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INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY:  
THE ROLE OF CULTURE

A Thesis  
by  
TANIA DIAZ

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major Subject: Criminal Justice

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

December 2021



INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY:  
THE ROLE OF CULTURE

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TANIA DIAZ

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Rachel Rayburn  
Chair of Committee

Dr. Rosalva Resendiz  
Committee Member

Dr. Paul Sale  
Committee Member

December 2021



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## ABSTRACT

Diaz, Tania, Intimate Partner Violence in South Texas: A Survey of Border Towns. Master of Science (MS), December, 2021, 70 pp., 12 tables, references, 57 titles.

Mexican culture along the border towns of the Rio Grande dominates views towards women and men experiencing violence in intimate relationships. However, there is a paucity of empirical studies relating to intimate partner violence in the Rio Grande Valley. This study addresses the dynamics of abusive relationship in a Hispanic community that can be influenced by cultural concepts such as familism and marianismo. The author utilized a mixed methods approach for this study that included a sample of (n= 513) surveys and (n=13) interviews that were analyzed separately. Multivariate logistic regression analysis was used to assess the correlations of the variables with intimate partner violence. Furthermore, types of violence were analyzed within genders, as well as the difficulty to disclose their victimization to others. Results indicated that there was a significant relationship between Marianismo, and the barriers victims face when seeking help. Interview data indicated that societal norms greatly influenced a person's decision to disclose of their abuse. Additionally, psychological abuse and sexual assault are greatly significant in a person's decisions not to report their victimization. Study findings assist in informing the youth and community about the dynamics of violence, improve law enforcement response, and change attitudes about dating violence within the Hispanic community.





## DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis work to my husband, newborn son, family, and friends. To my husband who has been by my side day and night supporting me through the most challenging times of frustration. For always giving me the strength to strive for more. To my newborn son Diego, who made me realize that although being a mother is extremely demanding, it only made me want to strive for more. To my mother who has been fighting hard for health, this is for you. Thank you for showing me what determination is. To my wonderful sisters Maira and Analy, we have been going through the most testing stretch of our lives, but you have shown me to push through hardships and the meaning behind “when there’s a will there’s a way.” To my recent high school graduate niece Hallie, I have watched you grow up into a brilliant and curious young lady. You have been of great help throughout my pregnancy and development of my thesis.

At the beginning of my master’s program, I met a magnificent person, Nohely. I am eternally grateful that we have both been by each other’s sides throughout our work. When either of us had any setbacks, we were there to guide each other. Any questions or concerns you were always there to respond and assist me. Whether it was early in the morning or late at night, you were always there to respond. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to all the survivors of intimate partner violence. To all the participants in this study, you have been incredibly brave to share your powerful stories. Without them, this thesis would not be possible.



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I wish to thank my committee members who were more than kind with their knowledge and valuable time. To my thesis chair Dr. Rachel Rayburn who has been guiding me throughout the beginning of what initially began as an assignment in her course and further evolved into the masterwork of a thesis it is today, thank you for your endless words of encouragement, countless hours of revisions, and most of all patience throughout this whole process. You truly are the definition of what a mentor should be, and I will always treasure that.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is under-reported and habitually occurs behind closed doors. Future research is needed to understand people's experiences and raise awareness of IPV. Individuals who are victims of IPV experience several types of abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological. Questions linger in what obstacles victims face during an abusive relationship and why they remain. Wallace (2015) describes the term as abuse from one individual to another in a relationship. Traditionally, domestic violence was used to describe violence between two individuals in an opposite-sex marriage. Although "domestic violence" has been utilized more often, IPV emerged to describe violence between two people. Usually, the male husband being the perpetrator. Therefore, presenting domestic violence as existing only in domestic relationships.

In 1994, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). This bill aims to prevent violent crime, respond to the needs of crime victims, learn about the crime, change public attitudes through a collaborative effort by the criminal justice system, social service agencies, research organizations, schools, public health, and private organizations. In March 2021, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2021 was passed. The bill was modified and reauthorized through 2026 for programs and activities under the VAWA that seek

to prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. This bill authorizes new programs and allows for changes in federal firearms laws. Furthermore, it, establishes new protections to encourage housing stability and economic security for domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking victims.

According to the US Census Bureau, the term Hispanic or Latino is defined as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. Hispanics can relate to Spanish-speaking Latin American countries and Latinos coming from Latin American countries to differentiate between the terms. Population estimates, as of the year 2020, roughly 62.1 million Hispanics are living in the United States, representing approximately 19% of the US total population. As reported by the UCD Health Connect, demographics demonstrate that Hispanics residing in the Rio Grande Valley account for about 94% of the population, which is the motivation for selecting the Hispanic population to be investigated in this study. To the researcher's knowledge, literature and research are scarce of intimate partner violence dedicated to the Rio Grande Valley.

In this study, data collected from participants were analyzed to observe any associations between Hispanic cultural concepts and their willingness to disclose their victimization. Additionally, the barriers victims encounter, which is also part of their experience, were further examined. Cultural concepts that were discussed in this study were Marianismo and Familismo. These concepts are common in the Hispanic/Latino communities. Although, Machismo is a predominant aspect in the Hispanic culture, and there was plentiful literature on this concept. Therefore, it was not investigated in this study. Marianismo and Familismo are essential in examining the associations within IPV.

Marianismo is a Hispanic cultural concept that is an idea or set of beliefs rooted in Catholicism that refers to the mother (the Virgin Mary) of Jesus, and that signifies women's experiences with the meaning and concept of submissiveness in relationships (Dufresne, Marrs Fuchsel, Murphy, & Dufresne, 2012). Women are to be inferior to men and are to put their family's needs before their own. A study conducted by (Cano, Rojas, Ramirez-Ortiz, Sanchez, & De La Rosa, 2020) revealed that women who believe in being the family's spiritual leader and are responsible for the family's spiritual growth reported lower odds of depression. Multiple domains of marianismo need to be examined, given that positive environments can have a beneficial association with depression. The passive, subordinate parts of marianismo, such as being virtuous and chaste, have been associated with higher depressive symptoms among women (Cespedes and Stanley, 2008). Furthermore, there are contrary findings in which they did not associate with increased odds of depression. Such as in Cano et al. (2020), which demonstrated that none of the passive-subordinate domains of marianismo were associated with depression.

Familismo has been characterized as "the attachment, loyalty, and reciprocity that characterize relationships among members of a nuclear family and extended family members, including significant nonfamily individuals who play a key role in the upbringing of children" (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2007) as a concept in which people believe in highly integrated families with supportive extended family members. There are two fundamental dimensions to familism, attitudinal and behavioral (Calzada et al., 2013; Sabogal et al., 1987). Attitudinal familism consists of values or beliefs and expectations of loyalty, solidarity, and reciprocity toward one's nuclear and extended families (Cauce and Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002; Steidel and Contreras, 2003). Behavioral familism refers to actions experienced concerning these values, such as providing or receiving assistance with child-rearing and caregiving. According to Nicasio et al.

(2019), behavioral familism has been studied using multiple variables typically concerning family responsibilities, duties, activities, and behaviors.

As Kasturirangan et al., machismo involves a man being dominant, superior, and strong in relationships. It is typically characterized by beliefs that men should be aggressive, stoic, womanizing, and oppressive toward women (as cited by Arciniega et al., 2008). Nunez et al. (2016) explain that machismo includes attitudinal beliefs that consider it appropriate for women to remain in traditional roles, encouraging males' dominance over women. Men are expected to portray authority and engage in paternalistic ways, reinforcing the marianista belief that women should be submissive, nurturing figures who need to have a sense of protection from men.

IPV is ubiquitous in the Rio Grande Valley, and studies like this can shed light on both women's and men's experiences. It is essential to acknowledge that IPV is a public health issue. This study will contribute at a macro level by adding to the growing literature that IPV is a concern. It not only affects an individual and families but a society additionally (Walters, 2020). Findings from this study can complement the educational system by providing information to public educators. The healthcare system can be provided with adequate training in identifying victims of IPV. Lastly, the improvement of policies can benefit the criminal justice system. Communities along the border can benefit from having more open discussions about IPV instead of keeping their victimization private. There is a lack of studies that can truly capture the experiences of IPV in the RGV. The majority of IPV studies focus on the perpetrator is male, but this study investigated the victimization of both men and women. People can be quick to judge without knowing what occurs behind their aspects. IPV is one of the most private parts of one's life and is often subject to stigmatization and stereotyping within many cultural concepts (as cited by Liang, Goodman, Tummala-Narra, & Weintraub, 2005).

