

FULL LENGTH ARTICLES

## Lullabies in the Border: Lullaby Singing in El Valle of Juarez

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Lullabies play important roles in children's development, mother's well-being, and healthy parent-child relationships. These songs also compromise musical repositories of cultural values and traditions. This paper summarizes the research and results obtained for my New Mexico State University Honors Capstone, which examines the presence of lullabies in the Valle de Juárez and Ciudad Juárez region. Grounded in ethnographic and ethnomusicological analysis to understand their importance in the border region's history and culture, the conclusions discuss the impacts of *maquiladora* work on maintaining the lullaby tradition. The project relied on ethnographic fieldwork to gather data as well as bibliographical research. With respect to the persistence of lullabies, results detail a decline in lullaby singing, reflecting the historical increase in maquiladora work, the main source of income for most families of the region.

A rocking chair swings in the corner of a room as a woman with a baby in her arms hums a soft lullaby. The child's cries stop as she slowly begins to fade away into sleep. The woman continues rocking and singing. Found all over the world, lullabies are considered a universal musical genre (Mehr et al., 2019, p. 7). Lullabies can be defined as any song whose primary intention is to put a baby to sleep. They play important roles in children's development, a mother's well-being, and healthy parent-child relationships. As song texts, they compromise musical repositories of cultural values and traditions (Merriam, 1964, p. 190).

Lullabies have not been as widely studied when compared to other universal musical genres (Warner, 1998). This might be attributed to certain characteristics, such as being a generally female-gendered song, being non-presentational, and being considered not as culturally relevant as other songs because they are associated with motherhood and considered "women's work" (Ortner, 1972). Nevertheless, lullabies are important for discovering and studying subconscious maternal phantasies, creating adequate bonding environments between parents and children, and aiding in children's language development (Palmer Wolf, 2017; Trehub & Trainor, 1998; Vicente et al., 2020; Warner, 1998). Lullabies are also a source of mental well-being for caretakers and begin the process of inducing reality and values in children, amongst others (Lomax Hawes, 1974). The study of lullabies as music and social behavior is an important endeavor in the academic community.

This paper summarizes the research and results obtained for my New Mexico State University Honors Capstone that examined the presence of lullabies in the Valle de Juárez and Ciudad Juárez region. The capstone attempted to illustrate the presence and characteristics of lullabies in the Juárez-El Valle region; explain their importance, both as a cultural phenomenon and as an element for building healthy parent-children bonds that support their well-being; and describe how the current state of the maquiladora industry, amongst other factors, is affecting lullaby's existence in society and thus affecting the community.

The beginning goal of the project was to find and record the lullabies that are currently sung in the Juarez-El Valle region. The idea was to discover if the lyrical characteristics of the songs could tell us something about the state of women and children in the area. I soon realized that lyrical differences between lullabies across northern Mexico were almost non-existent. Many lullabies are similar in most northern Mexican states, with only small variations that do not normally account for regional problems. Most of the singers used lullabies that were sung to them as children while living in adjacent states like Durango, or other cities in Chihuahua, showing that lullabies migrate with the people. Using lyrical aspects as a means for interpreting specific regional problems would not yield precise results and the original hypothesis was modified. Spending time in the area did reveal a decrease in lullaby singing that is actively harming the formation of healthy parent-children bonds. This realization allowed for a modification of the research objectives. The presence of abusive maquiladora work in the area and how it might be related to the decline in lullaby singing became an important research point.

The project relied on ethnographic methods to gather data as well as bibliographical research. The fieldwork mainly entailed participant observation and open-ended interviews. In total, three interviews were completed during the summer, and an extra one was completed during the fall of 2022. Three of the four individuals interviewed were women, and all the interviewees had sung lullabies to their children. Their names and personal information will not be discussed in the essay to respect their anonymity, but all interviewees were explicitly aware of the project and signed released forms. Apart from the interviews, I attended the weekly meetings of *the Consejo de Adultos Mayores* organized in the museum for senior citizens of the area. Most of the data was gathered by participating in these meetings and spending time with the senior citizens. A small survey was carried out during one of the meetings but most of the information came from interviews or participant observation. The interviews were recorded for further transcription and photographs were taken during the meetings.

