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## **Counter-storytelling through service-learning: Future teachers of immigrant students in Texas and California re-tell the “Self” and the “Other”**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the use of Critical Race Pedagogy in two service-learning initiatives that prepare pre-service teachers for working with an increasing immigrant student population in California and Texas. It is not uncommon for teachers to participate in the “Othering” dominant discourse that tends to see those who are of a lower socioeconomic class, immigrant status, or non-English speaking as deficient (Valencia 1999). As professors, we identified the need to use counter-storytelling, a method of Critical Race Pedagogy (Solorzano & Yosso, 2005) to facilitate transformative practices that help pre-service teachers revise their prejudiced assumptions about their future immigrant and ELL students. A transdisciplinary curriculum, coupled with a service-learning context, played a prominent role in implementing counter-storytelling. In this article we present data from the pre-service teachers’ service-learning, in-class group discussions, assignments and evaluations related to their fieldwork, and our fieldnotes during participant-observation.

**Keywords:** Critical Race Pedagogy, Teacher Education, Service-learning

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## Introduction

The use of a master narrative to represent a group is bound to provide a very narrow depiction of what it means to be Mexican-American, African-American, White, and so on . . . A master narrative essentializes and wipes out the complexities and richness of a group's cultural life . . . A monovocal account will engender not only stereotyping but also curricular choices that result in representations in which fellow members of a group represented cannot recognize themselves (Montecinos, 1995; pp. 293-294).

This article presents an empirical research study of two teacher education courses, one in Texas and the other in California, that utilizes service-learning to facilitate the participation of pre-service teachers in counter-storytelling as a means for understanding societal inequities. Counter-storytelling, according to Delgado (1989, 1993), is both a method and a tool; as a method, it involves telling the story of those whose experiences are often omitted (i.e. those on the margins of society) and, as a tool, it is used to analyze and challenge those whose stories constitute the dominant discourse—the majoritarian story (Delgado, 1993).

Using counter-stories as a method and a tool is a part of Critical Race Pedagogy, defined by Marvin Lynn (1999: 615) as “an analysis of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination in education . . . [leading] to an articulation and broad interpretation of emancipatory pedagogical strategies and techniques.” Critical Race Pedagogues are concerned with four general issues: the endemic nature of racism in the United States; the importance of cultural identity; the necessary interaction of race, class, and gender; and the practice of a liberatory pedagogy (Lynn, 1999).

We chose to incorporate Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP) in our teacher education courses in light of the current US social and political climate regarding immigration, as well as our geographical locations: sites with large immigrant populations. Our objective was for pre-service teachers in Texas and California to identify and understand the cultural, political, and social forces at work in this teaching context. We selected service-learning (SL) for the implementation of CRP and counter-storytelling because we did not believe that the student teaching context alone provided sufficient relational time with individual students to allow for the analysis of discourse. First, we wanted pre-service teachers to identify the majoritarian stories, or the “bundle of presuppositions, perceived wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings persons in the dominant race bring to the discussion of race” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, p. 462). Second, we wanted them to identify, produce and share the counter-stories, a “biographical analysis of the experiences of people of color . . . in a sociohistorical context” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 33). SL provided additional and alternative interactions with the community for identifying and discussing majoritarian and counter-stories as well as systemic racism and cultural difference.

Cultural difference (see Carter & Segura, 1979), rather than racism, continues to be cited as the leading cause of the low socioeconomic status and educational

failure of students of color.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, García and Guerra's (2004) research acknowledges that deficit thinking permeates US society; schools and those who work in schools mirror these beliefs. Students who are dominant in a language other than English are often viewed as being deficient, disadvantaged, or disabled, though their difficulties are often more closely related to geography and political climate, rather than actual knowledge (Valencia 1997). In practice, the deficit model is applied in the classroom, passing on beliefs that students of color are culturally deprived and therefore low achievers (Kretovics & Nussel, 1994; Persell, 1977). García and Guerra (2004) argue that this reality necessitates "a critical examination of systemic factors that perpetuate deficit thinking and reproduce educational inequities for students from nondominant sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds" (155).

Multicultural education addresses cultural difference and deficit thinking as a part of teacher education courses (Banks 2004, Nieto et al., 2007). There are also recent studies regarding the transformative characteristics of community-based teacher education (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000; Burant & Kirby, 2002). However, Critical Race Theory and Pedagogy have been largely ignored in teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, to date, although teacher educators may have incorporated SL to facilitate CRP, there are no empirical studies on the implementation of CRP in experiential contexts such as service-learning (SL).