The research question upon which this study is based investigates whether there is an association between cultural concepts such as familismo and marianismo and a person's decision to report their victimization in the relationship. Additionally, the literature review discusses Hispanic cultural concepts and how they can influence a person's interpretation of IPV and its consequences. Furthermore, factors that can prevent or obstruct a victim from seeking treatment or prevention include not adequately identifying the signs of IPV and issues with disclosing their victimization. We can hypothesize that cultural concepts relate to a person's willingness to disclose their victimization and who they choose to share that information with.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A literature review explored past studies examining IPV survivors' experiences overall and in Hispanics, identifying what constitutes violence and how culture impacts the relationship dynamics amongst Hispanics. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), about 20 people per minute are physically abused by their intimate partner. About 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience severe intimate partner physical violence, sexual violence, stalking with impacts such as injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, etc. In Texas, statistics demonstrate that roughly 40.1% of women and 34.9% of men have experienced physical violence, rape, and stalking from an intimate partner in their lifetimes. Although some research provided a much-needed baseline for future research, these studies do not address the critical topic of people's perception and experience of gender-based violence.

#### **What Constitutes Violence?**

The United Nations (UN) defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.” The World Health Organization (WHO) states that IPV is any

behavior by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors.

According to the CDC's Social-Ecological model, risk factors for IPV operate at four levels: individual, relationship, community, and societal. Community and society factors include gender-inequitable social norms that link beliefs of manhood to dominance and aggression, poverty, low social and economic status of women, weak legal sanctions against IPV within marriage, lack of women's civil rights, including restrictive or inequitable divorce and marriage laws, ineffective community sanctions against IPV, broad social acceptance of violence to resolve conflict and armed conflict and high levels of general violence in society. Researchers have begun to examine evidence at these levels to understand such characteristics associated with variations in frequency. However, there is still lacking research on community and societal influences.

Bonnet (2015) offers a detailed summary of debates regarding gender symmetry and bi-directional violence, how violence is defined and what causes it, and how it is dealt with in criminal law to contribute to the construction of intimate partner violence as an object of study. There is a problem in identifying violence in abusive relationships. Feminist sociologist Johnson (1995) set out a typology of IPV in which he compared patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence. Purely sexist violence is having complete control of their partner, which leads to severe violence and injury. Couples encounter daily life that goes no further than the standard argument but are sometimes made worse by material difficulties and alcohol abuse, escalating into shouts, broken crockery, slaps, and occasionally fatal blows. Anyone can argue, men and women alike, without linking to a patriarchal desire for control. Individuals in abusive relationships think that having a typical argument is not a sign of progressive IPV.

Violence against women or IPV is condoned through patriarchal systems of power within the social structure (Androff, Becerra, Messing, & Ward-Lasher, 2015). It is essential to note the intersections of culturally defined constructions of gender, family life, racial discrimination, ethnicity, cultural diversity, language, citizenship status, and socioeconomic status, among other social factors that exacerbate inequality within intimate relationships the social structure. Each of these can impact a Latina woman's fear in their willingness to report a crime. If victims have had previous encounters with law enforcement, they felt that the lack of responsiveness, the acceptance of violence against a woman of different ethnicity could decrease reporting.

According to feminist theorists, when males towards females perpetrate IPV, it reflects males' power authority over females, particularly in patriarchal families and male-dominated societies (as cited by Abrar et al., 2000). According to this theory, if a woman is a perpetrator, it results from retaliation for the violence committed against them (Dobash & Dash, 2004). Patriarchy plays an essential role in creating a climate conducive to the perpetration of violence against women (Resendiz & Espinoza, 2020, p. 54). In a structural society predominantly patriarchal, violence towards the least powerful is not only allowed, but it is to a considerable degree encouraged and normalized as a way of preserving traditions and protecting an established culture (as cited in Kandel-Englander, 1992).

### **Why Patriarchy is a Problem**

In the 1960s, the second wave of the women's movement and renewed interest in feminist thought, criminology came under attack for studying the gender-crime relationship (Daly and Chesney-Lind 1988; Heidensohn 1968; Leonard 1982; Reckless 1961). There has been an increase in feminist scholarship recognizing patriarchal society characterized by gender equality. Due to the rise of feminist criminologists, there have been some attempts to utilize

patriarchy as an explanatory factor in the relationship between gender and criminality. In criminology it has been argued that patriarchy explains why women exhibit lower rates of offending than men, why gender differences in offense rates vary for particular types of criminal and delinquent activity, why women are disproportionately victimized in certain kinds of crimes such as rape and domestic violence, and why women and men receive differential treatment from the Criminal Justice System (Ogle & Batton, 2009). There are several versions and forms to the term patriarchy, as per Brittan (1989). One version places patriarchy in agrarian societies noting that a patriarchal society is one in which the male head of household holds power.

### **Hispanic Cultural Concepts**

Familism and marianismo are very common within the Hispanic community. These cultural concepts are present in IPV (Dufresne, Marrs Fuchsel, Murphy, & Dufresne, 2012). Having a close relationship is essential in a Hispanic family. Even so, some women find it difficult to disclose information about domestic violence to their immediate family members because they felt embarrassed, unsupported, or even felt like a failure because they failed to maintain their family together. Immigrants, especially women from non-egalitarian societies, often bring their own beliefs about relationships with their partners to the United States and may not have the same views of what constitutes IPV as non-immigrants (as cited by Frieze & Chen, 2010). Because of cultural concepts like these, some women may not always recognize IPV as a violent crime because of IPV's association with machismo. Familism comes to play with the victims' willingness to report because they choose to keep the family together over their own needs. Sexually aggressive behaviors within the partner can be acceptable to some women because they are submissive.

### **Decision-making: Should I stay, or should I go?**

A study conducted by Barrios et al. (2020) theorized that the leaving processes are complex and shaped by intersections of various individual, familial, and sociocultural factors that affect one's access to resources and decision-making. Most women who experience IPV seek multiple ways to end the abuse or eventually leave the abusive relationship; however, their strategies differ (as cited by Anderson & Saunders, 2003). Evidence suggests that such strategies depend on numerous factors such as fatigue and depression in the individual, interpersonal such as the severity of IPV and desire to protect their children, and community or sociocultural factors such as cultural beliefs about a woman's role in a relationship (CDC, 2016; Chang et al. 2006; Liang et al., 2005). Luisa, a Hispanic mother who participated in Barrios et al. (2020), mentioned how taking care of her partner, children, house, and everything was part of Mexican culture. Women should do everything. The abuse she endured was based on being belittled to the point where she began to believe it, and to her, the abuse was normalized, and seeking help from her family would not have been helpful.

Cho et al. (2020) explored how IPV survivors' strategies in seeking help vary depending on the survivor's characteristics and victimization pattern. The study showed that women are the primary victims of IPV, and the pattern of victimization is associated with whether they seek help or not and what type of help sources they utilize. It was also noted that the survivor's gender made a difference in which females sought help more than males (Felson & Pare, 2005; Tsui, 2014). Men are less likely to seek help because they view this as admitting to their weakness and potentially exposing themselves to stigma (Vogel, Heimerdinger-Edwards, Hammer, & Hubbard, 2011; Yousaf, Popat, & Hunter, 2015).

## **Barriers to Women Disclosing their Victimization**

Hispanic women in violent relationships are particularly vulnerable and face unique challenges. Not only is the prevalence of IPV slightly higher than in non-Hispanic Whites (as noted in Black et al., 2011), but depression is strongly associated with IPV among Hispanics, complicated by comorbid socioeconomic stressors (as cited in Caetano & Cunradi, 2003).

Hispanic women are most likely to use the emergency department. They may avoid IPV disclosure to health care professionals, underutilize formal resources, and lack a willingness to act due to a variety of reasons, including language barriers, fear and distrust, cultural barriers, lack of knowledge of resource availability, legal rights and capabilities, social isolation, misinformation, and fear of deportation. Cultural characteristics such as living in extended families and familismo may increase informal help-seeking. Furthermore, Hispanic women may depend on other decision-making factors, emphasizing their need to provide for and protect their children (Katerndahl et al., 2019).

Stockman, Hayashi, and Campbell (2015) reviewed several studies in which physical, mental, and sexual, and reproductive health conditions were affected by IPV amongst the ethnic minority. It is important to note that the role of sociopolitical dynamics, such as acculturation and immigration, can affect health prevention and treatment efforts. Women illegally in a country will have a greater chance of not seeking help or treatment out of fear of deportation. (Stockman et al.) mentions that Hispanic or Latino's IPV health needs are becoming increasingly salient with a population growth rate more than three times that of the general U.S. population. (Bridges et al. 2018) conducted a study examining the strategies used to manage violence and leave abusive relationships by Hispanic and non-Hispanic White victims. A self-report questionnaire and interview were issued out to participants. Results in this article showed that

Hispanics reported fear of social embarrassment as a barrier to leaving, and they were most likely to use legal sources for help. Women who have experienced any form of violence from their partners have used legal sources' support. Maddoux, McFarlane, and Liu (2015) conducted a study in which they interviewed women entering the shelter or applying for a protective order. Questions to be examined included if victims felt safe even if they had a court protection order and were asked about the risks they faced if the protection order was violated. Sometimes these orders will be withdrawn by victims themselves because they need financial resources from the perpetrator, emotional attachment, or belief that they have changed.

