Joe y la Familia, Malo, and other Chicano artists, and his playlist is also a collage of sorts in that it includes music from various eras as styles such as those classified as Motown, Spanish-language, funk, and soul.

MIKE, EL DJ

Mike, as DJ, maintains the ethos of the listening community by encouraging relational listening, as well as by being a relational listener. He encourages those listening to the station to “Give a shout out” and to “Give a listen to” both the music and the callers. He reminds them that this is a place and people to which they belong and can always return. Reflecting on ethos, Kenneth Adonis Browne writes, “Embedded in every rhetorical exchange is an ethos on which the conversants rely to make their interactions not only comprehensible but meaningful, convincing, familiar, and authentic” (162). As DJ, Mike upholds the ethos of community listening, in the style of Browne’s description, involving the Borderland listeners in performances that include calling to make requests, dedications, announcements, and to share a bit of their story surrounding music.

Mike further engages the listenership as part of a praxis by encouraging the listeners to cocreate and sustain a community listening ethos by balancing his voice with that of the music and of the callers. Mike activates in his listeners some of the key relational aspects of community listening through active relational listening, which is fundamental to how community listening works in this and perhaps other listening communities. While on the air, Mike invites listeners to call in, saying, “Let’s hear from the Borderland. Give us a call at The Fox Jukebox.” Mike uses ads and a radio commonplace to build his relationship with local sponsors. He also uses social media, which is another means by which he engages listeners. These common practices operate as something distinctive in that relational listening requires that those participating make communication possible through multiple media, reaching as many listeners as possible and meeting them where they are as they engage with the show.

MIKE, THE RELATIONAL LISTENER

Mike reveals relational listening in action, as he “does” relational listening. He makes relational listening audible to listeners via the ways he performs relational listening and gets them to perform in response. Mike regularly invites listeners to share news about events, including that of a gathering in remembrance of a listener and well-known community member; he honors the memory of the oldies, as well of events occurring in the lives of the listenership. An example of this is the posting of a listener’s funeral services on The Fox Jukebox Facebook page on September 23, 2022, labeled “Pete’s Last Ride.” A flyer, with a picture of a man on a motorcycle, lists the details regarding a visitation, mass, and reception in the deceased’s honor. Mike is tagged on the posting with a message from the poster, “Here is the info for his services,” indicating that Mike has requested this

information for himself but also for other listeners who knew Pete. This type of sharing makes it possible for listeners to share condolences, further strengthening the bonds of the listening community. Mike is not just a businessperson who shares information but is part of the community, a friend of Pete's, and a friend of those who are gathering to honor him.

By inviting messages such as the one included above, Mike is also an invoker of narrative and is a conductor of emotions felt for the Borderland as home, expressed through the nostalgic music of yesterday. In less than a minute, at Mike's prompting, the listener can gather a story about family as a parent calls in for her children on June 5, 2022, and asks, "Can my kids say something?" At Mike's encouragement and approval, the kids yell, "Happy Birthday to our grandpa and grandma. They're both of them 80!" As listeners, we become part of a birthday celebration between three generations. All the while, this inclusion of a new generation of listeners guides young callers through the performance expected of radio show listeners and welcomes participation of younger generations. Through invitation and hospitality as the DJ of *The Fox Jukebox*, Mike models a variety of ways that listeners engage in relational listening.

I find it thought-provoking that the material, the music, that brings together this community is not new, but new occurrences are motivated by the music and by the younger generations, such as when a child calls the radio show and speaks to the DJ for the first time. This sounds like, "Hi, Mike. Can you play the birthday song by the Beatles for my grandma Mary?" asked by a young caller. "Did I do that right?" he whispers to someone, likely an adult in the room with him, "Yes, you did that right," Mike answers with laughter in his voice (April, 2016). In this example, the grandchild wants to be sure that his performance as a listener was correct. There are consistently new responses to old songs, and new memories are formed, layered with the memories that the songs have been a part of over decades. There is something special about initiating kids into the listening community, in that this practice adds to relational listening by providing kids a way to relate to and strengthen relationships with their elders in ways that can't be manufactured outside of spending time together, listening with intention, and creating opportunities for memory making. Mike welcomes the kids into the relational listening family. Hierarchies fall away when listening, as the kids and adults are all listeners, and not separated by age or position in the family. My grandpa Manny, my father's father, would fill an empty and cleaned Budweiser can with white landscaping rocks and tape the opening with black electrical tape. This homemade instrument allowed me to dance and shake along to the beat of the music, and while this was happening, I wasn't just the granddaughter or daughter. For a moment, I was a member of the band, hanging out, and taking in the music and conversations flying by and around me.