### **El Valle de Juarez**

The main part of the fieldwork was completed during the summer of 2022 in a five-week-long fieldwork process at the Museo Regional del Valle de Juárez in the town of San Agustín. San Agustín is approximately 30 km

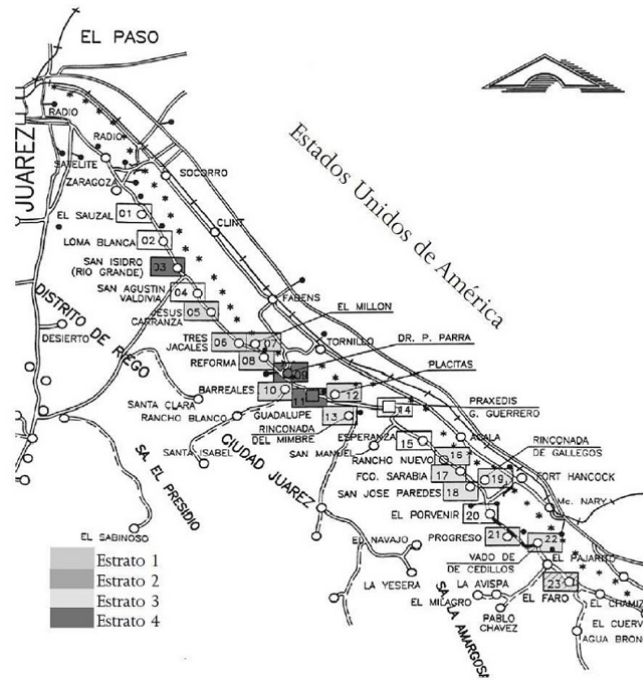


Figure 1. Map of the El Valle de Juárez Region. Obtained from <https://www.scielo.org.mx/img/revistas/regsoc/v18n35/a3m.jpg>

from Ciudad Juárez and is one of the more than 20 communities that form El Valle de Juárez (see Fig. 1). Although the stay in El Valley was limited, it allowed for a better understanding of the *Vallejuarense* (people from El Valle) culture. Being from Ciudad Juárez myself and having grown up visiting El Valle almost weekly to see my grandparents, I was accepted quickly into the meetings and the community and was able to integrate more smoothly into the daily routine of the museum. Being a woman, it was not seen as suspicious or strange to be asking about children’s songs, child-rearing, and other generally assumed “woman interests.” My gender also helped me establish rapport with the participants, most of them being older women who enjoyed talking to a young woman about their children, lullaby singing traditions, and issues that arose during their child-rearing experiences.

El Valle was a well-known agricultural area and was recognized around the world for the quality of the cotton (González de la Vara, 2009, p. 164). The cotton brought pride to the people of El Valle and its fame is still talked about by the older generations. With the growth of maquiladoras and industrial work, plus the lack of water in the river, agricultural production decreased. Most of the economy in the Valle of Juárez is now sustained by industrial *maquiladora* work. Maquiladoras, defined as a “manufacturing plant that imports and assembles duty-free components for export,” are known for low wages, bad working conditions, and extreme hours (Britannica, 2024; Flores, 2017). The long hours of the maquiladora employment keep most parents from San Agustin away for most of the day, leaving behind their children

in what feels like a ghost town during the weekdays. According to the interviewees, it is these extreme working hours that act as an important factor in the decrease of parent-children bonding activities like lullaby singing.

A thorough search for bibliographical information did not yield any results about the economy of El Valle. Information regarding its history was also scarce. The lack of records and academic research on El Valle de Juárez might be attributed to the dark stigma that surrounds the region. The extreme violence that occurred in the 2010s due to drug trafficking conflicts has created a bad reputation for the communities of El Valle. People from Ciudad Juárez and El Paso avoid it because of fear; few research and cultural projects are directed toward the region. Don Ernesto, the current director of the Museo Regional del Valle de Juárez, spoke a little about this issue while discussing the town *fiestas*:

People from other towns used to come and here [in the San Agustín church] was where all the *fiestas patronales* occurred... there were always people working in the U.S. who were from here and on those days they would come. Now, some of them still come but many don't, many of them are scared (personal communication, August 8, 2022, author's translation).

Surprisingly, Don Ernesto also shared that he feels even more scared in some parts of Ciudad Juárez than in San Agustín. The fear toward El Valle is understandable, but it has isolated the communities from the rest of the state.

