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Janet Muniz

Claremont Graduate University, janet.muniz@cgu.edu

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Bidi Bidi Bom Bom: The Audiotoopias of Selena Across the Americas

Janet Muniz
Claremont Graduate University

Abstract

Using Josh Kun's Audiotopia thesis as a theoretical framework and social critique, this paper will explore the role that Tejano (Texan) music star Selena Quintanilla-Perez's music plays as audiotoopias. Using the audiotopia thesis, this paper will argue that music functions like a possible utopia for immigrant communities on both sides of the United States and Mexico border in imagining ideal borderless Americas. This paper is guided by the following research questions (1) What does it mean to mourn Selena? (2) How does remembering Selena build community on both sides of the border? To Kun "music's utopian potential, [is] its ability to show us how to move towards something better and transform the world we find ourselves in" (Kun, 2005). Although music cannot topple regimes, break chains or stop bullets according to Kun, in the face of oppression in Mexico and U.S. state sanctioned racism and nativist immigration policy, music serves as a utopian disruption from the oppressive reality of immigrant communities. Music makes the struggles of marginalized communities audible for those who have been traditionally silenced.

This paper will attempt to fill in the gaps in existing literature on the music and remembrance of Selena by applying Kun's *audiotopia* theory for an understanding of the places her music takes its audience and the community Selena's legacy builds on both sides of the U.S. and Mexico border. Analyzing the role of Selena's music on the lives of marginalized Latino/a communities in the way that Kun does in *Audiotopia* this paper will argue that her music builds community in a way that can possibly serve as a means of countering hegemonic anti-immigrant, xenophobic and nativist discourses against Latinos/as who are increasingly becoming a majority in the United States. As remembering Selena at the time of her death served as a means of community building and mass mobilization via vigils, memorials and events, the legacy of remembering Selena *audiotopically* can serve as a means to mobilize in today's increasingly anti-immigrant and anti-Latino/a political climate.

Popular music does not merely serve as a means of entertainment, rather at a deeper level it is a tool for understanding difference and at the same time works to privilege and silence various communities. After a long period of "silence" or un-acknowledgement from the Latino/a community in the United States under the oppressive U.S. government and in the eyes of mainstream popular culture, the "voice" that was heard by the U.S. came in the form of Selena Quintanilla-Perez and the seemingly simple and catchy *Tejano* regional Mexican music. Music extends its impact onto identity, offering places for cultural difference and familiarity to be "experienced and imagined" (Kun, 2009). The music of icon Selena transcends not only the

physical borderlands of the U.S. and Mexico but speaks to the struggles embodied by her fans that belong to multiple communities and identities. Although Selena's music is not traditionally read as explicitly political in its lyrics or the message that her music is portrayed, it is the individualized meanings applied from the experiences of her fans that have become the *audiotopias* Kun theorizes about. The ability for example for an undocumented person in the U.S. and a teenage girl in Mexico to both apply Selena's music to their different ways of life, yet allowing for her music to take them to a non-material place where they both experience her music's different individualized *audiotopias*. The *audiotopic* potential of Selena's music can serve as an escape from the xenophobia in anti-immigrant discourse faced by an undocumented person and/or the patriarchal cultural values stressed upon a young teen in Mexico. The role of Selena's music as *audiotopias* for her fans across the U.S. and Mexico in an ideal borderless America has various political implications that are derived from her fan base and significance of her work after her death. These include the potential music holds for self-discovery, agency and empowerment.

The *Audiotopia* Thesis: A Social Critique

In developing his theory about music and its utopian potentials, Kun derives his theory of *audiotopias* from Michel Foucault's (1967) concept of the "heterotopia". Here Foucault contrasts "heterotopias" to that of utopias, which he dismisses as "sites with no real place" that transcends multiple borders (Kun, 1997). To Kun *audiotopias* are specific instances of "heterotopias" or spaces that leave room for "otherness" in counter or non-hegemonic production of social spaces and mapping that music makes possible (Kun, 1997). In the development of the *audiotopia* thesis Kun's goal is to highlight the *audiotopias* of music as sites for the creation of "homeplaces within border and diasporic cultural formations" for understanding the role of *audiotopias* in tracking migrations and travel across borders in mappings of the Americas (Kun, 1997). Music flows across the transnational borders that contain it or attempt to contain it, creating *audiotopias* for its audiences on both sides of the border. For Kun (1997), music moves across space and place, arriving while leaving and offering a theoretical place where cultures can be contested, consolidated, sounded and silenced. *Audiotopias* then allow for people to hear the mapping of space and place for belonging and identification (Kun, 2002).

