

Curt Dudley-Marling and Krista Lucas

Pathologizing the Language and Culture of Poor Children

This article will help teachers resist deficit discourses that pathologize the language and culture of children living in poverty.

Caitlin, a fourth-grade teacher in a diverse, underperforming urban school, began the school year by taking stock of the varied socioeconomic and linguistic resources her students brought with them to the classroom. Elena had come to live with relatives in the US only days before and spoke almost no English. Three other ELL students in Caitlin's class possessed varying levels of English mastery. The rest of her students were Black, most of whom spoke African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Almost all of the children qualified for free and reduced lunch, and some of her students' parents received welfare. Nearly all of Caitlin's students performed poorly on the state reading assessment as third graders.

Caitlin's classroom looks like many other classrooms across the country in which teachers are challenged by the diverse linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds of their students. How teachers like Caitlin respond to this diversity will depend on whether they view students' language and cultural experiences as *assets* on which they can draw in support of school learning or *deficiencies* that must be overcome—or “fixed”—before students can succeed academically. Unfortunately, many teachers, administrators, and policy makers have been persuaded to view poor students as culturally and linguistically deficient. The high level of reading failure among children living in poverty, for example, is often linked to the claim that poor children lack the rich and varied vocabulary needed to succeed in school (Blachowicz & Obrochta, 2005; Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006; Labbo, Love, & Ryan, 2007; Neuman & Celano, 2001). These perceived linguistic *deficiencies* tend to be blamed on parents who, presumably, do not provide their children with sufficiently rich language learning environments (Britto, Brooks-Gunn, & Griffin, 2006; Cooter, 2006; Neuman & Celano, 2001).

The primary source for the claim that poor children grow up in linguistically impoverished environments that limit their vocabulary development and, ultimately, their success in school is an enormously influential study of vocabulary development by Betty Hart and Todd Risley (1995). The Hart and Risley study, which examined vocabulary development in families of differing socioeconomic backgrounds, has been described as “groundbreaking work . . . essential reading in any course dealing with early literacy skills” (Walsh, Glaser, & Wilcox, 2006, p. 38). Additionally, the Hart and Risley study has been cited in Congressional hearings (“The critical need for evidence-based programs,” 2003), in numerous articles in the popular press, and in over 600 articles published in scholarly journals.¹

In this article, we argue that strong claims about language deficiencies in poor children and their families based on the Hart and Risley study are unwarranted. Further, we argue that the uncritical acceptance of Hart and Risley's findings is emblematic of a trend among some educators, educational policy makers, and educational researchers to readily embrace a deficit stance that pathologizes the language and culture of poor students and their families (Dudley-Marling, 2007; Foley, 1997). We hope that this critique will help teachers resist “research-based” policies that aim to *fix* the language and culture of poor and minority students with whom they work.

We begin with a description of the Hart and Risley study of vocabulary development.

THE HART AND RISLEY STUDY

Hart and Risley are among those who have argued that federal educational initiatives targeting the educational performance of poor children have been insufficient to interrupt the cycle of intergenerational poverty. As Hart and Risley

(1995) put it, “competence as a social problem is still with us. . . . Too many [poor] children drop out of school and follow their parents into unemployment or onto welfare, where they raise their children in a culture of poverty” (p. 2). Hart and Risley hypothesized that language *deficiencies* in poor children and their families play a significant role in perpetuating the cycle of poverty. To examine this relationship, they studied the language interactions of parents and children in the homes of 13 upper-SES (1 Black, 12 White), 10 middle-SES (3 Black, 7 White), 13 lower-SES (7 Black, 6 White), and 6 welfare (all Black) families, all from Kansas City. Families were observed for one hour each month over a period of 2 1/2 years, beginning when children were 7–9 months old.

Based on their findings, Hart and Risley concluded that, among the families in their study, there was a significant relationship between the quantity and quality of language used by parents and children and families’ socioeconomic status. They found, for example, that children’s vocabulary growth at three years of age strongly correlated with families’ socioeconomic status. In perhaps the most widely cited finding from their study, Hart and Risley reported that average three-year-olds from the welfare families demonstrated an active vocabulary of around 500 words compared to the average three-year-old from upper-SES, professional families, who demonstrated vocabularies of over 1000 words. Hart and Risley reported that these differences persisted after children entered school and were strong predictors of children’s vocabulary development and reading comprehension in third grade.

