

ferent complementary capacities interpersonal power and personal power, respectively. According to Person, the first of these is easier to conceptualize because we are all born into “a power grid called a family” where we first learn about power differentials between people.

All power relationships, all desires either to dominate or submit, have their psychological roots in the fact that we were once little children with big parents, and their existential roots in our feeling of being small people in an out-of-control big world that we need to be able to tame.

Person's explorations of powerlessness, power in intimate relationships, and power as it relates to sex, gender, hierarchy, and sadomasochism (which she defines as power corrupted by aggression) in the first two parts of the book are fascinating. However, Person is at her best in part 3, which focuses on personal power. This portion of the book contains her novel conceptualization of power as the force behind the sense of agency that allows us to author our own life stories, her examination of the power of creativity, and her study of the recognition of power in the form of fame, celebrity, money, and social status. Finally, Person explores the intriguing notion of the power to transcend through an analysis of what she calls the Godfather fantasy. As Godfather, Mario Puzo's Don Corleone is a miraculous, mysterious authority figure whose power, Person asserts, lies chiefly in our need for him to be powerful in a transcendent way, commanding life and death if he wishes and allowing others to transcend the ordinary rules of right and wrong. Person believes that the wish for such a figure and our willingness to cede personal authority to him in order to be connected to him derives from our sense of powerlessness and dependence in early life as well as our sense of powerlessness in the face of the certainty of death, for which transcendence might serve as an antidote. It is this second source of feeling powerless in the face of death and oblivion that arises as a new anxiety later in life and causes us either to strive for immortality through our achievements or to search for transcendent meaning.

Ultimately, Person defines genuine power as the capacity to stand on our own two feet and “taking a walk around life... facing what needs to be faced and doing so in the context of an interdependent world.” Person's epilogue, in which she addresses the psychoanalytic failure to theorize power, will be of special interest to psychoanalysts and those who follow new developments in psychodynamic thought. Overall, however, *Feeling Strong* is a must-read—and a delightful one at that—for anyone interested in the subject of power. And that, as Person successfully argues, means all of us.

References

1. Person ES: *Dreams of Love and Fateful Encounters: The Power of Romantic Passion*. New York, WW Norton, 1988
2. Person ES: *By Force of Fantasy: How We Make Our Lives*. New York, Basic Books, 1999

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SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES

The Secret Life of the Dyslexic Child: How She Thinks, How He Feels, How They Can Succeed, by Robert Frank, Ph.D., with Kathryn S. Livingston. Emmaus, Pa., Rodale (Philip Lief Group), 2002, 260 pp., \$23.95.

Decoding the medical descriptors and criteria for even the most common of developmental disorders can pose a challenge to medical professionals and laypeople alike. In *The Secret Life of the Dyslexic Child*, Robert Frank seeks to provide parents and educators with practical strategies for diagnosing and managing the disorder, as well as insight into the experience of afflicted children. Approaching the issue in four parts, the text describes a child's experience of dyslexia, offers ways for parents to think like their children, and presents strategies for action after a diagnosis is made. The author's personal experience as having dyslexia is touted as the key element setting his text apart. Although *The Secret Life of the Dyslexic Child* succeeds in providing compassionate insight into the daily practical and emotional struggles of a child with dyslexia (a term interchangeable with the more au courant “reading disability”), it falls short in its efforts to offer a meaningful guide to the process of identifying and subsequently securing the appropriate resources to cope with the disorder.

Frank places a welcome emphasis on the essential role of familial confidence and unwavering support in managing a dyslexic child's day-to-day life. Through the effective use of clinical vignettes, he skillfully illustrates the range of emotions—from frustration, through anger, to isolation—with which dyslexic children (and their families) must battle. His candid and accessible consideration of the subjective experience of a child with a reading disability—an aspect far too often overlooked—is an invaluable element of the text. This focus is clearly present throughout and is perhaps the book's major strength.

Frank's interest in drawing the reader into the world of the dyslexic child is readily apparent in his concentration on the experiential and emotional aspects of the condition. Consequently, the text is at its best in its creative use of exercises seeking to offer a glimpse into the inner experience of dyslexia. For example, he suggests attempting to carry on a conversation while limiting words to those containing only certain letters of the alphabet, which results in being forced to search for alternative words that may or may not convey the intended meaning. This exercise mimics the dyslexic child's difficulty in accessing desired phonemes and the ensuing tendency to substitute words that more readily come to mind. Frank argues that making every effort to understand a child's altered perception of the world goes a long way toward ensuring the success of implemented therapeutic efforts.