Another factor that does not help the situation is the physical conditions of the towns. San Agustín, and the rest of the El Valle communities, are not “pretty” places; the streets are not paved, the infrastructure is decayed, and the communal spaces are abandoned. There is virtually no public transportation, and there is a lack of adequate services including education. The government's neglect of the communities is a factor in the continuation of violence. The citizens do not appreciate the government and have been victims of corruption by soldiers and state officials (Lopez, 2022). Currently, efforts to provide cultural and artistic events and services are the Museo Regional del Valle de Juárez's main priority.

Officially founded in 1984, El Museo Regional del Valle de Juárez stands in the center of San Agustín, next to the church, the children's daycare, and the rural health clinic. The museum has become a local gathering spot for different social groups of the community, including the *Consejo de Adultos Mayores* (Council of Senior Adults), where I did most of my participant observation and research and met some women I would later interview. The *Consejo de Adultos Mayores* is a group made up of senior citizens of the area that gather every Thursday morning to eat lunch, play *lotería*, or listen to presentations by community members or government health agencies. The *Consejo* has existed in San Agustín for many years. Although no exact date is known, the *Consejo* must be at least more than 20 years old. Its survival

through some of the region's hardest times, like the extreme violence of the 2010s and the recent COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrates its critical role as a place of support and agency for senior citizens in the region.

### **Advantages of Lullabies**

Lullabies are any song whose main intention is to soothe a child into sleep (Lomax Hawes, 1974, p. 141). They can be made-up songs, popular songs, religious songs, "traditional" folk lullabies (songs created with this purpose), lyric-less sounds and humming, and just about anything else. Compared to other musical themes, lullabies have been studied very little and have only begun to gain attention in the last decades (Warner, 1998, p. 1). In the 1970s, a pioneer work on lullabies was published by Bess Lomax Hawes, and more recognition was given to overlooked women's and children's cultures (Lomax Hawes, 1974). During the 1990s, lullabies slowly began attracting attention; multiple articles regarding musical and lyrical characteristic lullabies were published (Trehub et al., 1992; Trehub & Trainor, 1998; Warner, 1998). There was more interest in lullabies as art or tools for children's development, but the research lacked anthropological and social analysis. Recently, there has been a generalized increase in the study of lullabies. Ideas like the advantages of lullabies in mothers' and children's lives and the pursuit of encouraging lullaby singing have garnered particular attention (Palmer Wolf, 2016, 2017).

Lullabies produce a multitude of advantages for parents and babies. Ranging from physical advantages to psychological and socio/cultural advantages, lullaby singing is an important tool for the development of children and the well-being of parents.

Physical advantages for babies have been widely studied. Loewy et al. noted the physical positive effects lullabies have on premature babies (2013). Some of these effects included: lower heart rates, improved feeding behaviors and sucking patterns, and increased periods of quiet-alertness (Loewy et al., 2013, p. 902). Although not mentioned in the study, it is feasible to assume that similar positive physical effects occur in non-premature babies. Lullabies are also key for language development and acquisition. They provide infants with extensive opportunities to hear repeated words and syllables in small and simple phrases. Language capabilities in babies are better developed if the babies are frequently spoken to and included in conversations (Hart & Risley, 2003). Lullabies are also believed to pass on phonetical sounds, not only words, characteristic of each language which is why syllabic repetition is so common (Warner, 1998, p. 11). As a tool for language development, lullabies play an important role in the combination of cadence and tone, linguistic abilities that are easily obtained through musical material (Warner, 1998, p. 11).

Psychological and socio/cultural lullaby advantages are also crucial for baby development. As previously mentioned, lullabies exemplify the social views and expectations of individual cultures, as well as work as a means of inducing reality in children early on (Lomax Hawes, 1974; Vicente et al., 2020). These ideas might be unconsciously mentioned in the songs to begin

the enculturation process from an early age. Lullabies subconsciously teach children cultural norms, what is expected of them, and prepare them for life. Lullabies work to psychologically prepare children for problems, sadness and loss, danger, but also happiness, love, and the unexpected beauty of the world.