Crucially, Hart and Risley linked differences in children’s vocabulary to differences in the language they heard from their parents. According to Hart and Risley, some children knew more words because they heard more words spoken to them by their parents. Based on an extrapolation of their data, Hart and Risley estimated that “by age 3 the children in professional families would have heard more than 30 million words, the children in working-class families 20 million, and the children in welfare families 10 million” (p. 132). Compared to the welfare families, the high-SES, professional parents not only exposed their chil-

dren to more words, they displayed more words of all kinds to their children—“more multiclaused sentences, more past and future verb tenses, more declaratives, and more questions of all kinds” (pp. 123–124).

What is particularly striking about Hart and Risley’s data analysis is their willingness to make strong, evaluative claims about the quality of the language parents directed to their children. Hart and Risley attached particular significance to the tendency of the welfare parents to prefer direct requests (“Pick up the toys”) and “corrective or critical” feedback (p. 187) compared to professional parents’ tendency toward indirect requests (“Why don’t you pick up the toys for me?”) and “affirmative” feedback (p. 124). According to Hart and Risley, professional parents’ preference for indirect requests is reflective of “upper-SES culture with its care for politeness” (p. 58). For example, the request form *can you?* “suggest[s] parental confidence that small children are willing but have either forgotten or are not yet skilled or mature enough to do ‘better.’ They prepare children for the important questions to come: ‘Did you remember to . . . ?’ or ‘Was that a nice/fair/smart thing to do?’” (p. 105).

The predominance of indirect requests among the upper-SES parents is, according to Hart and Risley, reflective of a range of language practices that prepare their children “to participate in a culture concerned with symbols and analytic problem solving” (p. 133). Conversely, “in the welfare families, the lesser amount of talk with its more frequent parent-initiated topics, imperatives, and prohibitions suggested a culture concerned with established customs” (p. 133). Hart and Risley conclude that the “prevailing negative tone” (p. 177) carried by the welfare parents’ propensity to employ direct requests and critical, corrective feedback had such a negative effect on children that it would take “thousands of hours of affirmative feedback even to begin to overcome what [the] child has learned about herself in her first three years” (p. 188).

For those inclined to embrace deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997), Hart and Risley’s study of vocabulary development provides a satisfactory explanation to questions about the intractability of intergenerational poverty and the limited success

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of early intervention programs. Children living in poverty fail in school because their homes are deficient in language. Moreover, the dearth of language opportunities during poor children's first three years of life cannot easily be overcome. In Hart and Risley's words,

... we saw that what parents said and did with their children in the first 3 years of language learning had an enormous impact on how much language their children learned and used (p. 159). . . . We could see too why a few hours of intensive intervention at age 4 had so little impact on the magnitude of the differences in cumulative experience that resulted from those first 3 years. (p. 180)

From this perspective, the language practices of poor parents transmit to their children a "culture of poverty" (Hart & Risley, 1995, p. 2) that denies poor children the cognitive and linguistic resources needed to succeed in school. For educators persuaded by this deficit perspective, closing the achievement gap that plagues American schools requires interventions that change how parents living in poverty interact with their children.

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF HART AND RISLEY

Hart and Risley's interpretation of their data implicates deficiencies in the language and culture of families living in poverty as the principal cause of poor children's generally low academic performance. This conclusion is undermined, however, by three factors:

- methodological flaws in how Hart and Risley selected their participants and collected their data;
- an ethnocentric bias that takes for granted the normative status of the linguistic and cultural practices of the middle- and upper-income families in their sample;
- the failure to make explicit the theory of language and culture that frames their analysis.

Again, the purpose of this critique is to help teachers resist the deficit thinking that stands behind Hart and Risley's research and other edu-

cational reforms that blame the victims of poverty for their academic and economic struggles.

Methodological Limitations

Many educational researchers and policy makers have generalized the findings about the language and culture of the 6 welfare families in Hart and Risley's study to all poor families. Yet, Hart and Risley offer no compelling reason to believe that the poor families they studied have much in common with poor families in other communities, or even in Kansas City for that matter. The primary selection criterion for participation in this study was socioeconomic status; therefore, all the 6 welfare families had in common was income, a willingness to participate in the study, race (all the welfare families were Black), and geography (all lived in the Kansas City area).