To understand the role that SL played in the collection and production of counter-stories within a CRP framework by pre-service teachers, first we introduce the theoretical framework of Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP), which is based on Critical Race Theory (CRT); we then show the ways in which our methodology corresponds or responds to CRP; and finally, we present our findings and conclusions.

### **Theoretical Framework: CRP and Counter-storytelling**

CRP is based on Critical Race Theory, which is a "set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2005, p. 69). CRT argues that the United States is and has always been a racialized country founded on a belief in the inherent inferiority and superiority of certain groups of people, based on physical characteristics (Omi & Winant, 1994). Additionally, "racism, sexism, and classism are experienced amidst other layers of subordination based on immigration status, sexuality, culture, language, phenotype, accent and surname" (Yosso, 2002, p. 72). We both knew that we needed to challenge these distorted views towards non-English-speaking, immigrant students and families. CRT, and its accompanying Critical Race Pedagogy, became our framework for selecting readings, reflection activities, and SL that would lead to transformative teacher practices.

Solórzano and Yosso (2005) advocate Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP) in higher education to help eliminate race, racism and other forms of subjugating forces such as gender and class in the classroom and in society. Solórzano and Yosso (2005, p. 70) list the fundamental elements of CRP: "1) the centrality and intersectionality of race

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<sup>1</sup> The term "students of color" refers to students from African-American, Asian-American, and Latino backgrounds.

and racism; 2) the challenge to dominant ideology; 3) the commitment to social justice; 4) the importance of experiential knowledge; and 5) the use of interdisciplinary perspectives.” We adopted CRP in the service-learning component of our curriculum to help pre-service teachers examine their position (socioeconomic class, race, language, gender, etc.) and interrogate the dynamics that shape that positionality.

CRP challenges the dominant ideology that social institutions create toward objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, and equal opportunity. These traditional claims, which assume people from certain backgrounds will be “limited” in achieving success in society, “act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power and privilege of dominant groups in US society” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2005, p. 70). In response, counter-storytelling, using interviews and drawing on the lived experiences of People of Color, is a method that “aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p.144). It exposes and critiques normalized dialogues that perpetuate the status quo and stereotypes. In other words, counter-storytelling “help[s] us understand what it is like for others, and invite[s] the reader into a new and unfamiliar world” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 41). We believe that teacher education instructors (and, therefore, their courses), by and large, lack knowledge and contact with the “unfamiliar world,” and this is one major factor that contributes to deficit thinking and “Othering” of those who differ in class, language, immigration status, gender, race, and so forth.

When a person is seen as deficient, “Othering” occurs, as one usually identifies the “Other” by what he/she is not. Different policies and trajectories pertaining to special and mainstream education proliferate and perpetuate this view of the “Self” (mainstream/normal) and the “Other” (special/abnormal). This practice sets up a series of binary oppositions (e.g. normal/abnormal), accentuating the “Othering” images assigned to certain individuals (Liasidou, 2005).

“Othering” is maintained and perpetuated by cultural deficit majoritarian storytellers who advocate cultural assimilation. Specifically, they argue that students of color should assimilate to dominant White, middle-class culture to succeed in school and life (Bernstein, 1977; Schwartz, 1971). Some examples of how this cultural assimilation might take place are: learning English at the expense of losing their native language, loosening community and family ties, and becoming an individual “American” success story. The cultural assimilation solution becomes a part of teacher education programs, school structure and curriculum and, by extension, of cultural deficit storytelling. A successful student of color is an assimilated student of color. Given the current rhetoric of “at-risk” and “disadvantaged” students, it is clear that just as insidiously as racism has changed forms, so has the use of cultural deficit terminology by social scientists (Solórzano, 1998; Valencia, 1997; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997).

Pre-service teachers identified and countered cultural deficit terminology while serving their respective communities. In the California case, pre-service teachers collected counter-stories while tutoring English at a school primarily for recent Hmong immigrants. The Texas case highlights Mexican-origin pre-service teachers who collected counter-stories while providing a career workshop for families of Mexican origin in the community. To prepare the pre-service teachers for counter-

storytelling, the class curriculum was extended beyond the typical teacher education curriculum to address each setting in-depth and holistically. Through readings, film, lecture, guest speakers, small group and class discussion, the pre-service teachers were exposed to local economic, historical, political, cultural, and social issues, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of CRP. In-class oral reflections and discussions were designed to help students identify and understand deficit majoritarian stories about marginalized people and revise some of their internalized hegemonic ideologies regarding families and students who were different from them, particularly in terms of class, language or immigrant status.