Advantages for mothers are mainly psychological. They provide a safe space for tension release, help them deal with the stress of parenthood, and are associated with better self-esteem, less anxiety and depression, and an overall feeling of well-being (Palmer Wolf, 2017; Vicente et al., 2020). The in-field interviews revealed similar data. When the women interviewed were asked about their feelings during lullaby singing, they always associated them with calmness, happiness, and love. Similar results were observed in the *Lullaby Project*, developed by Dennis Palmer Wolf and Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute. This project pairs up classical musicians with mothers in vulnerable situations to compose a lullaby. Their results in both mother and children support the physical, psychological, and socio/cultural advantages mentioned above, with an increase in baby language development, mother well-being, and family unitedness (Palmer Wolf, 2017).

Lullabies are a crucial element for family bonding, especially because they are carried out during the most important developmental years for infants. The singing of lullabies also encourages physical touch between caregivers and children. Physical touch during child development is “critical for healthy behavioral development... and infants who are deprived of it develop behavioral inadequacies in later life” (Jablonski, 2013). Lullabies positively affect mothers, children, and family well-being.

### Collected Lullabies

In total, 15 different lyrical lullabies were collected during the fieldwork. Some of these lullabies shared the same melody. The first instance of shared melody occurs between *Señora Santanna* (see Appendix A) and Version 1 of *A la Rurururu* (see Appendix B). The second instance is between three songs: *La Manzanita* (see Appendix E), *El Pescadito* (see Appendix F), and *Duermete mi Niño* (see Appendix G). The singers used the same rhythm and melodic intervals while performing the lullabies. This leaves a total of 12 unique melodies obtained and 15 lyrical lullabies. The original and translated lyrics of all 15 lullabies can be found in the thesis annexes.

Out of the 15 collected lullabies, only four of these contained “bad objects” – only roughly above 25%. These results correspond to those found by Vicente et al. about the overestimated presence of bad objects in lullabies and the prevalence of lullabies with good object themes (2020). Certain characteristics of the bad objects are recurrent. The most prominent characteristic is that all bad/scary creatures are male characters. “El Coco” and “El Viejo” appear in *Duermete mi Niño* (Appendix G) and Version 2 of a *A la Rurururu* (see Appendix C). They are usually interchangeable, with some mothers will sing “El Coco,” while others will use “El Viejo.” These characters are monsters that will kidnap or eat up children who don’t fall

asleep. They are analogous to the Anglo-Saxon “boogie man” and are used to frighten children to sleep. They might also warn children about strange men. On *El Pescadito* (Appendix F), the little fish is led away from her mother with promises of playing outside the water. The little fish is then most likely killed by a “*muchacho malo*” or “bad young man.” This song is a clear example of a teaching lullaby, that intends to warn children about disobeying their mothers and being weary of strangers. The pervasiveness of men as bad might be an unconscious desire of mothers wanting to teach their children to be weary of strange men, or mothers using lullabies to express their discontent or fear towards certain men.

However, not all mentions of male characters are grim. In *La Manzanita* (Appendix E), there is a nice, hardworking old man: Don Nabor. His hardworking status might reinforce traditional Mexican gender stereotypes of men as hardworking. This gender idea is also present in *Los Tres Cochinitos* (see Appendix D), a popular lullaby composed by famous Mexican composer Francisco Gavilondo Soler, “Cri-Cri.” In his lullaby, he tells the story of three little piglets and their dreams. The last of the piglets is seen as the best of them all because he dreams of working to help his mother out.

The following table summarizes the main lyrical themes found in the collected lullabies. Surprisingly, the most common theme was the presence of animals. A possible explanation is a desire to teach children about the common animals they will encounter in their early years. Another explanation is the use of animal characters as educational devices that children can empathize with, but still feel slightly detached from the stories and the fates of the animals. They work perfectly to explain tough situations to children early on without inflicting such a strong impression on them. Animals are a common theme in children’s literature and many works on their importance and presence have been published (see Bone, 2013; Burke & Copenhaver, 2004).