Families living in poverty are, however, an ethnically, linguistically, and racially diverse group (US Census Bureau, 2003). Strong claims about the language and culture of families living in poverty based on a sample of 6 Black welfare families living in Kansas City are unwarranted. Nor is there

reason to believe that Hart and Risley's welfare families—or other people living in poverty in the United States—share a "culture of poverty," as Hart and Risley and others (see Payne, 2005, for example) assert. The claim that there is a *culture of poverty* that limits the academic and vocational success of poor people is based on a flawed theory of culture that ignores the rich language and experience possessed by children from all cultural and linguistic groups (Foley, 1997; González, 2005; Jones & Luo, 1999). Further, assertions about the language and culture of parents and children living in poverty based on a sample of 6 welfare families, all of whom were Black, and 13 professional families, 12 of whom were White, reinforce harmful stereotypes that conflate poverty and race. The reality is that only 25% of the 33 million Americans living below the poverty line are Black (US Census Bureau, 2003).

The persuasiveness of Hart and Risley's findings is further undermined by the means by which they collected their data. To examine the language of professional, working class, and welfare families, trained observers audio-taped the

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verbal interactions between parents and children one hour per month over a period of 2 1/2 years. Observers were instructed to interact with families as little as possible, to be “a silent, friendly, but not very interesting presence” (p. 35). Hart and Risley concluded that the observers had little effect on the parents and children they observed. In their words, “parents seemed to be quite comfortable with the observer . . . over time the observer tended to fade into the furniture” (p. 35).

Smagorinsky (1995) notes that “data are social constructs developed through the relationship of researcher, research participants, research context . . . and the means of data collection” (p. 192). Indeed, there is a substantial body of literature in anthropology, linguistics, and psychology indicating that observers often affect the behavior of the people they are observing (e.g., Baum, Forehand, & Zegiob, 1979; Le Compte & Goetz, 1982; Rabinow, 1977; Zegiob, Arnold, & Forehand, 1975), particularly when observers are viewed as outsiders (Labov, 1970). Zegiob, Arnold, and Forehand (1975), for example, found that the presence of observers had a significant effect on upper-middle-class mothers’ interactions with their children. Specifically, mothers were “more positive in their verbal behavior and structured their activities more” (p. 509) when they knew they were being observed. Other research indicates that the age, race, dress, and demeanor of observers can have a dramatic effect on the language of young Black males, for example (Labov, 1970). Hart and Risley failed to acknowledge even the possibility that observers would affect the parents and children they were observing beyond assuring their readers that the observers “tended to fade into the furniture” (p. 35).

The contexts in which Hart and Risley collected their data may also have affected their findings. Various social contexts recruit different language forms, content, and vocabulary (Gee, 1996). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that Hart and Risley would have made every effort to ensure that the social contexts in which parents and children were observed were comparable across SES groups. This issue takes on particular significance given the small sample sizes. Hart and Risley did report that parents were asked to choose when they were to be observed, and most chose to be observed during routines

like mealtimes. It is unclear, however, whether the professional and welfare families engaged in comparable activities while they were being observed. Nor is there any evidence that Hart and Risley considered variation in activities between groups as a possible threat to their interpretation of their data. It is at least possible that upper-SES, professional parents chose to be observed during activities that were richer in language opportunities than when poor families chose to be observed.

Ethnocentric Bias

Hart and Risley reported qualitative and quantitative differences in the language practices of the middle- and upper-SES, working class, and welfare families they studied. However, by taking the language practices of the middle- and upper-SES families in their sample as the standard, Hart and Risley transformed the linguistic *differences* they found among the welfare families in their study into linguistic *deficiencies*. For instance, the

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tendency of welfare families to prefer more direct request forms is presented as an illustration of what Hart and Risley deem the “prevailing negative tone” (p. 177) in welfare families that will take “thousand

of hours . . . to overcome” (p. 188). Yet, Hart and Risley offer no evidence that the children and parents in the welfare families shared this interpretation of directives in their homes. Nor is there any indication that Hart and Risley even considered the possibility that poor parents and their children might have considered these interactions as mainly positive, business-like, honest, or highly involved.

