



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

*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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