Sleeping was another frequently mentioned theme. Sometimes sleep was encouraged gently; other times with a threat, and sometimes it was just present during the song. In *Bebe* (see Appendix I), the singer does not ask for sleep, she is simply stating the fact that she will sing while the baby sleeps. Having plenty, or the presence of food was another common theme. Lullabies can share multiple themes; in this case, *Duerme Negrito* (see Appendix K) contains both the sleeping theme, and the food/having plenty theme. In this lullaby, the singer asks the baby to sleep by promising food. The singer, who is not the parent, tells the child her mom will be back from working in the fields later, with delicious meat and fruit, but the baby must first fall asleep. This lullaby also presents the first case of intentionally changed lyrics – from, “que tu mami está en el campo negrito” (that your mommy is in the fields negrito), to: “que tu papi está en Juaritos negrito” (that your daddy is in Juaritos [Juárez] negrito). This intentional change from characters – mami to

Table 1. Main lyrical themes

Main Themes	Lullabies	#
Male as scary/bad	<i>A la Rurururu</i> Version 2, <i>Duermete mi Niño</i> , <i>El Pescadito</i> , <i>Yo Tenia 10 Perritos</i>	4
Work-Related	<i>Los Tres Cochinitos</i> <i>La Manzanita</i> <i>Duerme Negrito</i>	3
Animals/Farm Animals	<i>A la Rurururu</i> Version 1 & 2, <i>Caballito Blanco</i> , <i>El Chorrito</i> , <i>El Pescadito</i> , <i>Los Tres Cochinitos</i> , <i>Yo Tenia 10 Perritos</i>	7
Loving Mom/Parent	<i>Amor Chiquito</i> , <i>Cachito Mío</i> , <i>Señora Santanna</i> , <i>Los Tres Cochinitos</i> ,	4
Food/Having Plenty	<i>Señora Santanna</i> , <i>Los Tres Cochinitos</i> , <i>La Manzanita</i> , <i>Caballito Blanco</i> , <i>Duerme Negrito</i>	5
Sleeping	<i>A la Rurururu</i> Version 1 & 2, <i>Los Tres Cochinitos</i> , <i>Duermete mi Niño</i> , <i>Bebe</i> , <i>Duerme Negrito</i>	6
Religious Themes	<i>Señora Santanna</i> , <i>El Alfarero</i> , <i>Cachito Mio</i>	3

papi – and location – the fields to Ciudad Juárez – was made to better suit the personal situation of the singer (a father) during the time of his life he sang the song.

“I would change the lyrics because my daughters lived in Torreón with their grandmother and I would sing them that when I had vacations or a long weekend that we could go to see them” (personal communication, August 8, 2022, author’s translation). This instance is a perfect example of the use of lullabies to explain life to children, either explicitly, like in this case, or implicitly by using other teaching devices. The vivid recollection of the father about how happy his daughters were hearing the lullaby illustrates the importance of lullabies in developing and maintaining healthy parent-children bonds and the lasting effects they leave behind.

The theme of loving parents appeared in four lullabies. Loving parents, usually mothers, are depicted either by loving words or by acts of love. In *Señora Santanna* (Appendix A), one of the most quoted and heard traditional Mexican lullabies, the singer tells Lady Santanna, mother of Mary and grandmother of Jesus, that she will go to the garden to get the child an apple just to stop her child from crying. The mother pig in *Los Tres Cochinitos* (Appendix D) is also very caring towards her children. She tucks them into bed and gives them a lot of kisses before they go to sleep. *Amor Chiquito* (see Appendix N) and *Cachito Mio* (see Appendix O), both original popular

songs later used as lullabies, feature lyrics of complete adoration towards the child. They express love with sayings, such as “you are my life” and “piece of heaven.” These tender lullabies are ideal for giving developing children affection and providing them with love and caring words.

The final recurrent theme was the appearance of religious themes. The religious references to *Señora Santanna* (Appendix A) and *Cachito Mio* (Appendix O) were not the central focus of the lullabies. It was mentioned more like a passing aspect, without paying particular attention to the religious themes in them. In *Cachito Mio* (Appendix O), the singer thanks the Lord for giving her a “piece of heaven” and feels blessed for her child. Lady Santanna in *Señora Santanna* (Appendix A) acts as a comforting figure in the song, and the lullaby ends by saying two apples will be cut, one for the child and another one for God. This offering of food for God might be a form of spell casting or describes a religious offering. If lullabies are also considered magical songs, then the presence of religious themes and offerings can be expected.