Kun (2009) explores his *audiotopia* theory in relation to communities of color, historical experiences with music, and the places that music takes them. Kun (2009) explains that songs can be understood as *audiotopias*, places that music offer its listeners is not tangible or material, a sort of homecoming. Music for Kun "functions like a possible utopia for the listener" the experience of music is "not only a sound that goes into our ears and vibrates through our bones but as a space that we can enter into, encounter, move around in, inhabit, be safe in, [and] learn from" (Kun, 2009). The goals of Kun's book *Audiotopia* (2009) include recent debates about the role of popular music in American Studies, multiculturalism and diversity as well as case specific performers that use the power of music making; listening to pop music in the face of oppression and hierarchies seek to erase difference and ways of living and survival. Music in American life to Kun, or it can be argued the Americas generally, portray stories of difference, nation formation, and de-formation as songs pack and unpack themselves focusing on the ways listeners approach the music they listen to (Kun, 2009). Kun (2009) presents the American audio-racial imagination that includes "meanings and ideas about race, racial identity, and racialization within the United States [that] have been generated, developed and experienced at

the level of sound and music”. Although only a chapter in Kun’s text *Auidiotopia* is dedicated to Spanish rock music, his *audiotopia* thesis as a social critique can more specifically be applied to the influences of Selena’s music and the role of the audio-racial imagination and its implications in relation to other theories specific to Selena and Latin America. Kun (2009) borrows from George Lipsitz (2000) to illustrate how Los Tigres del Norte re-formulate rhetorical theoretical representations that ignore the realities and struggles of the community. In turn, they emphasize historical representation from the people at the root of struggle. Selena’s music can be seen in the same light as Los Tigres del Norte, severing as point of agency within the Latino/a community about representation as she became a mainstream pop culture icon on both sides of the border. Additionally, unpacking the idea of nation formation and de-formation that Kun uses in describing the role of music in the lives of people, for example like those of fans of Los Tigres del Norte, the same can be applied to the anti-immigrant and “new nativism” at the time of Selena’s death.

Fans of Selena on both sides of the border can be seen as a subaltern group or a marginalized group whose “identity is based off of its difference” according to Spivak (1988), building their own agency through the establishment of community that comes from listening to Selena’s music at a time when anti-immigrant legislation was on the rise in the United States at the time of her death in 1995. Here the function of the *audiotopia* thesis as a social critique is transformed into something much more than its role in Kun’s work. The *audiotopic* role of Selena’s music becomes interpreted by the listener and becomes a means of empowerment from the oppressive laws and discourses at the time of her death. This empowerment in turn can serve as a tool for overcoming the very structural oppressions that people escape from in their individualized *audiotoopias* while listening to Selena and have implications for the possibility of social change against racism, xenophobia, anti-immigrant discourse and hegemony.

Methodology

The methodologies employed in supporting the *audiotopia* theory’s relationship to Selena will be based on theories of *Selenidad* and its relationship to *Latinidad*, incorporating the community built from Selena’s afterlife and her remembrance. Using interviews or *testimonios* (testimonies) of Selena’s fans both migrants and native-born in the United States that illustrates their imagined relationships to Selena and the role her music plays in their lives. By utilizing Richard’s emphasis on the importance of the role of *testimonios* or subaltern accounts in “Intersecting Latin America with Latin Americanism: Academic Knowledge, Theoretical Practice and Cultural Criticism”, we can analyze how popular music on both sides of the border provides “raw” experiences of people living within these physical and theoretical borderlands (Richard, 2004). Specifically, these *testimonios* will be drawn from Selena remembrance websites and blogs where fans express their real and imagined relationships to her music.