We see the combination of CRP with SL as a novel and effective means for moving students beyond acknowledging cultural/social differences to beginning to deconstruct and interrogate power differentials and their roots in the target community and larger society.

### **Methodology**

The strength and uniqueness of this study is the combination of two similar research contexts where two researchers (Blum and de la Piedra) used similar theoretical, methodological and pedagogical tools. In Texas and California, both case studies focus on working with pre-service teachers in settings with high immigration populations. We used SL to identify majoritarian stories and implement counter-storytelling within a CRP framework. Finally, we used an assortment of in-class assignments and activities, in addition to assigned readings, to prepare students for their work in the SL context.

After identifying our concern with the fact that pre-service teachers hold deficit perspectives about students of color, as teacher educators, we consulted CRP for ways to improve our teaching by building cultural identities and social justice. Our research is based on the following data (specific details follow with each case description):

1. Activities where students recount their own biographies to understand how one's positionality and privilege are created and reinforced in society;
2. Activities that allowed students to use transdisciplinary knowledge of history and anthropology to have a deeper understanding of the lives of immigrant children;
3. Service-Learning activities that provide experiential, face-to-face, prolonged, and meaningful interactions with immigrant children to facilitate hearing, collecting and producing counter-stories.

We gathered evidence about how students responded to these pedagogical strategies through: 1) individual oral and written responses by students to course content and assignments (e.g. reflective essays about the service-learning activity), 2) reports of in-class group discussions and assignments, and 3) our fieldnotes during participant-observation of in-class and SL activities.

We conducted thematic coding analysis (Warren and Karner, 2010) in each case, paying attention to the students' interpretations of their experiences in relation to immigrant students, parents, and communities. Later, looking at the data from both cases, we found patterns across both cases, which we present in the Findings section. These themes include: 1) interrogating dominant discourse by reflecting on their own biographies; 2) questioning majoritarian stories through the transdisciplinary knowledge of history and anthropology; 3) producing counter-stories through experiential activities and knowledge gained in the service-learning activities. In the cases that follow, the aforementioned themes and our findings will be highlighted in both cases. Prior to the presentation of the themes and findings, we identify the setting and participants in each case.

### **Case 1: Texas: Counter-stories about Mexican families on the U.S.-Mexico border**

#### **Setting and Participants**

de la Piedra conducted her case study in her Parent/Community Advocacy course<sup>2</sup> at a university in El Paso, Texas. Located on the border between Mexico and the U.S., this city is very different from the rest of the state of Texas. The majority of its population is of Mexican descent (76.6%) and speaks a language other than English (71%). Communities along this border are among the poorest in Texas and the nation.

Thirty-four (30 female, 4 male) students took the course during a 15-week semester in 2006; all were of Mexican-origin and bilingual (Spanish and English). Seventy percent were either born in the U.S. or migrated from Mexico as children and attended school in the U.S.. About 30% of the students came from Mexico as adults to attend college.

In previous semesters, de la Piedra observed that even though most pre-service teachers were of Mexican extraction, majoritarian stories about Mexican immigrant, Chicano, and/or low-income families and parents surfaced during in-class discussions about parent involvement in schools. Some students held deficit views specifically about low-income Mexican-American families, while others had deficit views about Mexican immigrant families. "Parents do not care about education", "parents just drop their children at school and leave all the work to the teacher" and "they don't help their children with homework" were some of the many comments voiced during in-class discussions. Therefore, the SL activity in this course offered an opportunity for student interaction with something that students had "Othered"—low-income families of Mexican-origin. The SL component included a total of 7 hours of work: five for the planning and two for the implementation of workshops for participants of the local Mother-Daughter (M/D) program.

The Mother-Daughter (M/D) program serves mainly low-income, Mexican-origin and bilingual sixth grade girls from eight school districts. This program has the goal of promoting the equitable representation of Latino women in professional

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<sup>2</sup> The course is required for pre-service teachers enrolled in the elementary and middle school bilingual education preparation program.

careers. As stated in the published monograph about the program, “the girls learn about their many options in life by seeing success firsthand in the form of Hispanic university students and career women from every walk of life who participate as role models.” This program organizes different events for the girls and their mothers throughout the year. For example, during “Career Day,” participants visit the university for half a day and attend hands-on workshops organized by Latino community leaders, university students and professionals (particularly women). In this context, the pre-service teachers prepared workshops with the goal of showcasing the teaching profession.