### Disappearing Lullabies

A report published in 2020 by El Heraldo de Chihuahua stated that more than 50% of the working population in the Ciudad Juárez region works in one of the more than 300 maquiladoras in the city (Fuentes, 2020). Out of 1.5 million people in Juárez, more than 1.2 million depend on maquiladoras to survive. However important for the city’s survival, maquiladora work is abusive and exploitative. Their presence damages parent-children relationships, which furthers the propagation of violence in the region (Sypher et al., 2019). A correlation between maquiladora work and the decline in lullaby singing, amongst other parent-children bonding activities, was repeatedly mentioned during the interviews. My own experiences as a child growing up in Ciudad Juarez also sustain this correlation. Many of my peers and friends whose parents worked in the maquila would spend little time with them due to the working hours and demands. They even belonged to the middle class with their parents mostly having manager or engineering jobs. Lower-class operator jobs’ working hours are even more demanding and the conditions more extreme.

The presence of maquiladoras in Ciudad Juárez began after the cancelation of the *Braceros* program in the 1960s, which left a high percentage of unemployment on the Mexican side of the border that needed to be filled up quickly (Castellanos, 2018, p. 556). The low wages and the tax-free exportation area of the border attracted foreign enterprises and began what is known as border industry corridors (Kopinak, 1995, p. 33). During the maquiladora’s first years, there was a significant quantity of women workers, creating a cultural idea that maquiladora work is women’s work. This idea was reinforced by foreign enterprises that took advantage of the machismo ideology of Mexico to hire women in great quantity. Women were preferred because of their “natural dexterity and docility” and because they were less

prone to protest and unionize (de la O Martínez, 1995, p. 412; Kopinak, 1995, p. 32) They were also rarely promoted – also due to machismo ideologies – thus becoming the perfect long-term low-wage employee.

The low wage pay in maquiladoras does not provide enough resources for fair living conditions, causing parents to search for other forms of income and come home extremely tired. Currently, the minimum wage in Ciudad Juárez is \$312 Mexican pesos per day – equivalent to \$17.35 USD (Gobierno de Mexico, 2023). As of May 2023, most maquiladoras' initial operator job starts at around 320-340 Mexican pesos (approximately \$18 in USD) for shifts of over nine hours. One of my collaborators worked in a maquiladora for 7 years and discussed the working hours:

In the maquila you have to wake up at least at 4:00 a.m. because the bus gets here 20 or 15 minutes before 5:00 a.m. to take you. And you get out around 3:00 from the maquila, I don't remember if 3:00 or 3:30. You come back after 4:00, almost 5:00 [to El Valle]. It's all day. (personal communication, August 9, 2022, author's translation).

Coming back from work, the women are usually expected to cook for their children, clean the house, and do other household chores. Time for bonding with their kids is almost non-existent.

Already Juárez and many other Mexican cities depend on maquiladoras to survive (Castellanos, 2018). Without other forms of making a living, the population has no other alternative but to continue supplying cheap labor to foreign companies. Growing up in the city, one is constantly surrounded by the presence of maquiladoras. Everywhere you look one sees the large unpleasant maquiladora buildings, the constant personnel buses flooding the streets, the “great pay, no school required” advertisements, and the ever-growing industrial parks that seem to appear everywhere around town from one day to the next. Children from mid-to-high-income classes are taught from a small age that the maquiladora business is the place where all the opportunities are, and children from low-income classes grow up with the constant feeling that they are doomed to become low-wage operators.

Two main problems prevent the development of good bonds between parents and children in the Ciudad Juárez and El Valle region: a lack of time and a lack of desire. Both problems have their roots in bigger issues, one of them being the maquiladora society of Ciudad Juárez. Parents do not have enough time to spend with their children because of abusive and extensive hours, plus the external obligations and the need for other sources of income. In addition, working women are deprecated by their culture, negatively affecting their self-esteem, and fathers are excused from trying to form any type of emotional connection with their children. These factors have fostered an environment that makes it nearly impossible for children and parents to develop healthy bonds.

Children will likely grow up replicating these same ideas unless changes are made. Changes need to occur in the maquiladora workplace and in the way parenting responsibilities are divided and assumed. Both mothers and fathers are responsible and deserve to have enough time to create healthy bonds with their children. This is not possible due to the maquiladora jobs and our machismo society that detaches responsibility of fathers to their families and belittles working women.