Literature Review: *Selenidad*

The existing literature on Selena’s music by theorists such as Deborah Paredez and Deborah R. Vargas focuses on the critical aspects of Latino/a identity or *Latinidad* and its relation to what becomes termed *Selenidad*, which is used to illustrate the significance of Selena’s afterlife and its impact on the Latino/a community across borders. Paredez’s book *Selenidad: Selena, Latinos, and the Performance of Memory* analyzes the role of Selena’s increased popularity alongside an

increase in nativist anti-immigrant discourses and policies in the United States as well as Selena's popularity on both sides of the border as she released songs in both English and Spanish. The result of Selena's mass appeal on both sides of the border gained her recognition by various communities becoming known in the United States as the "Mexican Madonna" and on the border as the "Queen of *Tejano* Music", a Texas/Mexico border genre of music that had previously been dominated by men and was introduced into mainstream popular music genre as a result of the popularity of Selena.

Selena was born to Mexican-American parents in Texas, born into the music world after her father's music career in the group called "*Los Dinos*" (Paredes, 2009). Selena's father placed her at the age of nine into a music group called "*Selena y Los Dinos*", named after the group he sang with years before. Selena began singing in both English and Spanish in order to appeal to a larger audience, although she did not know how to speak Spanish. *Selena y Los Dinos* released several albums and were later discovered by top executives in the *Tejano* music industry in 1986 (Paredes, 2009). As a result, from 1986 to 1996 Selena won the award for best female vocalist at the *Tejano* music awards (Paredes, 2009). In 1989 Selena released her first album without *Los Dinos* and became the spokesperson for Coca Cola, demonstrating her transition into mainstream popular culture on both sides of the border (Paredes, 2009). In 1993 Selena won her first Grammy for best Mexican-American performance and began manufacturing her first clothing line, indicating when her career not only as an artist but an icon grew in the United States (Paredes, 2009). On March 31st, 1995 after learning that Yolanda Saldivar, the president of her fan club was embezzling money she decided to meet and fire Yolanda (*Selena Forever*). At this meeting Yolanda Saldivar shot Selena. Selena died later in the hospital just a few days shy of her 24th birthday and at the height of her career (*Selena Forever*). Selena's death erupted over both the United States and Mexico, with coverage by the mass media and an organized community. Selena was buried in Corpus Christi, Texas where over 60,000 people from all over the United States and Mexico, including music icons, fans, the community and her family attended her funeral (Paredes, 2009). Selena as an icon and superstar was and continues to be remembered and celebrated, or the practice of *Selenidad*, in documentaries, films, musicals, drag shows, murals, monuments, magazines and more recently memorial blogs where fans continue to write their testimonies about the role that Selena's music continues to play in their lives (Paredes, 2009).

In *Selenidad: Selena, Latinos and the Performance of Memory* (2009) Paredes conceptualizes her theory of *Selenidad* and its relationship to *Latinidad* in the culture and community built from the music and remembrance of Selena. *Selenidad* is defined as a place that offers a space for grief, grants a language to "speak the unspeakable" and draws upon collective Latina memory (Paredes, 2009). *Selenidad* helps us map *Latinidad*, or Latino/a identity, through narratives about citizen, gender, sexual and racialized identities that are each intertwined. Each chapter explores different functions and effects of *Selenidad* among different identities and Latino/a communities in the United States and Mexico, the movements and mappings of Selena's influences and *audiotopic* possibilities. *Selenidad* ultimately helps Latinos/as survive the present and imagine the future, presenting a link to the utopias presented to a person through *audiotopias* while listening to Selena's music. To Paredes (2009) "to remember Selena is ultimately to remember Latina histories" that include Latinas who have crossed over transnational borders of the political and cultural landscapes of the Americas. Paredes (2009) explores what it means to publicly mourn the death of Selena and to celebrate her after-life as a transnational icon in both

the United States and Mexico, something that no one else in the world of popular music had yet to attain.