### **Assignments, themes and findings in the Texas case**

Three activities were key in fostering CRP: 1) Funds of Knowledge<sup>3</sup> Group Reflection, 2) Case Study: Funds of Knowledge of a Bilingual Immigrant Child, and 3) The SL M/D Career Activity. In preparation for the three activities, students read research studies about US families of Mexican-origin (e.g., Valdés, 1996; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). These activities were designed as opportunities for pre-service teachers to revise their prior assumptions about border families and identify majoritarian stories within their own assumptions.

#### ***Interrogating dominant discourse by reflecting on their own biographies: Funds of Knowledge Group Reflection:***

In class, reflecting on their childhood, students identified their own funds of knowledge (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). After sharing their funds of knowledge with their teams, students reflected orally on the non-traditional knowledge that their border households provided and shared this with the class.

The group discussions revealed an increased awareness of dominant ideologies regarding legitimate knowledge. By looking at their own histories, students interrogated the societal construction of knowledge and power. For many students, this was the first time they thought about their parents’ (mainly blue-collar workers) knowledge and skills as being useful in schooling. During the oral reflection process in teams, de la Piedra heard comments such as “I never thought about my life in the *rancho* (farm) [in Mexico] this way.” Through the “self-knowledge approach” of the *Funds of Knowledge Group Reflection*, pre-service teachers were able to “examine, perhaps for the first time, their own cultural heritage and identify their feelings about it.” (Arias & Poynor, 2001, p. 420)

Drawing on the students’ lived experiences through autobiography and family histories, Mexican-origin pre-service teachers were able to see their funds of knowledge in new ways. They became “empowered participants, hearing their own stories and the stories of others, listening to how the arguments against them are framed and learning to make the arguments to defend themselves” (Yosso, 2002, pp. 74-75). After looking at the “self”, recognizing their own knowledge as valuable, and orally narrating their own counter-narratives for their classmates, students were better

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<sup>3</sup> Funds of knowledge are the bodies of knowledge, skills, and practice that Mexican families and communities on the U.S.-Mexico border circulate among their members in order to survive (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992).

prepared to “understand what it is like for the other” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 41).

***Questioning majoritarian stories through transdisciplinary knowledges:  
The Case Study***

The *Case Study: Funds of Knowledge of a bilingual immigrant child* was a second assignment which was significant to revising majoritarian stories about border families. Each student wrote a case study of a bilingual child and his/her family’s funds of knowledge. de la Piedra taught her pre-service teachers to use ethnographic methods; they kept a journal and recorded fieldnotes. The pre-service teachers then made a household visit, interviewed family members and recorded observations. Their case study was a written reflection, used to document new understandings and possible practical applications for their future classrooms.

Through the case studies, students individually wrote a counter-story that helped dispel the myth that low-income immigrant families lack important knowledge to help their children succeed in school. For example, Camila wrote in her reflection of this project:

I was sincerely impressed by the amount of information that Maria [case study child] was exposed to. It really brought into perspective just how these sources can transfer to school activities and content.

Camila identified the diverse funds of knowledge that this border family provided for María. She also reflected on how these funds of knowledge can be utilized in curriculum, teaching strategies, and concrete activities in the classroom:

For example, since Maria has been exposed to banking procedures, her knowledge can be used to introduce a simulated banking system for the classroom to work with money. Knowing that Maria enjoys stories about her family’s work background can be used to raise her interest and connect subjects such as math, science, and social studies to her experiences. Also, her exposure to different homes and family lifestyles and large groups can be used to develop her leadership skills or can be reason to use group activities when she is having trouble understanding concepts. Her travels to Mexican cities can be used as a topic for narratives or for oral storytelling to develop language.

Furthermore, Camila communicates the possibility that María’s teacher might not see these funds of knowledge as relevant:

I can think of countless ways in which Maria’s funds of knowledge can be used in the school setting. Unfortunately, her exposure and knowledge serve little in the school if the teacher does not see them as relevant to the curriculum. Without scaffolding and encouragement from her teachers, Maria is not really synthesizing all the information she has gathered from her experiences.

Camila's final words in her case study reveal an understanding of the power that recognizing a student's funds of knowledge can have and how detrimental it can be for a student when these assets go unacknowledged. Many other students wrote and shared similar counter-stories.

