



Family Secrets: Stories of Incest and Sexual Violence in Mexico (Latina/o Sociology)

By Gloria González-López

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“My breasts stopped growing when my grandfather touched them,” confides ‘Elisa’, a young woman who recounts the traumatic incest and sexual abuse she experienced in childhood. In *Family Secrets*, Gloria González-López tells the life stories of 60 men and women in Mexico who, like Elisa, saw their lives irrevocably changed in the wake of childhood and adolescent incest. In Mexico, a patriarchal, religious society where women are expected to make themselves sexually available to men and where same-sex experiences for both men and women bring great shame, incest is easily hidden, seldom discussed, and rarely reported to authorities. Through gripping, emotional narrative, González-López brings the deeply troubling, hidden, and unspoken issues of incest and sexual violence in Mexican families to light.

González-López contends that family and cultural structures in Mexican life enable incest and the culture of silence that surrounds it. She examines the strong bonds of familial obligation between parents and children, brothers and sisters, and elders and youth that, in the case of incest, can morph into sexual obligation; the codes of honor and shame reinforced by tradition and the Church, discouraging openness about sexual violence and trauma; the double standards of morality and stereotypes about sexuality that leave girls and women and gender nonconforming boys and men especially vulnerable to sexual abuse. Together, these cultural factors create a perfect storm for generations upon generations of unspoken incest, a cycle that takes great courage and strength to heal from and overcome. A riveting account, *Family Secrets* turns a feminist and sociological lens on a disturbing trend that has gone unnoticed for far too long.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Groundbreaking and revealing, this book offers a critical feminist examination of the social and cultural mechanisms that create the causes and conditions of incest and sexual violence in the family, complex realities existing in Mexican society. Besides unmasking a patriarchal taboo and analyzing it in depth, this moving, incisive, and thought-provoking book brings to light the human resiliency, puts forward the possibility of renewed social contracts and laws promoting the integrity, dignity, freedom, and safety of women, girls and boys, and other populations at risk, and calls for the defense and respect of their most basic human rights.”-Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos, author of *Los cautiverios de las mujeres: madresposas, monjas, putas, presas y locas*

“A sensitive, ethical, humane, yet deeply sociological and intellectually robust analysis of a very delicate subject matter. Gloria González-López criticizes, debunks, sheds new light, and does so with an immense humanity. Her approach has true potential for bringing attention to this issue with an eye for real change.”-Cecilia Menjívar, author of *Enduring Violence: Ladina Women's Lives in Guatemala*

“*Family Secrets* resonates with authenticity, and makes us look deep within ourselves and our sanitized domestic histories to recover the forgotten whispers about ‘black sheep’ that lurk in the recesses of memory in virtually every family, everywhere.” -*New York Journal of Books*

"I have never read a more powerful, highly original, sophisticated, and brave book as *Family Secrets*. It is an absolutely wonderful and truly riveting ethnographic study that will forever change the way look at gender and sexuality among Mexican-origin populations. Written with enormous compassion and intelligence, it is destined to become the most highly-acclaimed and path-breaking contribution to Latino/a sexuality research to date."-Tomas Almaguer, author of *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*

About the Author

Gloria González-López is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of *Erotic Journeys: Mexican Immigrants and Their Sex Lives* (2005) and co-editor of *Bridging: How Gloria Anzaldúa's Life and Work Transformed Our Own* (2011). Born and educated through her undergraduate years in Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico, she received her PhD in Sociology from the University of Southern California in 2000.

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