Sullivan (2018) created a study in which support services from domestic violence shelters were assessed. Evidence showed that these services are promising in promoting the well-being of survivors. Shelters not only work to protect survivors physically but to help them in their emotional and social health. According to Spivak et al. (2014), the key to preventing IPV is early intervention in the youth and parent-focused programs, therapeutic approaches for at-risk couples, community-based programs, and economic and policy-focused processes to reduce IPV risks.

### **Barriers to Men Disclosing their Victimization**

Research demonstrates that men also suffer from various intimate partner abuse types, including physical violence and abuse, psychological, financial, sexual, legal, and administrative abuse, parental alienation, and homicide. The US National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) found that the annual prevalence of physical victimization in intimate relationships was 4.0% among women compared to 4.7% among men. Those who support the gender-based paradigm of intimate partner abuse, such as police and court officials, are influenced by traditional societal norms and IPV views. Based on the study conducted by

(Lysova, et al., 2020), men who avoided seeking help from police, ideas, and beliefs associated with the norms of homogenous masculinity and rigid expectations to control were detected. Concerns that kept men from disclosing to the police were fear of stigmatization from the system itself, fears about children's well-being affected by the perpetrator's arrest, financial issues, intimate partner's threats to destroy men's lives, and prior negative experiences seeking help with the police.

Brooks et al. (2020) focus on men's understanding of their victimization, their perception of gendered roles and question whether the concept of hegemonic masculinities is a helpful tool. The idea of hegemonic masculinity is traditionally defined as stereotypical attributes of maleness, such as strength, domination, aggression, and power. Key themes emerged in the study: fear of IPV, maintaining power and control, victimization as a forbidden narrative, critical understanding of IPV, and breaking the silence. Men who participated in the study revealed that they feared violence against them, including fears for their safety while in abusive relationships. A participant named Keith mentioned fear of being killed by their partner and fear defending himself and hurting her. Masculine norms were presented in the way men described their victimization, such as not disclosing information because they demonstrated their situation as unmanly. Findings suggested that men wanted a safe place to tell their stories in a non-judgmental environment, including the perception that men's victimization is a forbidden narrative.

Like mentioned previously, most of the available research on IPV focuses on the prevalence rates. It is crucial to know women's and men's experiences throughout their abusive relationships and their decisions regarding disclosure on their victimization. Fears, social shame, lack of resources, nor cultural values should not be barriers in seeking help. Hopefully, this



survey will fill in what is missing in this area of research, especially in the Rio Grande Valley, and educate the community to identify risk factors of IPV to reduce the stigma behind it. With this, survivors and victims of IPV can have the strength to seek the adequate help they need and talk about this issue more freely.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### **Sample**

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained on July 30, 2020, for protocol number 20-0105, and data was collected between Fall 2020 and Summer 2021. Graduate student Tania Diaz administered the survey and conducted the interviews. Individuals eligible for the study met the criteria of being 18 years of age and older, lived in the Rio Grande Valley, experienced any form of abuse from their partners, and most importantly, gave consent to participate. This study's sample size consisted of 513 participants for the collection of quantitative data, and 13 participants were interviewed to analyze the qualitative data. Additional considerations were taken place if the participant's primary language is Spanish. The survey was provided in Spanish. Individuals who did not qualify for this study had no prior history of intimate partner violence. They were underage and not residents of the Rio Grande Valley. Those who did respond to the survey but did not reside in the Rio Grande Valley were excluded from this study.

Permission was obtained to email UTRGV students from all ranks of educational level. Qualtrics software was utilized for the survey, which included distributions to 6 anonymous links and a total of 34 participants took the survey through the social media platform Facebook. Much of our sample consisted of age of a UTRGV student is 23. The gender makeup of UTRGV

for male is 40.3% and female accounts for 59.7%. The responses collected from the UTRGV students were analyzed using SPSS software.

The RGV is also known as El Valle and is home to Hispanics representing 88% to 90% of the Rio Grande Valley population. According to the economic scan provided by the McAllen Chamber of Commerce, it has grown from being an agricultural-based economy to a central international trade area. It has become diverse with population influx from all over North America and the rest of the world, but what truly defines the Valley is a Hispanic representation and the young. The community predominantly utilizes bi-lingual, with English and Spanish being spoken fluently and interchangeably by most populous. Tex-Mex is frequently applied by residents in their everyday conversation in which they mix local Texas English and Northern Mexican Spanish without using any specific grammar rules.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Quantitative**

The survey was designed to collect types of violence, Hispanic cultural influence on victims' decisions not to report their victimization, and the barriers they face when seeking help. Additionally, who they disclose their experiences with was explored. Permission was obtained to gain access to the student UTRGV email list. An online survey was distributed using Qualtrics software. The survey was shared via the researcher's social media accounts and UTRGV student email list. Survey questions pertained to three general areas: types of violence, disclosing and seeking assistance for their victimization, and scenarios demonstrating the cultural beliefs related to concepts such as familismo and marianismo.

Social media platform such as Facebook was used to reach out to participants allowing them to remain anonymous. The survey link was shared via the researcher's private profile,

permitting friends of the researcher to share as well. Anonymous links were disseminated to other friends directly when they asked about the survey and if they could share with their friends. Because of Covid-19 restrictions, interviews were not allowed to take place in person. Instead, Zoom meetings or audio calls were set up and taken from the researcher's home office. The times that the interviews took place depended on the participants' schedules. A list of dates and times was made to avoid any overlapping and confusion.

The first section of the survey included a question regarding their gender. Participants were asked to select female, male, or other. The second section gathered data on the types of violence they have experienced, and which concerns them the most today. The third section asked participants to select who they have reached out to for help in the past and rank the following resources from least assistance to most assistance. The last section presented situations related to the Hispanic culture, specifically to the cultural concepts of familism and marianismo. Participants were asked to rate from 1 to 5 using the Likert scale, where 1= strongly disagrees to 5= strongly agrees. An open-ended question follows by asking the participant what suggestions they would give others experiencing violence in their relationships. The last item of the survey was optional and asked participants if they were willing to participate in a phone interview to discuss their responses further. They were to provide an email address, phone number, or any other form of contact information if they volunteered to do so. Those participants who agreed to be interviewed contacted the researcher via UTRGV email address with a convenient date and time for the interview. A recording device was utilized as allowed by the participant to document every detail of the participant's responses. Data collected from the interviews were then be transcribed.

## **Qualitative**

The survey included an optional interview via phone or video conferencing that collected information regarding those experiences. After the participant finished the survey, they provided contact information that the research could email them about the interview. The manner in which these interviews took place was by utilizing Zoom for video conference, and with the participant's permission, the interview was recorded. Other participants opted for an audio call. An account was created for Google Voice and Rev Call, interviewing the participant to abide by Covid-19 regulations. Demographics collected for the interviews were gender, age, and ethnicity. The researcher reviewed and analyzed 51 pages of verbatim transcribed interviews and 38 pages of field notes.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis utilized for this mixed methods research is explanatory sequential design. Quantitative data collected was analyzed using SPSS Software. The researcher transferred all data from Qualtrics Software into SPSS. Descriptive statistics were utilized to demonstrate the frequencies in types of violence amongst gender and the most concerning violence to them. Multiple Regression Analysis was carried out to study the association between the difficulty of disclosing victimization and barriers when seeking help (dependent variable) and cultural influence (independent variable). A *P* value of less than 0.05 was considered as the minimum level of significance.

The researcher utilized a qualitative approach for the interviews collected to further elaborate on victims of intimate partner violence. Systematic Content Analysis was used to organize and code the interviews. Interview and field notes were collected and made into text. Codes were then created analytically and attached to sets of transcript pages. Codes were

transformed into themes. Materials were sorted by these categories, identified similar phrases and patterns. The sorted materials were carefully examined to isolate meaningful patterns and processes. Those patterns identified are considered a small set of generalizations (Berg, 2007).

### **Risks and Benefits**

The potential risks associated with this study include the possibility of tampering from an outside source when utilizing the internet for collecting information. The confidentiality of the responses will be protected once data is retrieved and downloaded from the internet. There is always the risk of hacking or other security breaches that can threaten the responses' confidentiality. Participants were informed that they were free to decide whether they wanted to answer any question.

### **Confidentiality and Data Monitoring Procedures**

The principal investigator informed the participant via an online survey that they were allowed to stop at any moment or skip any question in which they felt any distress without any negative consequences from the researcher. Information was downloaded from the internet and stored to ensure all confidentiality and associations with any individual. Data was kept on an electronic device that was password protected and locked and stored in a safeguarded area. Only the principal investigator had access. The information collected will only be used for educational purposes for future research.