Arguably, Hart and Risley construed the interactions between the upper-SES, professional parents and their children as higher in quality because they reflected their own values (this group included parents who, like Hart and Risley, were college professors). In the upper-SES, professional families, Hart and Risley saw “quality interactions” that came “naturally” to families in which “parents had all the advantages of higher education, challenging jobs, substantial incomes, and broad experience” (p. 91). The language of professional families was “affirmative in tone” (p. 177), encouraged “politeness” (p. 57), promoted “analytic problem solving” (p. 133) and

“recall” (p. 101), “organize[d] thinking” (p. 101), and taught children “to take responsibility for social behaviors” (p. 104).

There is an alternative tradition in linguistic research informed by a sociocultural theory of language that “takes seriously the linguistic and sociocultural strengths of members of non-dominant communities in the hope that demonstrations of these strengths could influence schools and the reception and progress of non-mainstream children within them” (Michaels, 2005, p. 137). Labov (1970), Heath (1983), Michaels (1981), Gee (1996), and González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) are among the linguistic researchers who have demonstrated the richness, complexity, and rule-governed nature of the language practices of non-dominant groups. Miller, Cho, and Bracey (2005a), for example, recently reviewed a program of research indicating that the lower-SES, working class adults they studied participate “prolifically, avidly, and artfully in personal storytelling in their homes and communities and that they brought children into this valued activity from an early age” (p. 125). Moreover, Miller, Cho, and Bracey found that these working class families valued storytelling more highly and produced far more stories than their middle-class counterparts. Yet, from the perspective of deficit theorists like Hart and Risley, the language of non-dominant groups is rarely considered on its own terms, but rather is seen only in reference to the language of dominant groups. As Miller, Cho, and Bracey (2005a) put it, “Problems of ethnocentric bias, of invidious comparisons, of dichotomizing differences, of minimizing variation within groups [continue] to plague discussions when children from working-class, poor, or minority backgrounds are compared with their ‘mainstream’ counterparts” (p. 116).

Failing to consider the language of poor families on its own terms is the fatal flaw of the Hart and Risley study. If language is, in part, about enacting identities (Gee, 1999), then an alternative reading of Hart and Risley’s study suggests that the most significant difference between the upper- and middle-SES families and the welfare families who participated was their level of success in enacting the linguistic and cultural identities Hart and Risley shared with the upper- and middle-SES families.

Absence of a Clearly Articulated Theoretical Framework

Arguably, the position on scientifically based research that has emerged in the context of *No Child Left Behind* elevates method over theory, implying that theory may jeopardize the objectivity of the researcher. Research is, however, always undertaken from a point of view, some position on how the physical and social worlds we inhabit operate. The research tools of the physicist, for example, are created on the basis of (theoretical) assumptions about the nature of the universe. Similarly, the meanings physicists make of their observations are constructed on the basis of a general theory of the physical world (Kuhn, 1970). Indeed, data collected by physical and social scientists only have meaning in the context of some theoretical framework. As Dennett (1995) puts it, “there’s no such thing as philosophy-free science; there is only science whose philosophical baggage is taken on board without examination” (p. 21).

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for researchers to see beyond the margins of their theoretical vision. Still, it is the responsibility of researchers to delineate the boundaries of their theoretical framework. Situating research in an explicitly theoretical framework enables other researchers and practitioners to critique the research on its own (theoretical) terms and

from the position of alternative perspectives. Hart and Risley, however, fail to situate their study within an explicit theory of language or culture. They offer no theory of language *or* culture to support their presumption that people living in poverty share a common language or culture, for example. Arguably, by taking on board “philosophical baggage . . . without examination” (Dennett, 1995, p. 21), Hart and Risley engage in “unreflected action and holding magical beliefs . . . they conduct research without questioning why they do what they do or how their actions are connected to understandings of knowledge, people, or language” (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Stuart-Faris, 2005, p. xviii).

Based on their research, Hart and Risley report differences in the language of professional families and families living in poverty, differences that correlate with children’s academic success. On the basis of these findings, Hart and Risley conclude

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that the linguistic *deficiencies* of children living in poverty are the *cause* of their academic failures, necessitating interventions that change the ways poor parents interact with their children. Conflating correlation with causation in this way illustrates the “magical thinking” that emerges when researchers separate theory from method (Bloome et al., 2005). Hart and Risley make causal claims based on the co-occurrence of linguistic and academic variables, but what’s missing is an interpretive (theoretical) framework for articulating the relationship between their data and their claims.