The question arises of who takes care of the children while the parents are working in the maquiladora. The results of the fieldwork, as well as personal experiences, show that most of the time, this work falls on the grandmother or other elderly women of the family. In my case, I was cared for by my great-aunt Maru, one of the interviewees for this project. Many personal friends were also in the constant care of their grandmothers growing up. After spending time with the older ladies in the *Consejo de Adultos Mayores* in San Agustin, the importance of grandmothers as caregivers and keepers of cultural heritage became clear.

The specific reasons for the decrease in lullaby singing are dependent on each individual, but some general causes might be cautiously established. All the grandmothers interviewed, as well as some others from *the Consejo de Adultos Mayores*, agreed that lullaby singing is decreasing because of two reasons: the extreme working conditions of the region and modern technology. The extreme working conditions, heavily linked to maquiladora work and the current economic situation in Mexico, have already been discussed, but it is important to restate how much emphasis the grandmothers gave to it. One of the grandmothers mentioned too much work as the main culprit for the inability to sing to her eldest daughter and another former maquiladora worker mentioned how it affects mothers and children. She stated: “For example, nowadays, the ones that come back from the maquila get back all annoyed and having to make food. And then their kids are like, ‘Mom!’ And they say, ‘Don’t be bothering me, I am busy!’ And they give them their phone so they leave them alone” (personal communication, August 9, 2022, author’s translation).

This quote mentions the two main factors, according to grandmothers, for the decline in the tradition of lullabies. The same interviewee also addressed the growth of technology in her interview: “The kids now, they don’t want a bedtime story, they want the phone to watch everything there” (personal communication, August 9, 2022, author’s translation).

What the future holds for lullaby singing is unknown. Some grandmothers believe they are in danger of disappearing. One grandmother spoke a little about it: “Sadly, I do think that they can disappear.... I wish everybody kept on singing to their children” (personal communication, September 2, 2022, author’s translation).

She also mentioned how she has seen the changes personally and has noticed how the newer generations don’t sing to their children as often. She mentions how Cri-Cri, Mexican composer well known for his lullabies,

has also begun fading away from culture: “For example, the grandkids of some friends who are younger than me, like 8-10 years younger than me, their mother never showed them Cri-Cri... Times change” (personal communication, September 2, 2022, author’s translation).

Grandmothers also agree on the importance of maintaining these songs. Another mentions: “They are memories of when we were kids, they are beautiful memories because in the present one doesn’t hear them anymore” (personal communication, August 9, 2022, author’s translation).

Grandmothers wish for this tradition to continue and feel joy when singing and listening to these lullabies. This look into the personal feelings and thoughts of grandmothers recognizes the importance they have as keepers of culture and educators of the next generation.

This thesis explored the characteristics of the lullabies on the border and their relationship with the current situation of the Ciudad Juárez and El Valle community. It looked at the history of the region and the factors that led to the development of the maquiladora society. It also discussed the importance of the Museo Regional del Valle de Juárez for the cultural well-being of the El Valle region, and how its installations function as a safe space in an area that has greatly been affected by continuous violence. Participant observation, open-ended interviews, and personal insight were key components of the data-gathering process.

The lullabies were analyzed musically and lyrically and patterns amongst them were identified. The main themes in the lyrics of the lullabies expressed traditional cultural values and ideas. Lullabies also provide a place for mothers to begin the enculturation process at a young age and as a way of tension release. The importance and advantages of lullaby singing, both for caregivers, children, and families, were emphasized.

The fieldwork observations demonstrated the critical role of grandmothers in the continuation of this tradition. The main key informants identified themselves as grandmothers. The results showed a decrease in lullaby singing in the region. The grandmothers identified the causes of this decrease as modern technology and a lack of time due to abusive and excessive work conditions, mainly linked to the maquiladora work. These factors have threatened the continuation of lullabies, that are extremely important for family bonding, children’s development, and the mother’s well-being.

Public engagement and accessible outreach programs that transmit the importance of lullaby singing would greatly benefit the community of Ciudad Juárez and El Valle. These programs would support the continuation of lullabies and other bonding activities in the region to improve the relationship between parents and children. Every parent deserves to have enough time to give their children the care they need. Although these programs would not resolve the economic situation of the maquiladora, they might encourage parents to use lullaby singing as a means of bonding in the little time they might have. It is also important to preserve these memories and these songs for our well-being and to conserve our heritage.



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## Supplementary Materials

### Lullabies in the Border Appendices

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