### **Measures**

The independent variable (IV) used in this study was gender and Hispanic cultural concepts; Marianismo and Familismo. Scenarios for cultural beliefs were derived from the Marianismo Scale (Castillo et al., 2010) and Familismo Scale (Steidel & Contreras, 2003). These scales are used to measure attitudes towards these concepts. The author used partial scenarios

from these scales. Questions were created in a manner that all genders can identify with. Participants were given several cultural concepts and asked to circle from the following they related to the most. (1= Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=neither disagree or agree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree). The dependent variable (DV) measured were the reasons for not reporting and barriers when seeking help. The dependent variables were also in Likert scale form and grouped, and a mean score was calculated for each section. For Marianismo, statements included: "I should not talk back to my partner," "I must conform to my partner's needs," "Religion is very important to me." Statements for Familismo included: "I must keep my family united," "If any family members need any financial help or housing, I must offer help," "I have a strong commitment to care and provide for my parents when they no longer can care for themselves." Statements for barriers when seeking help listed the following: a language barrier, shame, lack of resources and information, lack of transportation, and fear. Reasons for not reporting entailed a few of the following: "I did not think anything would be done," "I did not think anyone would believe me," "I did not think it was serious enough to report." The control variables utilized in this study were types of violence, including physical, psychological, verbal, sexual assault, and others.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Quantitative

Table 1 provides the gender makeup of the current study. Participants in this study were asked to identify their gender, including (n=435) 84.6% female and (n=79) 15.4% male.

Frequencies were performed on types of violence (see table 2). Overall, participants reported verbal abuse as the most experienced abuse at (30.5%), followed by psychological (29.4%), physical (21.0%), sexual assault (17.2%), and other (1.9%). Other types of violence included financial abuse, stalking, and harassment.

Table 1: Gender

Gender		
	Frequency	Percent %
Male	79	15.4%
Female	435	84.6%
Total	514	100.00%



Table 2: Types of Violence

	N	%
<b>PHYSICAL</b>	282	21.0%
<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL</b>	395	29.4%
<b>VERBAL</b>	410	30.5%
<b>SEXUAL ASSAULT</b>	231	17.2%

Table 3 demonstrates a crosstabulation of the types of violence experienced within females and males. It showed that males (69.4%) experienced psychological abuse the most, followed by verbal (65.3%), physical (41.7%), and sexual assault (22.2%). The most common form of abuse experienced in females was verbal (84.2%), followed by psychological (80%), physical (58.5%), and sexual assault (49.9%). Moreover, nearly half of the respondents who identified as female have experienced sexual assault by an intimate partner throughout their lives.

Table 3: Crosstabulation for Types of Violence within Gender

		Types of Violence		
		Male	Female	Total
Physical	Count	30	252	282
	% within Gender	41.7%	58.5%	
Psychological	Count	50	345	395
	% within Gender	69.4%	80.0%	
Verbal	Count	47	363	410
	% within Gender	65.3%	84.2%	
Sexual Assault	Count	16	215	231
	% within Gender	22.2%	49.9%	
Other	Count	7	19	26
	% within Gender	9.7%	4.4%	
Total		72	431	503

The researcher ran a crosstabulation to see the differences between men and women in who they disclose their victimization (See table 4). Both men and women had a high percentage in disclosing to a friend, followed by a family member. 10.8% of males disclosed their victimization to both a co-worker and healthcare worker. 8.1% of males sought the help of law enforcement. In women, results showed that 21.1% sought help from law enforcement, followed by a healthcare worker at 14.4%. Assistance labeled as other included domestic violence shelters, advisors, professors, school counselors, church members, high school principal, OVAP at

UTRGV, psychologist, neighbors, and Veterans Affairs. There was a higher percentage in men of 39.2% who decided not to disclose their victimization than 26.4% in females.

Table 4: Crosstabulation for Seeking Help within Gender

		Seeking Help		
		Male	Female	Total
Friend	Count	36	253	289
	% within Gender	48.6%	58.6%	
Co-worker	Count	8	45	53
	% within Gender	10.8%	10.4%	
Family member	Count	18	191	209
	% within Gender	24.3%	44.2%	
Healthcare worker	Count	8	62	70
	% within Gender	10.8%%	14.4%	
Law enforcement	Count	6	91	97
	% within Gender	8.1%	21.1%	
Other	Count	7	47	54
	% within Gender	9.5%	10.9%	
No one	Count	29	114	143
	% within Gender	39.2%	26.4%	
Total		74	432	506

Lastly, the researcher ran a crosstabulation analysis to uncover the disparity between females and males in what violence concerns them the most today. Results in Table 5 showed

that the most concerning type of violence for both men and women is psychological abuse; female (34.1%) and male (40.3%), followed by physical abuse; female (25.5%) and male (19.5%), and sexual assault for females (19.6%) and males (11.7%).

Table 5: Concerning Violence within Gender

	Male		Female		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Physical	50	19.5%	105	24.5%	120
Psychological	31	40.3%	146	34.1%	177
Verbal	3	3.9%	26	6.1%	29
Sexual Assault	9	11.7%	84	19.6%	93
Unsure	13	16.9%	42	9.8%	55
Other	6	7.8%	25	5.8%	31
Total	77	100.0%	428	100.0%	505

This study was conducted to determine whether there were any associations between Marianismo and Familismo and a victim's decision not to disclose their abuse. Furthermore, barriers victims encountered were also investigated when seeking help. The following models detailed the relationship between cultural influence, gender, types of violence, and its effect. The researcher utilized two independent variables, which were gender and cultural beliefs, separated into two categories: marianismo and familismo. The dependent variables used for this analysis were the reason for not reporting and barriers to seeking help.

Table 6, Model 1: Dependent Variable – Reason for not reporting – with Two Independent Variables

<b>MODEL 1</b>		
VARIABLE	B (SE)	Exp (b)
Hispanic Cultural Concepts		
Familismo	.062 (.226)	.281
Marianismo	.012 (.196)	.049
Gender		
Female v. Male	.159 (.114) ***	.400
* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001		

Results showed that 2.4% of the variance in reasons for not reporting their abuse could be accounted for by the two predictors, together,  $F(3, 475)=4.865$ ,  $p<.002$ . Multiple linear regression analysis indicated a positive relationship between the dependent variable and gender ( $b= .400$ ). When looking at the predictors individually, gender ( $\beta=.159$ ),  $t=3.512$ ,  $p=.000$ ) demonstrates a significant predictor of a victim not reporting their abuse. Furthermore, it indicated that women are more likely than men to have a reason for not reporting. In model 1, the results determine that marianismo positively influences the dependent variable ( $b= .049$ ). However, it also does not have a statistical significance ( $p= .804$ ). Familismo has a positive effect on the dependent variable ( $b= .281$ ). Nonetheless, it also indicated that it does not have a statistical significance ( $p= .214$ ).

Control variables such as types of violence: physical, psychological, sexual assault, verbal and other were added to compare the effect to the dependent variable. Results show that the two predictors can account for 10.8% of the variance in the reason for not reporting their

abuse, jointly,  $F = (8,470) = 8.218$ ,  $p < .001$ . Model 2 shows that when looking at the predictors individually, such as psychological abuse ( $\beta = .151$ ,  $t = 3.410$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and sexual assault ( $\beta = .238$ ,  $t = 5.249$ ,  $p = .000$ ), they show a very significant relation to a victim not reporting their abuse.

Table 7, Model 2: Dependent Variable – Reason for not reporting – with Two Independent Variables and One Control Variable

<b>MODEL 2</b>		
VARIABLE	B (SE)	Exp (b)
Hispanic Cultural Concepts		
Familismo	.371 (.219)	.082
Marianismo	.182 (.189)	.047
Gender		
Female v. Male	.177 (.115)	.070
Types of Violence		
Physical	.068 (.043)	.074
Psychological	.165 (.048) **	.151
Verbal	.031 (.054)	.027
Sexual Assault	.217 (.041) ***	.238
* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$		

As shown in Model 3, results show that 2.1% of the variance in the barriers victims face when seeking help can be accounted for by the two predictors, mutually,  $F = (3,478) = 4.405$ ,  $p < .01$ . Model 3 demonstrates that when looking at the contributors individually, there is a positive effect on the dependent variable. Gender ( $\beta = .096$ ,  $t = 2.121$ ,  $p = .034$ ) and Marianismo ( $\beta = .147$ ,  $t = 2.936$ ,  $p = .003$ ) positively predict those barriers victims face. Furthermore, this model

indicates that women are more likely than men to encounter barriers when seeking help. Model 3 suggests that familismo has a negative effect on the dependent variable ( $b = -.098$ ). Nonetheless, it indicated that it does not have a statistical significance ( $p = .655$ ).

