Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*	**Synopsis** When the sister who delighted their parents by her faithful embrace of Mexican culture dies in a tragic accident, Julia, who longs to go to college and move into a home of her own, discovers from mutual friends that her sister may not have been as perfect as believed. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author Sanchez, Erika	
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Professional Reviews of *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (September 1, 2017 (Vol. 114, No. 1))

Grades 9-12. Julia's older sister, Olga, was always polite, respected her parents, and eagerly took up the Mexican traditions her mother insisted upon. After Olga dies in a car accident, Julia is thrust into a spotlight she's not ready for. She's too angry, too unappreciative, too American, which results in her mother shutting out her social and love life. Then Julia discovers Olga's trove of secrets, which hint at a hidden life. As Julia pursues the mystery of the real Olga, she begins to find out that more than one of her family members has secrets. This bildungsroman immigrant story captures the chaotic life of a young person trying to navigate two worlds while trying to follow her own path. Julia wants to leave Chicago and attend college, while a "perfect Mexican daughter" would stay put, get a job, and contribute to the family. Sánchez weaves these threads along with a tragic story of distant sisters to create an earnest and heartfelt tale that will resonate with teens.

Kirkus Reviews (August 15, 2017)

After the death of her dutiful older sister, Olga, Julia must deal with grieving parents and the discovery that her sister was keeping secrets. Fifteen-year-old Julia Reyes is nothing like her sister, "Saint Olga," who was struck by a semi at age 22 and was always the family's "perfect Mexican daughter": contributing at home, attending community college, working at a doctor's office, and helping their mother clean houses. Julia, on the other hand, hates living in her roach-infested apartment building in their predominantly Latinx Chicago neighborhood, and she doesn't even try to live up to her Amá and Apá's expectations that she behave like a proper Mexican young lady. After secretly snooping through Olga's room, Julia begins to suspect that Olga may have led a double life. In one of many overlong subplots, Julia starts a romance with a rich Evanston white boy, Connor, whom she meets at a used bookstore. Sánchez's prose is authentic, but it's difficult to root for Julia, because she's so contemptuous, judgmental, and unpleasant: "I do dislike most people and most things"—from "nosy" aunts, "idiot" cousins, and tacky quinceañera parties to even her "wild and slutty" best friend, Lorena, at least sometimes. An abrupt plot development involving self-harm and mental illness feels forced, as does a magically life-changing trip to Mexico in the third act. This gritty contemporary novel about an unlikable first-generation Mexican-American teen fails to deliver as a coming-of-age journey. (Fiction. 14-17)

Publishers Weekly (August 7, 2017)

Why isn't 15-year-old Julia Reyes a perfect Mexican daughter in her mother's eyes? Mostly because of her

older sister, Olga, who puts family first, listens to her parents, and dresses conservatively. Julia, by contrast, argues with her mother, talks back at school, and dreams of becoming a famous writer. When Olga dies suddenly, Julia is left wishing that they had been closer and grieving what she sees as Olga's wasted life. And when she starts to suspect that Olga might not have been so perfect, she follows every clue. Sánchez's debut novel covers a lot of ground, including Julia's day-to-day activities in Chicago, her college ambitions, her first boyfriend (who is white and comes from a wealthy neighborhood), her difficult relationship with her overprotective parents, and her search for Olga's secrets. As the book moves along, Julia's frustration with the many constraints she lives under-poverty, family expectations, and conditioning that she resents but can't quite ignore-reaches dangerous levels. Julia is a sympathetic character, but Sánchez's often expository writing keeps her and her struggles at arm's length. Ages 14-up. Agent: Michelle Brower, Zachary Shuster Harmsworth Literary. (Oct.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

School Library Journal (September 1, 2017)
Gr 10 Up-Fifteen-year-old outcast Julia Reyes longs to attend college in New York, in order to get away from the suffocating watch of her undocumented Mexican parents in Chicago. The unusual death of Julia's older sister Olga-considered the perfect child by her family-only bolsters this desire, as her parents focus their attention even more strongly on their now only child. When Julia stumbles across unexpected items in Olga's bedroom after the funeral, she sets off on a course to discover her sister's secrets while trying to find some escape from her strict parents. Sánchez makes Julia's unflinching candidness very clear from the start, with the opening sentence providing her stark description of Olga's corpse. This attitude intermittently brings levity to heavy moments, but also heartbreak when the weight of it all comes crashing down. That honesty and heartbreak is skillfully woven throughout, from the authentic portrayal of sacrifices made and challenges faced by immigrants to the clash of traditional versus contemporary practices, and the struggle of first-generation Americans to balance their two cultures. The importance of language, a lens through which Latinxs are often viewed and sharply judged, is brilliantly highlighted through an ample but measured use of Spanish that is often defined in context without feeling forced or awkward. The author interweaves threads related to depression/anxiety, body image, sexuality, rape, suicide, abuse, and gang violence in both the U.S. and Mexico with nuance, while remaining true to the realities of those issues. VERDICT Like Isabel Quintero's Gabi, a Girl in Pieces, sans the diary format, this novel richly explores coming-of-age topics; a timely and must-have account of survival in a culturally contentious world.-Alea Perez, Westmont Public Library, IL © Copyright 2017. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Horn Book Magazine (March/April, 2018)
Julia Reyes's older sister Olga was the "perfect Mexican daughter"—living at home, working at an office, and happily spending time with her parents—but readers never meet her. Instead, the book opens at dutiful Olga's tragic funeral after she is hit by a truck. Fifteen-year-old narrator Julia has spent her life being Olga's opposite—hating her family's roach-infested apartment, arguing with her parents (especially her mother), and dreaming of being a writer far from her poor Chicago neighborhood. But after Olga's death, Julia begins to search for information about her sister, and suddenly the simple narratives she has created about her family begin to unravel. Sánchez paints an evocative portrait of a Mexican American family, effectively capturing the bicultural tensions that can arise from growing up in a different country than did one's parents. The plot occasionally feels overstuffed, as threads about mental illness, gang violence, class, body image, rape, abuse, and suicide are introduced with varying success; and a romantic subplot with an affluent white boy feels shoehorned into the broader narrative. But the depiction of Julia as she processes her losses is hauntingly memorable and noteworthy in its authentic representation of culture and experience too rarely written. christina dobbs

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*
Source: bookconnections.org, NovelistPlus
International Latino Book Awards, Second Place Winner: 2017
National Book Award for Young People's Literature Finalist: 2017
School Library Journal Best Books of the Year: 2017
Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award: 2018
YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults: 2018