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PERSONALIDAD MULTIPLE: UNA EXPLORACION PSICOLOGICA
por Alfonso Martínez-Taboas, M.A.
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Alfonso Martínez-Taboas' book titled **Personalidad Múltiple: Una Exploración Psicológica** represents the first systematic and thorough study of the psychological disorder of multiple personality as manifested within an hispanic clinical population. Martínez-Taboas' work forms part of a new and very challenging body of literature focusing on patterns and configurations of mental disorders within social and cultural contexts.

Martínez-Taboas' work consists of four major contributions to the understanding of multiple personalities. The author sets the stage through the review of the historical and empirical literature available to date. The basic concepts, changing theoretical positions and controversies are presented and discussed with clarity and depth. From this contribution alone, Martínez-Taboas' work serves as an excellent bibliographical resource for the study of multiple personalities.

The second contribution that Martínez-Taboas' work represents is the enlightened and challenging case presentations. Through the eyes of the author, the reader is lead through the clinical discovery of multiple personalities. The clinical management of three cases is richly presented through transcripts and the sequential presentation of the unraveling cases. The cases dramatize the clinical signs and symptoms that all clinicians should be familiar with as part of basic diagnostic skills.

Thirdly, Martínez-Taboas discusses in depth clinical issues associated with multiple personalities such as dangerousness, suggestibility and manipulation of clinical cases by therapists, and special neurological concerns in the diagnosis and case management such as the use of medication.

Lastly, Martínez-Taboas focuses on treatment and the effectivity of various treatment modalities.

It is truly commendable how Martínez-Taboas achieves

a scholarly integration of theoretical, empirical and clinical material in the analysis of the disintegrating effects of childhood abuse on the formation and structure of the personality. Martínez-Taboas argues that discussions limited to social explanations and descriptions of oppression and abuse and the psychological impact of inequality on the personality are not sufficient analytical tools to be able to describe, examine and study the dynamics of how abuse becomes engrained, registered and a part of the personality structure. The author provides a model for the mapping of cultural configurations of pain and suffering within the social-cultural context in which the abuse is permitted, maintained and executed. As seen in the clinical discussions, Martínez-Taboas dramatizes how the multiple personalities emerge from the dynamics of abuse on the developing personality. It is within this context of an integrated, complex and well documented study that the nature of multiple personalities and their social-political and psychological origins can be understood.

The multiple personality syndrome is a clinical manifestation of psychopathology. However, in no part of Martínez-Taboas' work do we perceive an element of clinical resignation for the fate of the three persons presented: Migdalia, Diana and Olga. The development of alter egos is presented as a defensive position based on their non-acceptance of oppression and abuse. To disconnect oneself from an intolerable reality and escape into fantasy is an active coping mechanism, an assertive survival strategy that stimulates inner resources when placed within a powerless position and one wrought with pain.

The researching of alter egos and the dynamics of multiple personalities should become a workshop in the study of coping styles of the powerless, in these cases

mostly women as children, during extreme family situations. Martínez-Taboas' work will hopefully stimulate the in depth study of alternative coping resources, patterns and configurations present in hispanic family structures and social systems.

Martínez-Taboas' book represents the first two of three stages in the introduction of new areas of study. The first stage brings a new condition into focus and asserts its legitimacy. The second stage witnesses the develop-

ment of a sensitivity to the special features of the phenomena and helps take away the unfamiliarity and strangeness that new ideas seem to generate.

The task of the third stage is to direct the field to exploring and researching the complexity of the process behind the formation of multiple personalities. Martínez-Taboas has launched the field of psychology into the third stage with his book.

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