now conventional wisdom that students become proficient readers and writers through early, extensive, and meaningful engagements with print. In Chapter 3, "Transformational-Generative Grammar," Williams explains how teachers' efforts to align students' linguistic performance with the level of their innate competence have yielded to notions that video and print literacies share equal value, along with "the dominant social forces that celebrate ignorance and deride intelligence, that glamorize mediocrity and mock excellence" (152). Williams continues in this vein in the final two chapters of the book, speculating that students from print-impoverylished backgrounds have not developed the neural pathways that support reading and writing competence. The notion of linguistic impoverishment returns in the final chapter, "Dialects," where Williams emphasizes the difference between dialect and slang, concluding that students often perform poorly in the academy not because of dialectical interference but because of a restricted verbal code that subverts effective communication of thought.

Not all instructors will find Williams' assertions persuasive. His insistence that the instrumental benefits of mastering Standard English prevail over students' right to their own language may strike some readers as insensitive. And removed from the context of the entire text, the author's indictments of popular culture may appear no less regressive than the prescriptive grammarian's complaints against a populace that fails to observe the linguistic habits of the educated elite. But the appearance of such topics in a grammar book simply illustrates the impossibility of segmenting language into discrete components. Read in its entirety, The Teacher's Grammar Book is likely to (re)stimulate the reader's interest not only in English syntax but in the intricacies of language, composing, and thought.

Kearney, Nebraska


Reviewed by Jon Boe, University of California–Davis

Writing out of personal experience, keeping a journal, the revision process, peer response group, free writing, portfolios, and sentence
combining all are part of contemporary composition instruction. The common scholarly assumption has always been that these innovations stem from twentieth-century innovations in college writing instruction. But in a charmingly readable and deeply researched book, Lucille M. Schultz has shown that the roots of so much that we think of as modern and even postmodern stretch back into early and mid-nineteenth-century writing instruction for school children.

For me, Schultz’s book had two main heroes among the many contributors to the emergence of composition in the nineteenth-century: the already well-known Swiss educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and the more obscure (certainly new to me) American teacher and writer, John Frost. Schultz compared Pestalozzi (1746-1827) with Jean Jacques Rousseau in that Pestalozzi believed “in the importance of educating the child as a child and not as a miniature adult, and in the primary importance of using objects rather than abstractions to teach a child new concepts” (5). Schultz demonstrates that Pestalozzi’s work made its way into composition textbooks, and as a consequence children for perhaps the first time “were invited to write about the objects and experiences of their own lives” (5). The first evidence of this Pestalozzian (and Romantic!) influence appeared in John Frost’s Easy Exercises in Composition (1839). This “First Book” (a book for beginning writers) was the first to start not with grammatical rules but with illustrations of scenes from children’s own lives, inviting children to write “freely and boldly” about them.

Schultz traces this Pestalozzi/Frost approach though hundreds of other first books of composition, giving fascinating examples of actual writing assignments by nineteenth-century teachers and actual writing by nineteenth century children. Along the way she makes lucid connections to the education of minorities in America (particularly African-Americans, Native-Americans, and the deaf). Schultz tells a fascinating story, arguing convincingly that “many of the pedagogies that are invoked in writing classes today and widely regarded as recent and innovative carry a history that goes back to the schoolbooks and the classrooms of the nineteenth-century” (150). While she cites previous researchers in composition history (Emig, Connors, Crowley, et al.) she demonstrates over and over again that they have neglected an important source for what most writing teachers do today.

I assume that the contributions of Pestalozzi, Frost, and others have so long been neglected because they were directed to children rather than young adults. Like most people, scholars underestimate the importance
and intelligence of those who work with children. The major innovations in composition pedagogy turn out to have come not from Harvard, which those educated at Harvard tend to assume to be the case, but from the teachers of the very young, from the writers and teachers of “First Books,” Schultz tells an important and too long neglected part of composition’s story. I am grateful for her important book, a book anyone interested in composition’s history should read.

Davis, California


Reviewed by Brad E. Lucas, University of Nevada, Reno

Throughout her book, Cindy Johaneck portrays a near-crisis situation in the field of rhetoric and composition: she laments the “prominent place” of anecdotal evidence that belies “our rejection of the quantitative,” and warns us that the “near-abandonment of research that seeks and analyzes numerical data” will divide us “further into the more private worlds of personal stories” (11). She argues for an inclusive paradigm in composition and rhetoric studies, one that focuses on the type of research the field needs versus the kind we like. And she assumes that what we like is bad for the field. Many readers will find the arguments over paradigms, current-traditional rhetoric, and quantitative/qualitative debates familiar, but Johaneck takes a uniquely strident approach in championing the neglected realms of empirical research.

Readers unfamiliar with the field could walk away from this book thinking that composition scholars are on the brink of completely rejecting methodological rigor and—above all—any research involving math. As Johaneck has it, the “current climate” is a “new favoritism toward anecdotal forms of research” in a “battle for trustworthiness between a number and a narrative” (15). Elsewhere she cautions that “modern composition researchers seem close to the day when they abandon ‘traditional’ methods entirely” (51). Such sentiments are rife throughout Composing Research, and no doubt they will provoke discussion from all scholars interested in research. Some may be surprised that Johaneck so easily speaks on behalf of who “we” are and what “we” think about research in “our” field. She assumes that “the more comfortable world of the social, personal, anthropological, political, and literary arenas . . . have always