Table 8, Model 3: Dependent Variable – Barriers when seeking help – with Two Independent Variables

<b>MODEL 3</b>		
VARIABLE	B (SE)	Exp (b)
Hispanic Cultural Concepts		
Familismo	-.098 (.220)	-.022
Marianismo	.560 (.191) *	.147
Gender		
Female v. Male	.234 (.110) *	.096
* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$		

Results for Model 4 show that 9.6% of the variance in the barriers victims face when seeking help can be accounted for by the eight predictors, mutually,  $F(8, 473) = 7.386$ ,  $p < .001$ . Control variables such as types of violence: physical, psychological, sexual assault, verbal and other were added to compare the effect to the dependent variable. Model 4 confirms that when looking at the contributors individually, there is a positive effect on the dependent variable. Marianismo ( $\beta = .173$ ,  $t = 3.588$ ,  $p = .000$ ), psychological ( $\beta = .098$ ,  $t = 2.201$ ,  $p = .028$ ), verbal ( $\beta = .101$ ,  $t = 2.126$ ,  $p = .034$ ), and sexual assault ( $\beta = .225$ ,  $t = 4.950$ ,  $p = .000$ ) positively predict those barriers victims face. Sexual assault indicates a very significant relation to a victim facing barriers when seeking help. Marianismo is statistically significant, implicating its direct effect as a barrier when seeking help.

Table 9, Model 4: Dependent Variable – Barriers when seeking help – with Two Independent Variables and One Control Variable

<b>MODEL 4</b>		
VARIABLE	B (SE)	Exp (b)
Hispanic Cultural Concepts		
Familismo	.005 (.214)	.001
Marianismo	.661 (.184) ***	.173
Gender		
Female v. Male	.024 (.112)	.010
Types of Violence		
Physical	.053 (.042)	.059
Psychological	.103 (.047) *	.098
Verbal	.112 (.053) *	.101
Sexual Assault	.200 (.040) ***	.225
* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001		

Overall quantitative results indicate that the most experienced form of abuse was verbal. Women reported high levels of verbal abuse, and men reported to have experienced psychological abuse the most. Results demonstrated that both men and women disclosed their abuse to a friend. It was discovered that women are more likely than men to have a reason for not reporting their abuse and encounter barriers when seeking help. However, sexual assault, psychological and verbal abuse were strong predictors of the barriers victims face when seeking help.



Sexual assault and verbal abuse contributed to why a victim decided not to disclose their abuse. Marianismo has a substantial effect on the barriers a victim faces. Familismo was not a significant predictor in neither of the dependent variables utilized in the quantitative data. Although variances accounted for were relatively small, the independent variable Marianismo was statistically significant. The researcher can still conclude that there is a reasonable association between Marianismo and the barriers encountered by a victim.

### **Qualitative**

The stories behind a victim's experience are imperative in approaching such an issue of intimate partner violence. Hearing these stories helps survivors better understand what barriers they face when trying to leave a violent relationship. Cultural beliefs can be manipulated in a relationship; therefore, it is essential to identify when to recognize the signs of IPV—thinking that it is normal for such actions to occur. IPV occurs in all genders. Consequently, the experiences from other genders besides females can encourage everyone to tell their stories. All participants had one thing in common: violence.

Thirteen participants were interviewed. Ten identified as female, one as non-binary, and two as male. Many participants (n=10) identified as Hispanic, with (n=2) identifying as Latina and (n=1) as Mexican American. The age range of the participants was between 19-50, with an average age of the participant 31. On average, interviews lasted about 17 minutes. The shortest interview was about 8 minutes, and the longest was about 41 minutes. Communication with participants was via email, Zoom video conferencing, and audio call. Requirements to participate in the interview were that the participant be 18 years and older and have a history of intimate partner violence. The demographics collected from the qualitative were age, gender, and ethnicity. No demographics were collected from our quantitative sample overall. Therefore, there

is no comparison. Ethnicity was the only demographic that fit our entire study sample. No one was excluded in this part of the qualitative study.

Table 10: Demographics

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>
Participant 1	Female	28	Hispanic
Participant 2	Female	29	Hispanic
Participant 3	Female	42	Hispanic
Participant 4	Male	22	Latino
Participant 5	Female	25	Hispanic
Participant 6	Female	43	Hispanic/Mexican descent
Participant 7	Female	26	Hispanic/Mexican descent
Participant 8	Female	50	Hispanic
Participant 9	Female	36	Mexican/American
Participant 10	Female	20	Hispanic/Latina
Participant 11	Female	24	Latina
Participant 12	Non-binary	19	Hispanic
Participant 13	Male	44	Hispanic

The researcher utilized systematic content analysis to analyze the interviews. Systematic content analysis allows the researcher to compress many words of text into fewer categories based on coding. These categories assisted the researcher in detecting words and concepts in the data to make conclusions and discover patterns (Salehijam, 2018). The researcher collected data that included interviews and field notes. During the interviews, field notes were taken to record any words that stood out the most and if any participant exhibited any emotions. Each audio-recorded interview was listened to utilizing audio dictation in Microsoft Word. The researcher listened to each of the interviews carefully at least three times to edit any incorrectly picked up words by the audio dictation tool. After the interviews were fully transcribed, they were then uploaded to NVivo Software.

### **Intimate Partner Violence**

Seven types of abuse were discovered amongst the participants: financial, psychological, controlling, emotional, sexual, physical, and verbal abuse. Table 1 shows the types of abuse and frequency amongst the participants. The types of IPV that were experienced the most were physical (n=8) and verbal (n=8), followed by sexual abuse (n=6) and emotional (n=6). (n=4) of the participants shared they experienced emotional abuse, followed by psychological (n=3) and financial abuse (n=2). From these, a subcategory was created upon discovering a new theme in which (n=11) had some form of history of abuse. (n=2) had a history of childhood sexual abuse, (n=3) had a previous history of abuse when they were in high school, and (n=6) experienced abuse through their parents. The abuse was either towards the participant or amongst their parents.

The most common type of abuse experienced amongst the participants was physical and verbal. Acts of physical abuse ranged from being stepped on the hand, being pushed while

pregnant, strangled, punched in the nose, ribs, squeezed neck, being bruised where it could not be seen, and repeatedly being hit. Two of the participants shared their experiences in which they suffered violence because they refused to be intimate with their partners. Participant #3 described a situation in which her partner went to the kitchen to grab a knife because she refused to be intimate.

"So I told him, no, and he went to the kitchen and grabbed a knife, and he stabbed me because he kept trying to get my legs open, and since I kept kicking him with my legs, he kept trying to stab at me, and then finally he stabbed my leg, and the knife got stuck in between the bone and the skin because it was a serrated knife and he couldn't take it out, it broke like the handle broke so the knife was stuck inside of me and he couldn't pull it out."

Participant #7 shared that at the time of the abuse, she was in a polyamorous relationship. She expressed her feelings to her partner about spending more time with her instead of seeing the other person when things quickly escalated. She was shocked at her partner's reaction when she told her how she felt because she was not expecting him to snap so easily.

"He got very aggressive he pushed me up against our I forget what it's called like it's where the AC unit is the door, and he pushed me up against that, and he put his hand on my neck and was like squeezing pretty tightly around my neck it, but like he was going to like really like his intent was to really harm me, and it was it was scary."

The second most common form of abuse experienced between the participants was verbal. Participants described a lot of arguments, name-calling, yelling, and being put down. Participant #10 described being in the car with her partner during an argument, and she feared

being with him at that time. Participant #13 recounted a situation where his wife had gotten in front of the door blocking his exit during an argument. Four of the participants experienced name-calling that included words such as "pinche puta cucaracha," "pinche ruca," "vete a la verga pendeja" all these horrible words.

Table 11: Violence

Code	Frequency
Abuse	
Physical	8
Verbal	8
Sexual	6
Emotional	6
Control	4
Psychological	3
Financial	2

Six of the participants shared they had some form of sexual assault in their intimate relationship and a history of sexual assault. Moreover, some of those participants had a history of being sexually abused as a child. Participant #1 shared that as a child, she had been touched inappropriately by a cousin. She shared with the researcher that she mentally blocked those incidents. Participant #10 disclosed that she was touched inappropriately without her consent by her then-boyfriend when she was in high school. Participant #3 had been sexually abused since she was two years old by her stepfather. She shared that with her first husband, he would enjoy raping her at gunpoint. She further explained that her then-partner would do this daily and would "get a kick out of terrorizing me." Participant #5 detailed a sexual attack by her then-partner,

who planned the entire ordeal. She was sexually assaulted by several people. Participant #7 was in a (BDSM) Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, and Sadochism and Masochism. She mentioned that this was consensual even though, at the time, it would get too rough for her because her partner would leave bite marks all over her body.

"It got to the point where he would bite me hard, and he would bruise me. I have pictures where my legs and like my inner thighs were like purple from the extreme bruising that he would cause to me. It got to the point where people would like try to hug me, and I'd be like no like, please don't because my body was in like so disarrayed like with bruising".

Other nights he would wake her up and have sex with her without her consent. She would ask him to stop, but he wouldn't since he would become very physical and hold her down.

Four participants experienced behaviors of control from their intimate partners. Such behaviors included demanding to dress a certain way, being allowed to listen to certain music, and when to socialize with friends and family. Another participant described her partner as being jealous and would tell her not to talk to men. Participant #3 described her partner as aggressive and protective.