Researchers who fail to situate their research in an explicit theoretical framework deny readers of their work a conceptual position from which to assess or debate the research beyond technical discussions of method. The discourse of “scientifically based research,” which equates the scientific method with technique, has led to a body of research that is resistant to meaningful (theoretical) critique. Hart and Risley’s conclusions about the language practices of families living in poverty, for example, are emblematic of a discourse of language deprivation that

seems impervious to counter evidence, stubbornly aligning itself with powerful negative stereotypes of poor and working-class families. It remains the dominant discourse in many arenas, both academic and popular, making it very difficult to see working-class language for what it is . . . or to be heard to be offering a different perspective. (Miller, Cho, & Bracey, 2005b, p. 153)

Hart and Risley offer their readers little guidance on the theoretical framework of their analysis, but our reading of Hart and Risley reveals a “tacit” theory (Gee, 1996) of language and culture that informs their interpretation of their data collection and their data analysis. From this perspective, they are establishing a norm thoroughly biased in favor of middle- and upper-middle-class children. This common-sense rendering of the data pathologizes the language and culture of poor families, reflecting harmful, long-standing stereotypes that hold the poor primarily responsible for their economic and academic struggles (Nunberg, 2002).

Blaming the poor for their poverty in this way leaves no reason to consider alternative, systemic explanations for poverty or school failure. There is, for example, no reason to wonder how impoverished curricula (Gee, 2004; Kozol, 2005; Oakes, 2006), under-resourced schools (Kozol, 1992), and an insufficiency of “high-quality” teachers in high-poverty schools (Olson, 2006) limit the academic performance of many poor students. Nor is there any reason to consider how the conditions of poverty affect children’s physical, emotional, and neurological development and day-to-day performance in school (Books, 2004; Rothstein, 2004). Recent research in neuroscience, for exam-

ple, indicates that the stresses of living in poverty can impair children’s brain development (Noble, McCandliss, & Farah, 2007). But most Americans do not easily embrace systemic explanations for academic failure. In our highly individual-

istic, meritocratic society, it is generally assumed that academic underachievement is evidence of personal failure (Mills, 1959).

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PATHOLOGIZING THE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE OF POOR CHILDREN

There has been a re-emergence of deficit-based explanations for disproportionate school failure among poor Black and Hispanic youth (Foley, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Popular family literacy programs that aim to fix literacy deficiencies in poor families (Taylor, 1997); the broad acceptance of Ruby Payne’s (2005) portrayal of people living in poverty as deficient in the cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and spiritual resources needed to escape poverty; Bill Cosby’s widely quoted denunciation of the language of Black youth (Dyson, 2006); and the tremendous influence of Hart and Risley’s research on vocabulary and social class exemplify the willingness—even eagerness—of many educators and educational policy makers to accept explanations for academic failure that implicate the language and culture of poor children and their families as the cause of their academic struggles.

Rolstad (2004) laments that “linguistically baseless language prejudices often underlie [even] well-designed, well-conducted studies” (p. 5).

Linguistic research conducted within theoretical and anthropological linguistics and sociolinguistics that demonstrates the language strengths of children from non-dominant groups “has had virtually no impact on language-related research elsewhere” (Rolstad, 2004, p. 5). The deficit-based research of Hart and Risley, with all of its methodological and theoretical shortcomings, has been more persuasive than linguistic research that considers the language of poor families on its own terms (e.g., Labov, 1970; Heath, 1983; Michaels, 1981; Gee, 1996; see also Michaels, 2005), perhaps because Hart and Risley’s findings comport with long-standing prejudices about the language of people living in poverty (Nunberg, 2002).

Revealing the flaws of deficit-based studies like Hart and Risley’s is insufficient for changing how (some) people think about children and families living in poverty. Ultimately, the fundamental problem of Hart and Risley cannot be remedied by more or better research. Real social change demands reframing the question, i.e., “changing the way the public sees the world . . . [by] changing what counts as common sense” (Lakoff, 2004, p. xv). In this case, reframing the question involves transforming the “common sense” that views people in poverty through the lens of deficit thinking. Acknowledging the richness of the language and culture all children bring to school, for example, leads to a very different set of questions, such as *What is it about school that manages to transform children who are good at learning . . . regardless of their economic and cultural differences, into children who are not good at learning, if they are poor or members of certain minority groups?* (Gee, 2004, p. 10). *How can changing the conditions of poverty (e.g., quality health care, nutrition programs, safer neighborhoods, better housing) affect the academic performance of poor students? Instead of “getting the child ‘ready’ for school,” how do we get “the school ‘ready’ to serve increasingly diverse children?”* (Swadener, 1995, p. 18).