In context to linking Paredez's work on *Selenidad to Latinidad*, Vargas' (2002) "Bidi Bom Bom: Selena and *Tejano* Music in the Making of *Tejas*" looks at the ways in which the *audiotopias* of Selena transformed *Tejano* music and "third space". Vargas describes *Tejas* (Texas) as a "discursive and geopolitical 'place' representative of Texas-Mexico cultural production" and specifically *Tejano* music as a historically male genre of music on both sides of the of Texas and Mexico border (Vargas, 2002). Vargas represents *Tejas*, Texas in Spanish, as the production of music through cultural practices, language, working-class, race and an attempt at creating counterhegemonic narratives (Vargas, 2002). Although Vargas (2002) does not label her linkage between "third space" and the role Selena played as a *Tejana* music icon in the making of *Tejas*, this can be seen as the role of an *audiotopia* in the mapping of theoretical utopian space creating a new space within the work of Kun's theory. Vargas argues that the music of Selena creates a "place for her fans to come 'home' to", the home, which Kun argues, is neither here nor there and theoretically utopian and creates *audiotopias* for its listeners. Paredez's theory about Selena and *Tejas* as a "third space" based on an exploration of Selena's representation and Selena's creation of a new sound for *Tejanas/os* as it pushed against the racial, language, gender, and generational borders of music (Vargas, 2002). Selena, as a superstar crossing over borders into both the U.S. and Mexico's top pop music charts introduced her representations of Latinos/as and Latin America, representing agency in a time of racist culture in *Tejas* and the United States.

The music of Selena took the *Tejano* music experience to a familiar place, allowing *Latinidad* to be experienced through its mix of techno, *cumbia* and bilingual lyrics. Selena was one of the first major artists to cross over from Mexico's top charts over into the United States. As a result she served as a representation and embodiment of Latinos/as, an increasingly majority minority group at the time. This time period in the early to mid 1990's in the United States not only saw an increase in a migrant Latino/a population but also anti-immigrant legislation and fear of an "other". These anti-immigrant nativist policies marked a period when Selena's music was giving agency to the Latino/a community and provided an outlet for community building.

Anti-Immigrant Legislation and Rhetoric

Both Kun (2009) and Paredez (2009) explore these anti-immigrant policies and their relationship to the time period of Selena's music and death. Some of this legislation includes California's Proposition 187 (1994) and Proposition 227 (1998), the immigration provisions include the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (1996) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (1996). Proposition 187 denied undocumented people access the basic human rights of health care and education, later overturned as unconstitutional. However remnants of Proposition 187 became present in national welfare and immigration reform two years later in 1996. Proposition 227 banned all bilingual education in public schools, essentially targeting the migrants coming into the U.S. during this period of time. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act cut welfare to legal immigrants while the Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act sought to control the U.S. and Mexico border with increasing surveillance over people crossing the border. Methods of surveillance at the border include an increase border patrol agents, reinforcement of building

“the wall” to keep people out of the U.S. and in Mexico. Ultimately this was the beginning of the militarization of the border and the police state that is present today. Prior to Selena’s death, in her home of Texas, the Operation Blockade/Hold-the-Line in El Paso (1993) set a territorial strategy for immigration regulations in the future that later included Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego (1994) and Operation Safeguard in Nogales, Arizona (1999). All of these measures were acts of xenophobia, creating a new nativist hegemonic discourse following the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (1994) that constructed migrants and all Latinos/as in the U.S. as “outsiders” or “others” that were disrupting the status quo of the U.S. that existed prior because of the labor demands between the United States and Mexico.

The representation against Latinos/as in the United States became that of producing fear of an “invasion”. In the midst of this legislation, following the death of Selena in 1995, the state of Texas took on the issue as a means of honing in on the growing Latino/a population as a political constituency and the state senate adopted Resolution No. 619 to honor Selena’s “one-of-a-kind talent” and her success in “breaking through the ethnic, cultural, age, and language barriers that divide people and nations” (Paredes, 2009). Following Resolution No. 619, Governor George W. Bush proclaimed April 16th, 1995, which would have been Selena’s 24th birthday, “Selena Day” in Texas. At a time when Latinos/as in the United States were being targeted for their “invasion” and migration into the U.S., the honoring of Selena in Texas served to celebrate her success as the exception in community under attack by the government.