It was also noted that (n=3) their partners were influenced by either alcohol or illicit drugs during the abuse. Participants described their partners, either being drunk or high on marijuana at the time of an argument or physical act of violence. Only one participant stated that in one incident, she had decided to go to her neighbors since they were having a barbecue, so she drank. Her partner decided to drink as well. Participant #3 disclosed that in one situation in which she and her partner got into an argument:

"I'm not gonna lie I got super drunk that day I was drunk" "as you get home on Thursday, it's drink drink drink Thursday, Friday, Saturday Sunday, and then you go to work on Monday, so basically you work three days, and you drink four days."

Participant #6 shared her story in which her then partner was drunk wanted to be intimate.

"I guess he wanted to have, you know, be intimate, and I didn't want to because he was drunk and he just kind of like took a swing at me, and I just felt like the air go by you know like when you I guess the punch just he didn't hit me, but I just felt like the air the first time yeah it was very cool."

Participants #8 shared that her husband was a frequent marijuana user. When he was either drunk or high, he would become violent:

"My first husband was dependent on marijuana, so that was his first love. He would come home drunk and stoned, or you know one or the other, and he would be violent."

Table 12: Impact Barriers on Hispanics' Disclosure of IPV

Code	Frequency
Disclosure of Abuse	
Friend	5
Relative	6
Law enforcement	1
Not report	1
Barriers	
Sociocultural	4
Shame	3
Fear	4
Family Influence	
Negative	4
Positive	3
None	6

### Disclosure

This theme encapsulates participants' disclosure of abuse. The second theme from the interviews was who the participants reached out to talk about their victimization. Out of the 13 participants, six reached out to a family member, including their mother, sister, brother, cousin, or aunt. One respondent did not have someone to talk to. Five reached out to their friends about their abuse. Although the participants who disclosed their victimization to either a family



member or friend described them as not helpful. Either they were not believed, nothing was done about the situation, or they were going through the same thing.

While four of the participants sought professional assistance such as therapy and domestic violence shelter that included Mujeres Unidas, participant #6 described reaching out to a domestic violence shelter because she did not have a place to go to.

"I did reach out to Mujeres Unidas, but my thing was you know I didn't have anywhere to go because I didn't you don't have at the time when I reach out to Mujeres Unidas my children were still in elementary, so I didn't have a home to go to"

Participant #3 did seek out assistance from law enforcement in many situations, and nothing was done. She added that when she called the police on her husband, they victimized her. They looked at her like she was the bad guy for calling the police on her husband. In another situation, she could find resources for help at a domestic violence shelter but was cut short because her husband at that time found her. It is known that domestic violence shelters do keep a victim's information private.

"The only support system that I've ever had was when I got into a shelter, and it's not really a support system because it's very temporary support, but it's where I learned that there were resources to help people and that abuse isn't normal. "I had gone to a domestic violence shelter, and he found me. He found me in the shelter because they only keep you for six weeks, so they transition me".

### **Barriers**

Several barriers appeared amongst the participants, including fear, shame, sociocultural factors, and lack of information. Participants explained how fear kept them from seeking help. A

participant noted that she was fearful that her then-partner would take away her daughter because that was just the type of person he was. She also mentioned having a fear of not knowing what could happen. Furthermore, she added that she had to be very careful, almost like walking on eggshells, to achieve her goal. She would tell her partner that she was going to a certain place when in reality, she was meeting with a divorce lawyer. When planning her exit strategy, she would be very secretive. She further added the following:

"When I was trying to seek help, I was always like in fear of the unknown that like oh maybe he's going to find out or like I had to do I had to be had to be very secretive and had to hide a lot of things."

Shame was brought up by three participants in which prevented them from speaking up. Participant #9 shared that she felt it was too degrading for her. That was one of the reasons she never sought any type of help or even therapy. At the beginning of the interview, she was very emotional and hesitant to disclose her abuse. She wanted to make sure her identity would be kept safe because her partner was in jail for unknown reasons and would be released soon at the time of the interview. She admitted that it was the first time talking about her abuse with the researcher. She added that as much as there is Machismo, women tend to be prideful as well. She asked herself, how can this happen to a prideful person? Participant #4 showed embarrassment if he had spoken up about his abuse. His experience with intimate partner violence was mainly psychological abuse in which his then partner would portray being the victim and blame him for everything. When he felt that need to talk to someone about it, it was difficult to disclose because of the type of society we live in.

"If I had gone like to the public eye people would say oh, you're weak, you're man you need to stand up for it; like this kind of society tells you that a man shouldn't be able to express his feelings because you will be seen as a weak"

Participant #6 described feeling embarrassed because she did not have anywhere to go to. She didn't want to have to pull her children out from elementary school and into somebody else's home. Although she did state that she reached out to Mujeres Unidas, but it was something she did not want to do out of embarrassment.

Besides having feelings of shame, participant #9 said she was also influenced to stay in her abusive relationship because she was taught to keep her family together. Regardless of her endured abuse, she didn't want to speak and be blamed for breaking her family apart. She added that anything goes wrong, just for not putting up with a couple of hits.

"We're Mexican, and we're always taught that the family has to stay united, you know and you trying into your best for your kids, and you try, and you do your best for your husband, and you tried your best for everyone in your family your mom your 'suegra' or your sister-in-laws your brothers or everyone everyone that it's hard, that you're going to break up a family. Anything goes wrong por no aguantar unos chingasos. It's like OK"

Participant #2 shared that she was not aware of her resources, such as Mujeres Unidas shelter. Another participant was not aware that verbal abuse and mental abuse were a thing. She stated that she never saw the red flags leading up to him being physically and mentally abusive.

### **Family Influence**

The fourth theme that emerged from these interviews was the family influence. A total of six of the participants had no impact from their families, four said their families were negatively

influenced, and three had a positive influence. They did state that their family did know of their violent relationships. Participants' answers ranged from parents asking them why the victim did not fight back. One participant's mother would tell her husband to hit her. Parents would pray for her, parents were aware of her partner's jealousy, and lastly that their family would accept it because it was the victim's choice. Those whose answers were that their family was negatively influential in their relationships narrated that they were taught to take care of their marriage and keep it private.

Participant #3 shared that her mother would encourage her partner to hit her. She would justify her actions by telling her daughter's partner to obey him by beating her. She also influenced her mother-in-law, who defended her son by blaming her daughter-in-law. She would question the victim what she did wrong, putting her down by telling her that she was not a good woman, she doesn't do things like how she's been told to do so, and finally, if she learned how to keep her mouth shut, they wouldn't be beat up.

“My mom would tell my husband “pegale, pegale para que te haga caso, es lo que le gusta”. His mom, all of my suegras have that in mind “pues que le hiciste? Es que tu no eres buena mujer. No haces las cosas como se te dicen”. And then my favorite line from my suegras would be “si aprendieras a callarte el pinche osico que tienes, no te lo rompieran”.

Participant #8 said that because of her background, she was used to it. Her mother was abusive and often made it difficult for her because she knew she was being abused but would say, "*Que va decir la gente?*". Her mother was too worried about what people were going to say. She shared the following:

"They made it very hard because to my I mean, my parents' generation we were all about you know what are the people gonna say what are the people going to you know what what is there well to me it didn't it didn't matter obviously, but to them, they were *que va decir la gente*?"

Participant #9 also experienced a negative influence from her mother-in-law. While her partner was in prison, her mother-in-law would constantly stalk her, control her, and demand her to call her when she would wake up and go to sleep. In other situations, her mother-in-law would blame her and tell her that it was her fault for getting physically assaulted by her partner.

"She knew, she knew her son beat me, and she knew everything, and her response was always "what did you do?" and she would flip it and blame me because when he's mad at you, try to please him and then when he's happy with you get mad at him, so it's like it was my fault everything was my fault."

Although she never witnessed violence between her parents, she stated that her mother-in-law had been abused. Her in-laws would still argue in front of their grandchildren. The victim's side of her family accepted the relationship she was in because it was her choice. They were not aware of the full extent of her enduring abuse because she could conceal it very well. She added, "you'd be amazed at how much makeup really works."

At the end of the interview, participants were asked if they had any advice for someone who is in a similar situation that they were in. They said the following: speak up, find someone who has the power to do something rather than talking to a friend, once you see the red flags leave, it is not worth it, women should not give up on themselves, plan an exit strategy and have someone to talk to instead of repressing those feelings.

"you're not alone. You know there's probably a lot of people out there at the same, and I mean I think it's pretty common it doesn't matter from what background you come from when social economic you come from you know it's it's pretty common, so I guess just you know talk to someone I know it's kind of embarrassing, but you just need to talk to someone and and you know that they can help you out I'm I'm pretty sure they're not going to keep quiet you know specially if there are children involved".