Mike actively builds the ethos of community listening by engaging in certain kinds of relational listening and utilizes his authority to choose his callers, emails, letters, and social media requests for reading on air. He keeps the communities of the Borderland united through shared memories and a shared love for the genre of music specific to the El Paso region. Maintenance of the commitment and emotional closeness of nearby cities is encouraged when Mike gives thanks to callers outside of El Paso by naming them as such as when he says, “Thank you to our Las Cruces caller,” or, “We just heard from James from Clint.” Also, Mike acknowledges his online listenership and invites them to call in from outside the Borderland region. When speaking and when writing on social media, Mike enacts relational listening by using certain words and phrases to engage his listeners in jargon that is familiar to the listeners, relating to them through the slang of the Borderland, as well as with familiarity with the community and the people within the community.

As a way of keeping musical heritage intact, Mike creates a space on a particular Easter Sunday, when a dedication from a male voice shared, “I’d like to make a dedication to my mom – I love you.” The song following the dedication, a polka ranchera “Las Nubes,” (“The Clouds”) by Little Joe Y La Familia, which has been spoken of as an anthem to Chicanos and migrant workers everywhere in the Southwest. The listeners can relate to this request, especially on this day when the workers are resting and celebrating family and the resurrection recognized by this majority Catholic population. Mike responds affirmatively, following the dedication with the song that is important on this day, and also a well-loved and anticipated song every Sunday that mentions struggle, Texas, and God. The lyrics tell of a man who dreams of his childhood days, would rather die than suffer any longer, and would rather cry than sing but he gets relief when the clouds stop to rain on him to brighten his soul. In the lyrics, it is also told of the man that, “His heart’s still back home in Texas, beneath its beloved sky,” a feeling with which those who miss Texas can relate. This song from the radio show’s archive will be appreciated widely by the Border listening community, as well as by numerous generations from whom love for the song has been inherited. This is also one of the songs to which my sister, Kathryn and I learned to dance polka rancheras with our dad, uncles, and brothers, adding a layer of personal nostalgia for me. It’s these memories that, in large part, keep me returning to the show.

By playing songs from a range of genres, styles, and social movements that have taken place from the 1950s to the 1980s, Mike is host to a listenership that spans at least three generations. He encourages active participation and, between songs, converses with the audience, most often by leading the caller with questions such as where they are, what they are doing, or the reasons for their request or dedication. Mike recognizes the voices of frequent callers, remembers names,

and makes consistent mention of locations throughout the Borderland, such as neighboring cities, high schools, restaurants, and other El Paso businesses, Mike reminds the listeners of those to whom they belong. These relationships are not only Mike's but also the listeners', as through relational listening, they too come to recognize people and locations. It's not uncommon for Mike to call out to someone casually, such as, "Hey, Adrian! I haven't seen you in a while." It is also expected that a caller will send out music to their hometown, such as, in this case, San Elizario, a city in El Paso County. The caller says briefly, "Mockingbird,' from Inez and Charlie Foxx, going out to our friends in San Eli" (June 2020). Listener requests and comments illustrate the community listening interaction as the music serves intimate functions, such as reinforcing the listening community by enacting nostalgia and commemoration of important dates, as well as celebrating important events as an extended family.

Unlike the national DJs to whom I grew up listening, Mike is accessible as a local DJ, and because of his style of interacting with callers, he is a relational listener and encourages relational listening by sharing his life with the El Paso community. When he came up on a milestone birthday, he shared his celebration with the twentieth anniversary of The Fox Jukebox in 2021 with hundreds of listeners. The celebration was held a year late due to COVID-19, but was a grand event, advertised on the radio, as well as all social media outlets. At the event, Mike recognized the community in an announcement, "Thank you very much to all the gente that came out from out of town, from the Segundo, from Central, from Northeast El Paso, los de Fabens que vinieron, los de Ciudad Juarez tambien los que vinieron. People came from Cruces, thank you very much, We're one big happy family on a Sunday afternoon. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for a great twenty years. Let's see if we can do twenty more. A ver" (EPTCruising).