Testimonios: Theory in the Flesh

Looking at the overlapping areas of Cultural Studies and Latino/a Studies together with the creation of anti-immigrant and anti-Latino/a hegemonic discourse, it is important to focus not only on legislation and theory but also to look at how communities and peoples real lives were affected. For Arpacio (2003) the development of theories need not to be divorced from the reality of the subaltern subject, taking from Cherríe Moraga (1983) they need to come from real subordinated experience or rather “theories from the flesh”. Kun’s (2009) *audiotopia* theory becomes individualized within the *audiotopias* that listeners find in music, making it a theory in the flesh, a study of a colonized subject who is silenced by institutions, the nation and anti-Latino/a discourse. The border in Latino/a Studies functions as an open wound theorized by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987). Here we see how the border functions in the mid-1990’s as a wound and place of state-sanctioned violence against the Latino/a community at a time of public mourning of Selena’s iconography. To affirm this it becomes important to allow the Latino/a community to speak for themselves rather than theorizing about the possible effects of legislation and the loss of Selena. By utilizing testimonies or *testimonios*, we can better learn their *audiotopic* experience of Selena’s music and it’s relationship to their political experiences as Latinos/as in a country marginalizing their existence in a country they know of as home. *Testimonio* as methodology for this paper provides not only a theoretical approach on experience but also a tapping into localized knowledge that Selena’s fans, which are primarily Latino/a in both the United States and Mexico, hold. Contesting traditional and “valid” academic knowledge where both Latino/a and Cultural Studies merge, this paper uses *testimonio* to explore and expand on Kun’s audiotopia thesis. In order to fill in the gaps in both Kun’s theory and expanding on Paredes’s notion of *Selenidad*, it is important to link the two in examining popular culture’s relationship to politics, representation and discourse.

What Does it Mean to Mourn Selena?

A central question in bridging the *audiotopia* thesis as a social critique with Selena's afterlife, is what does it mean to mourn Selena? What does her music do for its fans and where does it take them? This question is present in the media representation of Selena and collective community mourning, asked by the media and used as a tool for targeting Latino/as. The commemorative representations after Selena's death took various forms, one of the post popular included *People* magazine's special issue, the two previous special issues including Audrey Hepburn and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (Paredes, 2009). *People's* editor claimed that the release of this special issue, was their attempt at reaching to a Spanish speaking audience thought of as new migrants; ironically many of these *Tejanos* were in fact U.S. citizens and spoke little Spanish similar to Selena herself (Paredes, 2009). After this special issue, *People* found the growing Latino/a population as a new market and launched *People en Espanol* in 1996, one year after Selena's death and the commemorative issue (Paredes, 2009). Following *People en Español*, was the introduction of *Newsweek en Español* and *Latina* magazine in 1996 (Paredes, 2009). Since then there have been numerous accounts of popular culture tributes to Selena in the form of a film released in 1997, a musical *Selena Forever* in 2000 in the midst of the 2000 census which claimed powerful Latino/a representation and websites for all things Selena related where fans can leave their own *testimonios* of the effects of Selena on their lives.

Selena Forever

Selena as a transnational superstar on both sides of the U.S. and Mexico border continues to influence the lives of Latinos/as. Her music continues to take people to real and imagined places outside of the realities of everyday life. Remembering Selena has not simply been about the music, rather it has been about the celebration of *Latinidad*, empowerment, and the message that Selena sent to her fans about unifying together, helping each other and building community. Today there are popular websites and blogs dedicated to the continued remembrance of Selena. One of these popular websites include the blog *Selena Forever* which includes a compilation of Selena's music, information about her life, newspaper articles and a section dedicated to the Spanish speaking community. Another unique section of the blog that is unique is that fans are able to submit their own testimony and tribute to Selena. On this website fans from all over the world have been able to leave their tributes to Selena and write about how her music and career made them feel, the place her music took them and continues to take them, their families and community today.