Generally, qualitative results suggest that social norms significantly influence a victim's decision to disclose their victimization. These included normalizing being in a toxic relationship, familial influence, and the types of abuse experienced. Although drugs and alcohol were not factors explored, they did emerge in several participants' stories. Furthermore, two-thirds of the participants admitted to having a history of violence either as a child or in a previous relationship. Participants described various barriers faced when seeking help, such as fear and shame. Many of the participants disclosed their victimization to friends and family. The most common types of abuse experienced by the participants were physical and verbal.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **Discussion**

The current study utilizes mixed methodology to explore the dynamics of intimate partner violence among Hispanics in the Rio Grande Valley and cultural concepts. Because IPV is a major public health concern. To fill this gap, the current study sought to elaborate on victims' experiences and investigate the relation of Marianismo and Familismo on victims' decisions for not disclosing their victimization and the barriers encountered when seeking help. Other aspects of intimate partner violence were explored to investigate the disparity in violence within gender. Part of our measurements originated from the Marianismo and Familismo scales to measure these attitudes.

#### **Marianismo**

The concept of Marianismo was present throughout our current study. For example, despite the violence, Kulkarni (2007) examined young adolescent mothers' lives, parenting experiences, and commitment to residing with their abusive partners. Participants described needing self-silence, being responsible for keeping their family united despite the abuse, and not disclosing the abuse out of embarrassment. It was further discovered that Marianismo influenced their decision to remain in the relationship. In Marss Fuchsel et al. (2012), only one participant

understood what Marianismo meant, and it was discovered that the concept of Marianismo may influence their experiences in domestic violence. Gender role beliefs within Hispanics and Latinos are supported by empirical literature. Several cultural beliefs, such as Machismo and Marianismo, may dictate how men and women behave in a relationship (Marrs Fuchsel et al., 2012). The idea that a woman and a man should follow a specific role within their relationship is common among Hispanics. Existing research on intimate partner violence suggests that Marianismo dictates Latinas' roles within their families and romantic relationships (Castillo et al., 2010) and is hypothesized to contribute to Latinas' experiences and responses to IPV. In the present study, Familismo and Marianismo were explored to see any relationships with a victim's decision not to disclose their victimization. The concepts did not play a significant role in these actions.

### **Types of Violence**

When comparing quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher discovered that verbal abuse was the most common form of violence. Although females were a larger sample size in qualitative data than males, verbal abuse was still a high element in their abusive relationships. Additionally, quantitative results indicated men experienced psychological abuse the most versus women who suffered from verbal abuse. Multiple regression models indicated that several types of violence were indicators in victims' decision to disclose their victimization and the barriers they encounter when seeking help. It was discovered that psychological abuse and sexual assault had a significant relationship with victims' decisions not to disclose their victimization.

### **History of Violence**

Previous research suggests that women who experience child sexual abuse are at a higher risk of experiencing domestic violence as an adult in a romantic relationship. According to Marrs



Fuchsel (2013), child sexual abuse is a risk factor for future domestic violence-related incidences. In their study, 78% of the participants had experienced some form of child sexual abuse. In the current study, two of the participants were victims of child sexual assault. Both reported being abused by a family member and having difficulty disclosing their abuse. Participants in the present study also mentioned coming from broken families that included violence within their parents. Jewekes (2002) noted that childhood experiences of violence in the home reinforce the normative nature of violence for both men and women, thus increasing the likelihood of male perpetration and women's acceptance of abuse.

### **Disclosure of Victimization**

Fear of violence was present throughout the current study and is consistent with (Ahrens, Del Carmen Lopez, Isas, & Rios-Mandel, 2010). The primary goal of their study was to assess the range of cultural influences that affect Latina's ability to identify and disclose instances of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Participants in the study explained how the fear of violence silences survivors. Some of the participants in their study described how the fear of violence kept them from disclosing the abuse they were experiencing. In the current study, participants described having a fear of the unknown such as not knowing what would happen if their partner was to find out they were seeking help. There was a total of 4 participants who feared for their lives and feared that their children would be taken from them. Consistent with previous research, children play an integral factor in their mother's management of their abusive relationships. In a study by (Zink, Elder, & Jacobson, 2003), mothers' feared involving child protective services if they revealed that the IPV was justified.

Qualitative data in the current study revealed an impact of sociocultural factors, fear, and shame when disclosing their victimization. The responsibility to keep the family united and self-

silencing regardless of the abuse is a dimension of Marianismo. This is a characteristic of the family pillar, which emphasizes the responsibility to keep their families together. Consistent with previous research, Latina survivors have reported that family members told them that if their marriage ended, it would put their children's welfare at risk (ALAS, 2004; Erez et al., 2009). Latinas are discouraged from sharing private family matters outside of the home to preserve the family's reputation. Therefore, encouraging victims to disclose to informal services rather than law enforcement. In the current study, there were reservations from the victims' mothers about what society would say and fearing for their children's safety.

Gender was demonstrated to be a significant predictor in our quantitative data. It suggests that women are more likely than men to have a reason for not reporting their abuse. Furthermore, women made up the majority of our sample size and experienced a great deal of violence compared to men. According to (Chan, 2011), there are mixed findings in differences in reporting styles. Past studies have pointed to some gender-specific reporting patterns of IPV; men tend to under-report their own IPV perpetration while women are more likely to under-report their IPV victimization. Although gender-specific, culture-specific, and methodological factors associated with the differences in reporting styles have been examined, prior findings point to men under-reporting.

### **Seeking Help**

Prior research demonstrated that half of the Hispanic women in their sample sought help from law enforcement, counselor, or lawyer. Although in the present study, most of the participants sought assistance from informal services the most, such as family members or friends, and only one participant sought the help of law enforcement multiple times with a negative outcome. In (Cerulli, et al., 2011), more than two-thirds of the sample sought either

formal or informal help, and women were more likely to seek help when experiencing more severe levels of physical abuse.

In (Barrios, Khaw, Bermea, & Hardesty, 2020), participants in their study sought informal help from friends and family during their leaving process, despite if their assistance was helpful or not. Informal support provided participants with advice, encouragement, and tangible help such as temporary housing. In the present study, one participant stated not having family where she was living, therefore not having a place to stay.

### **Barriers**

Shame prevented a victim from seeking help. In the current study, participants had difficulty disclosing their abuse because it was too embarrassing. In Marrs Fuschel (2013), participants wanted to reach out for help and report their domestic violence incidences to their families but were too embarrassed and ashamed. The researcher found that societal norms were barriers that prevented a victim from coming forward. Participants described living in a society in which a toxic relationship has been normalized. Growing up with the belief that women should be submissive, silent, and obedient was the norm. For men, it was concluded that they had to demonstrate being strong, consistent with the concept of Machismo. According to (Barrios, Khaw, Bermea, & Hardesty, 2020), gendered ideologies in Latino cultures, such as machismo, can create additional barriers to help-seeking.

Nonetheless, it was revealed that psychological abuse and sexual assault were highly associated with a victims' reasons for not reporting abuse. Consequently, making it difficult for a victim to report their victimization. Sexual abuse may also present several additional barriers to help-seeking, involving shame that prevents women from disclosing abuse, embarrassment over the details of the abuse, or fear of blame from others. The findings are consistent with those of

Cerulli et al. (2011), in which sexual abuse predicted lower rates of help-seeking than those who experienced physical abuse.

Moreover, gender and Marianismo were statically significant in the barriers victims face when seeking help. Notably, women are more likely than men to encounter barriers when seeking help. Therefore, the researcher can still determine that Marianismo substantially relates to the barriers faced when seeking assistance in the current study. Since gender and Marianismo accounted for a small portion of the variance, findings cannot be generalized. The barriers included in the questionnaire were the following: shame, fear, language barrier, lack of transportation, and lack of information. Furthermore, psychological abuse, verbal abuse, and sexual assault were statistically significant, suggesting that a relationship exists in the barriers victims encounter.

Thus, based on this study's findings, the researcher can conclude that Marianismo has a significant correlation in a person's decision not to disclose their victimization. Furthermore, gender plays a significant role in the barriers people face when seeking help and the decisions behind not disclosing their abuse. It is determined that the types of violence such as psychological, verbal, and sexual assault are contributing factors.

### **Limitations**

It is important to note that the present study should be interpreted with the following limitations in mind. First, most of the findings are based on a sample of UTRGV students, which may not represent the Hispanic communities in the Rio Grande Valley. Second, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, further interviewing victims residing in domestic violence shelters was not feasible. The researcher could not interact with victims living at domestic violence shelters, affecting part of the study population. Third, the study is based on self-reported measures, which

are subject to social desirability. Participants may have withheld more sensitive information out of shame or fear. As reported, some participants in the qualitative data felt uneasy about releasing certain information and were hesitant in how the interview would take place.

### **Implications**

The present study has important implications for social science research and the criminal justice system. First, findings from this study fully support the Hispanic community in the Rio Grande Valley by raising awareness. There are no published studies centered on IPV in the Rio Grande Valley to the researcher's knowledge. This brings a better understanding of the relation of Familismo and Marianismo on victims' experiences with IPV.