Frank effectively uses his professional and personal expertise to describe the experience of having a reading disability, but his text's utility to parents and educators is far less apparent in the areas of diagnosis and management. The clinical description of dyslexia is inattentive to detail at best, nosologically inaccurate and misleading at worst. He identifies three types of the disorder—auditory, visual, and combined—and includes among the core symptoms of dyslexia deficits in both auditory and reading comprehension. This description

seems to blur the borders between developmental dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities, a line more carefully differentiated in other reference texts for the layperson. Sally Shaywitz, a leading dyslexia researcher, notes in *Overcoming Dyslexia* (1) that developmental dyslexia is “distinguished [from other language disorders] by the unique, encapsulated nature of the phonologic weakness, one not intruding into other language or thinking domains” (p. 140). Shaywitz’s description of the signs and symptoms of developmental dyslexia conflicts noticeably with that offered in *The Secret Life of the Dyslexic Child*, most obviously in its distinction between the isolated decoding weaknesses present in developmental dyslexia and the more widespread comprehension weaknesses found in other language-based learning disabilities. More startling than blurred diagnostic categories is Frank’s inclusion of symptomatic descriptors—such as difficulties with spatial orientation—described in Shaywitz’s section on myths about dyslexia. Frank’s intention may very well be to simplify the often complex diagnostic categories, but such imprecision seems a disservice to the audience he seeks to educate.

The book’s imprecision is unfortunate but less likely to prove problematic to parents than to nosologists. In contrast, the strikingly incomplete and naive discussion of the process by which parents initiate and secure special services or an individualized education program for their children is of direct concern. Federal law, codified in section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 1975 (amended in 1997), requires schools to identify, evaluate, and provide for the needs of disabled children. However, the realities of fiscal and staffing constraints on public school districts around the country can make securing such legal rights an uphill battle for parents, if not outright unattainable. Consequently, in a text purporting to educate families and help them navigate the unfamiliar territory of dyslexia, vagueness in this section constitutes a serious flaw. Frank fails not only to differentiate between the services required by each law but even to mention the relevant legislation at all. As a result, critical details are never addressed—such as the timeline allowed by law between the parents’ request for an evaluation and the institution of an individualized education program or the venues of recourse should the individualized education program prove unacceptable. Frank notes that parents may opt to bring an advocate to the unfamiliar process of a school planning and placement program meeting but does not suggest the possibility of an education attorney or of nonadversarial means of due process. In fact, his description leaves the impression that schools are proactive and helpful systems—an idealistic yet unfortunately inaccurate view.

The strengths of *The Secret Life of the Dyslexic Child* lie in its attention to the daily emotional and practical hurdles of dyslexia. Frank’s compassionate and accessible description of the challenges faced by children with a reading disability is both informative and reassuring. The book most likely should find its niche in the hands of parents hoping to understand the lifelong journey on which they are jointly embarking with their children.

Reference

1. Shaywitz S: *Overcoming Dyslexia*. New York, Alfred A Knopf, 2003

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Finding the Real Me: True Tales of Sex and Gender Diversity, edited by Tracie O’Keefe and Katrina Fox. New York, Jossey-Bass (John Wiley & Sons), 2003, 256 pp., \$17.95 (paper).

As a seasoned adult psychiatrist, I thought that I had an acceptable working knowledge of gender identity disorder. Then I read this book. As the title suggests, it is a volume of stories, first-person accounts of individuals who have faced huge challenges to their identity. In reading their stories, I was engaged by the complexity of their lives, the confusion and loneliness, the effects on their families, and the dignity and courage that underlie their distinctive journeys.

The foreword is written by Stephen Whittle, J.D., a senior lecturer in law in England, prolific author, social activist, and transsexual man. He sets the stage with this statement:

Trans people beg the whole question of human understanding as it currently is about gender and sex. Taking that challenge, over the past fifty years, the transsexual/transgender community through writing and theorizing has attempted to offer an “insider’s” exploration of the ways in which trans people view gender issues. As this work progresses, trans people have been among the first to acknowledge that gender, as we know it, is not a clear-cut issue.

The coeditors are Dr. Tracie O’Keefe, a clinical hypnotherapist, psychotherapist, and counselor who came out as a transsexual woman in 1997, and Katrina Fox, her partner, who is a freelance journalist, book author, and former dancer and actress. In the introduction they describe their intent to let the authors’ stories stand alone without analysis or commentary. They write,

We think it’s about time for those who have often been pathologized by the medical profession, demonized by mainstream society, and ignored by lawmakers for years to speak their truths for themselves.

What follows, after a glossary (thank goodness—I needed definitions of the terms “metagender,” “she-male,” “sie,” “s/he,” “zie,” and “transgender” versus “transsexual”), are 26 stories by people from all over the world but mainly the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States. Although some describe “being trapped in the wrong body,” not all do as they make the transition from male to female or female to male. There is no magic endpoint for many but only a new beginning—a process that may take them into a relationship with someone of the opposite sex or same sex, someone born into that sex or someone who also has made a transition. Some male-to-female transsexuals may stop along the way and live indefinitely and quite comfortably with breasts and male genitalia. Many of the writings celebrate gender diversity and