These fan testimonies include the answer to the questions posed by the blog such as "What does Selena mean to you?" including demographic information about where the readers are from and how they found this Selena remembrance website (*Selena Forever*). Many of the answers to this question about their relationship to Selena and her music fit into what Kun is theorizing about in his *audiotopia* thesis. Here we can explore the relationship between the thesis as a social critique and how it is present in the lives of Selena's fans and their collective memory of her. To the fans, Selena represented hope, empowerment, working towards a dream, and hard work. These representations include characteristics that appealed to the Latino/a community on both sides of the border. The fans writing on blogs and online websites dedicated to Selena since

the time of her death continues to live on today and to an extent challenge Kun's thesis through generational shifts in the collective memory of Selena among Latinos/as along different border experiences. At the time of Selena's death fans expressions of dedications to Selena took form as *testimonios* at memorials, today this is taking place on the Internet. I argue that this is contributed to several factors including the rise of the Internet and the continued preservation of what it means to remember Selena as a community. Fans who continue to write their dedications and express their *testimonios* are also now a new generation who have grown up with the music. This type of fans relationship to Selena is a result of their parents' relationship to her music. Selena's music is now not only transcending borders, but generations of the celebration of her music and life.

One of the fans who answered that they are from both the U.S. and Mexico states "I don't remember anything that happened on that tragic March day [when Selena was killed]. I wish I could remember" (*Selena Forever*). This illustrates an attempt to preserve the memory that Paredez (2009) calls *Selenidad* in the mourning of Selena and connection to her from people who were too young at the time of her death and are now fans of Selena years later. Another fan comments "I think that more people love Selena now that she is gone [...] True Selena fans will always love her and her music" (*Selena Forever*). This new generation of fans listening to Selena who may not have been aware of the implications of her music or death at the time that it happened are now being connected to her music on various levels. Fans of Selena, who maybe were not born at the time of her death but were introduced to her music and legacy by their families, are seeing a reflection of themselves in Selena. Fans as first generation Latinos/as and/or non-Spanish speakers relate to Selena in navigating what it means to be a Latino/a in the United States. Fans find Selena's profound influence on the U.S. and Mexico in both migrant communities and among Latinos/as who might have been first, second or maybe third generation like Selena herself.

Other fans write that in a time of anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S., as a result of an increase in immigration from Mexico, "Selena made me proud to be Mexican" at a time when being a Latino/a was not something to be proud of or publicly celebrate (*Selena Forever*). Many of the fans in the forums describe their relationship to Selena and the effect of her life as, "it is hard for me, and most of her fans, to accurately put into words what she meant or how her music makes me feel" (*Selena Forever*). This *testimonio* is an example of the *audiotopias* within the music of Selena as fans cannot put into words how they feel but rather know that her music reaches to their experiences and memories associated with her music.

There is a continuous reference to Selena as an angel who they continue to reconnect to today and wish to later meet or reunite with in an afterlife. These posts touch into a spirituality and religious aspect of Latino/a migrant communities who have found sanctuary for salvation from their daily struggles as working class people. Selena's music connects to this spirituality or religion within culture on the borderlands of the United States and Mexico, which has taken her music to another level of listening. Fans in the forums refer to Selena as a "queen" who lived an American dream they too wish to live. There is another theme in the posts that reoccur such as the use of Selena's music in order to connect to the fan's life. One fan writes, "Whenever things seem hopeless, I think about Selena" and another writes "I can really connect with the emotion of her songs and continue to listen to them as they mirror the events of my life as a young woman". This illustrates the emotional and personal connection to Selena's music and how Selena appeals to both migrant Latino/a communities and those who like Selena have family in

the U.S. for generations and do not speak Spanish, living in a contradictory world behind several types of borders.

Latina Iconography Today

Thinking about the impact of Selena's death and its relevance today, I question the role of mass media and the increase in usage of the internet since then and how that has impacted fan *testimonios*. Fans of course continue to celebrate Selena's life and legacy in online communities on their own, however at the time of her death the community building was a bringing together of people to public spaces such as her massive funeral and the memorials that took place in cities all over the United States and Mexico. *Selenidad*, or the collective memory of remembering Selena that is present today and is being used as a means to also collectively and *audiotopically* mourn the lives of other stars that are being compared to Selena.