Second, victims of intimate partner violence can be provided with better services, such as legal assistance for their advocacy. The educational system can positively impact the youth about the dynamics of violence and help identify behaviors that can lead to IPV. The criminal justice system's approach to intimate partner violence can be beneficial by better understanding the victims. Law enforcement is usually the first line of defense to victims. Victims often are reluctant to report their abuse based on fear, shame, victimization. Findings from this study can give insight to law enforcement when approaching an intimate partner violence call. Research in IPV can aid prevention programs that teach healthy relationship skills and change attitudes about dating violence within the Hispanic community. The detailed experiences from the victims offer an intimate insight into why victims remain in abusive relationships.

### **Future Research**

Future work is still needed to evaluate the dynamics of intimate partner violence. Although much of the literature provided information on domestic violence, IPV must get the attention it deserves. Overall, the sample in the current study was a representation of college

students. Colleges and universities are mandated to collect and annually report on campus crime statistics and information relating to campus security as part of the 1990 Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act ("Clery Act"). Nevertheless, when it comes to collecting intimate partner violence data, they are not limited to Clery Reporting when collecting partner violence data. It is important to have a survey dedicated to intimate partner violence amongst the students. UTRGV currently offers the Campus Climate Survey. This survey only gathers data on on-campus community experiences. Data collected for the Annual Security and Fire Safety Report shows Clery reportable crimes. The criminal offenses related to violence against women are domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. There were twelve dating violence reports, one domestic violence report, and twenty stalking reports on the Edinburg Campus on campus from 2018-2020.

The current study can improve by utilizing the Familismo and Marianismo scales and further investigating links between sexual abuse and the effects of IPV. Marianismo needs to be further investigated to determine further associations with victims' experiences in intimate partner violence. Campuses across the Rio Grande Valley can benefit from promoting better tools to investigate dating violence and sexual assault incidents on campus.

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## APPENDIX A

## APPENDIX A

### SURVEY

1. What is your gender?  
Female  
Male  
Other (please specify)
2. Which type(s) of violence have you experienced? Please select all that apply.  
Physical  
Psychological  
Verbal  
Sexual Assault  
Other (please specify)
3. Which of these types of violence concerns you the most today?  
Physical  
Psychological  
Verbal  
Sexual Assault  
Unsure  
Other (please specify)
4. Who have you reached out to for help in the past? Please select all that apply.  
Friend  
Co-worker  
Family member  
Healthcare worker  
Law enforcement  
Other (please specify)  
No one (please specify the reason behind this)
5. Please rank the following resources that have provided you with assistance: 1=least assistance and 5=most assistance.  
Friend  
Co-worker  
Family member

Healthcare worker  
Law enforcement  
Other (please specify)

6. Please click if any of the following pertain to your situation now or in the past, where: 1= Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree or disagree, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I did not know where to go or who to tell.	1	2	3	4	5
I felt embarrassed, ashamed, or that it would be too emotionally difficult.	1	2	3	4	5
I did not think anyone would believe me.	1	2	3	4	5
I did not think it was serious enough to report.	1	2	3	4	5
I did not want the person to get in trouble.	1	2	3	4	5
I feared it would not be confidential.	1	2	3	4	5
I did not think anything would be done.	1	2	3	4	5

7. How much influence does your family have on your relationship?

A great deal  
A lot  
A moderate amount  
A little  
None at all

8. Please click from the following cultural concepts in which you can relate to, where: 1= Strongly agree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree or disagree, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I must keep my family united.	1	2	3	4	5
I must conform to my partner's needs.	1	2	3	4	5

Remain a virgin before marriage.	1	2	3	4	5
Religion is very important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
I should not talk back to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5

9. Please indicate from the following cultural concepts you can relate to, where: 1= Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree or disagree, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
If any family members need financial help or housing, I must offer help.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a strong commitment to care and provide for my parents when they no longer can care for themselves.	1	2	3	4	5
Don't discuss personal issues outside of the household.	1	2	3	4	5
Household work and children are my responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5
My parents told me about my role as a spouse and what is expected of me.	1	2	3	4	5

10. Please click to what degree the following have affected you in seeking help: 1= No affect, 2=Minor affect, 3=Neutral, 4=Moderate affect, 5= Major affect.

	No affect	Minor affect	Neutral	Moderate affect	Major affect
Language barrier.	1	2	3	4	5
Shame	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of resources and information.	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of transportation.	1	2	3	4	5
Fear	1	2	3	4	5

11. What suggestions would you give to others experiencing violence in their relationships?

12. May I call you for a phone interview to further discuss your responses in more detail? (Please note that you don't have to participate in the phone interview, but it is greatly encouraged).

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Other contact \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX B

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Hello, my name is Tania Diaz. I am a graduate student in the Criminal Justice Department from The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV).

I am researching how the dynamics of an abusive relationship in the Hispanic community can be influenced by Hispanic cultural concepts such as Familism and Marianismo. This study will also seek to understand the participants' decisions whether or not to report their victimization or disclose their experiences to others.

If there are any questions that you are uncomfortable with answering, feel free to let me know and we can skip them. Also, please be aware that you are entitled to withdraw from the interview at any moment and terminate your participation without question or comment.

To better assist this research, I would like to ask for your consent to audio record your responses during this interview. Your confidentiality will be protected with the use of a pseudonym that you can choose, or I can assign. The recorded material will only be used for research purposes and for the presentation of this research. All data collected, including the recorded material, will be securely stored in a place where only I have access to.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protection (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not adequately met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) 665-3598 or [irb@utrgv.edu](mailto:irb@utrgv.edu).

1. Do you have a preferred name/pseudonym you prefer to use to protect your privacy?
2. How do you identify your ethnicity?
3. Age?
4. In thinking of the last time, you remember experiencing violence, could you tell me a little more about the situation?
5. Can you talk a little more about the violence you have experienced overall in your life?

6. Can you think of a situation that escalated to violence? (for example, verbal to physical)
7. Thinking back upon this experience and others, did you have anyone you felt like you could talk about it?
8. If you could give advice to another person in a similar situation that you were in at the time, what would it be?
9. How was your family influential in your relationship?
10. What do you think prevents people from seeking help?
11. I know this is difficult to talk about, but is there anything you feel is important to point out that we have not discussed?

## APPENDIX C

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### EMAIL RECRUITMENT

My name is Tania Diaz and I am a graduate student in the Criminal Justice Department. I am conducting research on intimate partner violence among men and women. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the dynamics of an abusive relationship can be influenced by Hispanic cultural concepts such as familismo, marianismo and machismo. If you have prior history of abuse or currently experiencing some type of abuse by your partner, please consider taking the survey. You can disregard this email if it does not pertain to you, but feel free to share. Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, you can contact me at: [tania.diaz01@utrgv.edu](mailto:tania.diaz01@utrgv.edu)

**Follow this link to the Survey:**

[\\${1://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${1://SurveyURL}](#)

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${1://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

## APPENDIX D

## APPENDIX D

### CONSENT FORM

#### Intimate Partner Violence in South Texas: A Survey of Border Towns

This research is being conducted by Tania Diaz, a graduate student at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the dynamics of an abusive relationship in the Hispanic community can be influenced by Hispanic cultural concepts such as Familism and Marianismo. This study will also seek to understand the participants' decisions whether or not to report their victimization or disclose their experiences to others. Data used in this research are online surveys that are collected from individuals who have experienced any form of intimate partner violence.

We will be asking those interested to participate in a one-on-one interview that will allow us to collect information regarding those experiences. These interviews are projected to last approximately 30 minutes and will be conducted via phone or video conferencing. The manner in which the interviews will occur can be decided by the interviewee.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. If there are any questions which you are uncomfortable with answering, feel free to skip that question and leave the answer blank. Also, please be aware that you are entitled to withdraw from the study and terminate your participation at any time without question or comment.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate. If you are not 18 or older, please do not complete the survey.

All survey responses received will be treated confidentially and stored on a secure server. However, given that the surveys can be completed from any computer (e.g., personal, work, school), there is no guarantee of the security of the computer on which you choose to enter your responses. As a participant in this study, please be aware that certain technologies exist that can be used to monitor or record data and/or websites that are visited.

Any individually identifiable responses will be securely stored and will only be available to those

directly involved in this study. De-identified data may be shared with other researchers in the future but will not contain information about any specific individual identity.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protection (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not adequately met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) 665-3598 or [irb@utrgv.edu](mailto:irb@utrgv.edu).



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mrs. Tania Diaz was born in McAllen, Texas. After completing high school coursework at McAllen High School in 2008, she attended South Texas College in McAllen, Texas. After a brief period, she received her medical assistant certification from Southern Careers Institute in 2010. She was employed for several years at Pediatric Heart Clinic. In 2015, she changed career paths and enrolled at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. She received her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. During her last semester, Mrs. Diaz completed her internship at the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services in which she joined the Investigative Unit for Child Protective Services. In 2019, she entered the Criminal Justice Graduate Program and has worked as a Graduate Assistant and Graduate Research Assistant with the Department. She has successfully defended her thesis and earned her Master of Science in Criminal Justice from UTRGV in December 2021. Currently she resides at 7401 N. 40<sup>th</sup> St. and can be reached at [tdiaz1218@gmail.com](mailto:tdiaz1218@gmail.com).