In the same way that the listening community includes Mike by sharing details of their personal lives when calling into the radio show, they also know details about Mike's life and health, his friendships, and about a major illness experienced almost ten years ago, the information shared predominantly through social media. Most DJs spend time in their communities making guest appearances, but Mike also has an online presence through Instagram, Twitter, and three Facebook pages, adding another dimension to his contact with listeners outside of radio. In these ways, Mike is involved with the listening community through his voice, through his physical presence, and through sharing photos, videos, and messages. While it is important to take notice of Mike's involvement on the local level, he also has a national listenership that speaks to the ethos of community listening that he has created. As he models relational listening, this encouragement is far-reaching for listeners outside the borderland, who feel welcome to participate in relational listening and feel closer to home as a result.

CONCLUSION

Mike and the listeners of The Fox Jukebox's listeners take active, intentional roles in upholding the values within the community. His interactions with the listenership constitute relational listening, as he shares language, knowledge, and history with the listeners while encouraging their participation and gives them a listening home to return to each Sunday. Through participation, the listeners build upon memories carried from the past, associated with music by layering new memories, created each Sunday. This relational listening happens as the result of listeners coming together through an intentional decision to tune in to The Fox Jukebox, to listen to the music, to Mike, and to the participants of the show who belong to the Borderland and to The Fox Jukebox, some of whom who have belonged their entire lives.

On November 15, 2021, a mother shared a video of her daughter's wedding day on Facebook, writing:

When I was pregnant with Juliandra, Grandma Yvette had already picked out her song, Suavecito by Malo. Since she was born Yvette has called in a dedication into 92.3 The Fox and our wonderful friend Mike G. would play it for them both for every birthday, Sunday, all the time. So, it was only right to have Mike G be the one to dedicate and introduce their song as a surprise. Thank you for making the moment so special Mike.

This is an example of the consistency of The Fox Jukebox as part of El Paso family life, as well as Mike's relationships with the listeners as DJ, family, and community members involved in the upholding and sharing of memories, as well as in memory making. This message is an example of the ethos of community listening that Mike upholds, the sharing of a story in exchange for a song, the commitment to history that is enjoyed at present, and the valuing of generations that serve as a thread from the music's beginnings to today. Through his willingness to share details of his life, by showing an interest in the stories of the callers, and by staying close to the values of the Borderland culture, the relationships Mike has built with his listenership have helped him to build an ethos of community listening. The listeners want to share with Mike and with each other.

Every so often, between songs, the show is interrupted by the bursting voice of a radio announcer who declares, "It's an El Paso tradition, oldies on Sundays" and there is comfort in knowing that as a listener, there will always be a place to be and belong on Sunday. Through relational listening, the community of The Fox Jukebox reaffirms that they have a place and people to belong to, and to which they can return. I return because community listening means coming together to honor people, places, memories, and moments through music.

Consistent in my practice of listening to oldies on Sunday, and dependent on The Fox Jukebox to transport me back to my hometown and to memories of my family, I recall one of my first memories where I learned to operate a Hi-Fi radio set in a large, walnut console at my Grandpa Manny and Grandma Lupe's house in El Paso. With me as DJ, the family would listen on weekend summer nights. Although we didn't call into the show, my parents, grandparents, little brother, and I would interact with the callers on our end of the radio. When certain oldies would play, my dad would say, "Oh man, I like that one. It reminds me of this one time..." and my mom would say, "Ooh, remember that one? I haven't heard that one in forever." The stories connected through songs were some of the only ways I got to know my dad. For him, music was connected to blocks of time in his life, although some artists and songs remained constant throughout. Sharing his memories and stories helped me to relate to him, to see him as a man who was once a teen, a Marine hanging out on leave in San Diego, a young man falling in love to the music of Fats Domino, rather than just my dad who worked the grind of the Post Office or was the disciplinarian.

Engaging in community and relational listening takes more than a dad who teaches his children to love music. It is helped along by a DJ who loves the music he represents, respects the stories and memories of the listeners, who cares about and understands the community, and who is willing to push the next generation into learning how to belong to the listening community to create a space like The Fox Jukebox. I would nod as a child, in agreement with my parents' comments on the music we listened to on Sundays. Although I didn't know it then, many years in the future, I would use music as a way of traveling home and would respond in their absence with, "I like that one too, dad," and to my mom, "I remember and won't ever forget."

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