The recent death of Latina star Jenni Rivera on December 9th, 2012 is being compared to that of Selena. Both stars shared many of the same characteristics. They both changed regional Mexican music that had been primarily dominated by men. Both Selena and Jenni were at the height of their career when transitioning between stardom in the U.S. and Mexico and both their lives were cut short due to tragedies. Each sent political messages to their fans whether explicitly or implicitly, having a transnational impact on the lives of Latinos/as. Selena's music became popular on both sides of the border in the wake of new border security sending the direct message of wanting to keep Latino/a migrants out of the United States. While Selena spoke out about being kind and offering assistance to those in need rather than a distinct political message, her music was still read as such. Jenni Rivera on the other hand was one of the first major stars that came out as an activist against Arizona legislation SB 1070 that seeks to racially profile anyone who "looks" undocumented in Arizona, presenting another direct attack against the Latino/a community. Both Selena and Jenni were born in the United States and grew to stardom at a time when the Latino/a community was especially vulnerable to anti-immigrant and xenophobic legislation. Their music both shared many of the same significant impacts on the lives of people on both sides of the border. The news media is speculating that Jenni Rivera's death and after-life might grow to be bigger than that of Selena's. Rather than comparing who had a larger impact on the community it is important to see the connection between both stars and how music of powerful Latinas continues to serve as *audiotopias* for marginalized communities. Selena's death however will always remain as a marker for one of the largest impacts on the Latino/a community and the relationship people draw from her music years later.

Mestiza Consciousness

What we can draw from this is that Selena's music not only fits to serve as utopias from the realities of life Kun theorized but rather how relevant it is today as people continue to be oppressed by state-sanctioned nativist immigration policies. People continue to navigate physical and theoretical borders in both the United States and Mexico. We can see how the *audiotopia* theory actively works in producing utopias and how it draws upon the concept of Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) *mestiza consciousness*, to live in the borderlands straddling multiple languages, cultures, and nations. Anzaldúa (1987) states "Because I, a *mestiza*, continually walk out of one culture and into another, because I am in all cultures at the same time", in this way the fans of Selena are in both Latino/a and hegemonic U.S. white worlds at the same time they must

navigate and negotiate as a means of survival. A *mestiza* learns to accept contradictions and tolerate ambiguity, to Anzaldúa a *mesitza* has no country and is casted out by the country, is cultureless, yet belongs to all countries and cultures and the same time. Latino/a immigrants at the time of Selena's music's height can be seen as *mestizas* who embraced their *mesitza* consciousness through mass mobilization around Selena's death at a time when being Latino/a or an immigrant was not something to celebrate together as a minority community on its way to becoming a majority in the United States.

Conclusion

The music of Selena flows across transnational borders, as do her fans and those who embrace *Selenidad* to collectively mourn her loss. The online *testimonios* from fans about their relationships, whether real or imagined, to Selena and her music illustrate the *audiotopic* potential music holds. By utilizing *testimonios*, communities speak for themselves and their real life experiences rather than being subject to interpretation, meaning in this way does not get lost in translation. If the death of Selena can draw over 60,000 people together to mourn loss and lead to the organization of massive crowds to celebrate her life and the impact her music had on their own lives then *audiotopias* can serve as a tool for community organizing. The music of Selena served as a means of empowerment at a time when Latino/a migration to the United States from Mexico was both implicitly and explicitly criminalized by the state.

As Kun argues, "Music is experienced not only as a sound that goes into our ears and vibrates through our bones but as a space that we can enter into, encounter, move around in, inhabit, be safe in, [and] learn from" (Kun, 2009). What is unique about the power of music in its role as an *audiotopia* is that it is timeless and something that her fans continue to find a safe space from. As shown through Selena's legacy, her music continues to remain relevant today and has been passed down through generations of Latino/a communities. Music is also not just timeless but it is also a more form than a text that is accessible to different groups of people. The music of Selena is accessible to non-Spanish speakers both in and out of the Latino/a community because she sang in both English and Spanish in order for her music to cross borders. The empowerment that came from Selena's music and her legacy that continues today makes the *audiotopia* thesis as an ideal social critique for fighting against xenophobia and anti-immigrant rhetoric both at the time of Selena's career and today.

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