There is no denying, however, that children from poor families experience higher levels of academic failure than their more affluent peers. In the final section of this article, we briefly consider a pedagogical stance that acknowledges and

builds on the cultural and linguistic strengths that students from non-dominant groups bring with them to school.

AN ALTERNATIVE TO DEFICIT-BASED LANGUAGE PRACTICES

Children’s language plays a crucial role in school success . . . and school failure. To succeed in school, children must learn the formal language of schooling. There is little to be gained, however, by pathologizing the language and culture of children living in poverty. Arguably, the representation of students’ language and culture as *deficient* contributes to student alienation that some see as the root cause of high levels of school failure in non-middle-class communities (McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993). Moreover, when the language of schooling is viewed as a set of social and cultural

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practices (New London Group, 1996; Gee, 1996), it is clear that school-based language practices must be learned in the context of schooling. Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Turner

(1997) put it this way:

From a sociocultural perspective, children develop, acquire, and are socialized to various literacies, as they actively participate in culturally defined systems of practices such as participating in religious classes, playing sports or games, and participating in formal and non-formal schooling activities. (p. 369)

From this perspective, the responsibility for teaching students—especially students from non-dominant groups—the language of schooling rests with teachers, not parents.

As a beginning, teachers need to recognize the linguistic, social, and cognitive resources all children bring with them to school. This must go beyond merely acknowledging the language strengths of students from non-dominant groups, however. Michaels (2005) challenges educators “to go beyond claims and documentation of difference (even differences ‘on their own terms’) and show specifically how these differences can be recruited, in school, as strengths” (p. 137). In classrooms that make space for students’ linguistic and cultural experiences, children have more linguistic, social, and cognitive resources to draw

on in support of their learning (Dyson, 1993, 2003; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Turner, 1997). The social practices in these classrooms “authenticate, integrate, and connect the classroom literacy practices to the [discourse] practices” of the communities from which students come (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Turner, 2007, p. 373). In this way, students’ language, culture, and background knowledge become tools for learning. The emphasis in such classrooms is on “what can be done with language, rather than what cannot” (Schleppegrell & Go, 2007, p. 530), and children’s everyday language is available as the basis for learning the formal language practices valued in school (Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007).

Finally, Hart and Risley draw attention to a real problem that teachers encounter every day in their classrooms: children enter school with more or less of the linguistic, social, and cultural capital required for school success. However, we take exception to the characterization of this situation in terms of linguistic or cultural *deficiencies*. Through the lens of deficit thinking, linguistic differences among poor parents and children are transformed into deficiencies that are the cause of high levels of academic failure among poor children. In this formulation, the ultimate responsibility for this failure lies with parents who pass on to their children inadequate language and flawed culture. But, in our view, the language differences Hart and Risley reported are just that—*differences*. All children come to school with extraordinary linguistic, cultural, and intellectual resources, just not the *same* resources. It is the responsibility of teachers to draw on these resources in support of school learning, including teaching the language practices valued in school. If there are crucial language experiences needed for school success, then teachers must provide them. The remedy for disproportionate levels of failure among children living in poverty is a school curriculum that respects their background knowledge and experience and builds on students’ linguistic, cultural and cognitive “funds of knowledge” (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) to teach them what they need to achieve success. As Gloria Ladson-Billings’s (1994) research reminds us, respect is the key to successful teaching. Ultimately, this is about respect for students’ knowledge, who they are, and where they come from.

Note

1. The *Social Science Citation Index* (SSCI) allows users to determine how often a particular publication has been cited in the 1700 social science journals included in the SSCI database. The number of times a work has been cited gives some indication of its influence. We found over 600 references to the Hart and Risley study, nearly half of these in the past five years.

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Curt Dudley-Marling is professor in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. **Krista Lucas** is a doctoral candidate in Curriculum & Instruction in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College.