Pre-service teachers gave an oral presentation of individual case studies and shared abundant examples of how parents or older siblings assisted young children during hands-on learning activities in home and community contexts. These counter-stories portrayed Mexican-origin parents assisting their children learning new skills, such as making, packing, and sorting tamales for sale, the use of measurement concepts (ounces) for preparing milk and the mathematical notions related to carpentry. Being able to identify the linguistic and cultural resources in these families helped the students view parents and children as experts who can contribute academically to the learning process.

Students also discovered transnational funds of knowledge related to festivities and ceremonies celebrated in Mexico, working in the *ranchos* (farms) and marketplaces across the border, *folklórico* dancing, music, and acting, which were shared between families across the border. These counter-stories, told by pre-service teachers, are powerful alternatives to the dominant narratives that situate Mexican families as deficient or "uneducated."

After these presentations, students also participated in collective counter-storytelling. They concluded that border families had a wealth of knowledge, which was shared among social networks on and across the border. The class came up with the following categories of funds of knowledge based on the case studies presented: 1) the use of Spanish for oral and written language development, 2) the parents' jobs and activities inside and outside the home, and 3) transnational funds of knowledge related to activities in Mexico that families shared across the border.

This transdisciplinary knowledge base, constructed through anthropological methods and perspectives, was necessary to better understand the community (Solórzano & Yosso, 2005). Besides some differences in terms of class or immigration, pre-service teachers found both differences and points of connection between their respective case studies and themselves. They discovered that they shared similar experiences of racism, when they realized that their own funds of knowledge had also been ignored in their schooling experience.

### ***Producing counter-stories through experiential activities in SL***

During "Career Day" at the university, on the last week of class, teams of five pre-service teachers conducted one-hour workshops on diverse topics to address local needs in the Latino community. Latino mothers and daughters participants of the Mother/Daughter program were invited. In a workshop on gender equity, the women made a collage of pictures of men and women taken from magazines and discussed how the media portrays gender roles. Later, the team of pre-service teachers shared statistics about economic and educational disparities between men and women. Finally, each group presented its collage and discussed the topic of gender equity with the information provided in the workshop. This was just one example of the

workshops the pre-service teachers organized to serve the Latino community, identify majoritarian stories and counter-stories.

The following quotes are examples of counter-stories that students wrote about families of Mexican origin, after the SL experience. In both reflections, we see how this SL assignment of M/D Career Day helped students question the widely held assumption that “immigrant families do not care about their students’ education”:

*Reflection #1:* “As a presenter, my goal was to educate the young audience and their mothers about how to fight gender stereotypes. But, as time went by, they made my view and perspective of them [the parents and children] change... Usually we hear that parents do not care about their children’s education, they do not participate or they do not have valid arguments in topics related to the educational system; at least I believed in that. Thanks to the parents and the words I heard from them, I could break the stereotype. I see that on the contrary, they want to become informed about the educational system in the U.S., but [can’t] because of difficulties such as not knowing the language or working long hours. The parents and children actively participated and even made suggestions to us as future teachers. For example, they asked us to advocate for dual language programs (Sandra).”

*Reflection #2:* “Parents and kids were working together to create wonderful stories. It was great to be able to include the parents into our lesson. We realized that parents can be indeed part of the curriculum. Teachers need to think about ways to include parents into the classroom. (Claudia).”

Reflecting on her experience as a child, Daniela recalls the opportunity to participate in a LULAC Leadership conference. She hopes to provide the girls with a positive image (counter-story) about Latino identity similar to that she had from the conference, equipping them to challenge deficit discourses (majoritarian stories) about Latino/a students:

I shared my thoughts about this with them about my own experience visiting [the local university] for a LULAC youth leadership conference when I was about the same age as the students were. I think that my experience [as a LULAC conference participant] gave me an image that I could refer to when I was talked to about going on to a university. I hope I had a part in creating this image for the students and the parents that participated in our discussion.

This quote shows how experiences can create “images” or counter-stories for both Latino children and pre-service teachers. In sharing and helping the female participants create counter-stories, Daniela is able to “open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing the possibilities beyond the ones they live and that they are not alone in their position” (Delgado cited in Solórzano and Yosso 2001, p. 70).

María shares the pivotal role that service-learning played in facilitating counter-storytelling:

My [SL] experience helped put into practice what we have learned in class throughout the semester. In class discussion, we talked about the different levels of parent involvement, the funds of knowledge that students bring with them and that they all have in order to provide culturally relevant pedagogy that would give meaning to their education. However, I discovered that we learn more when we actually implement our knowledge into a hands-on activity like this one (María).

For pre-service teachers, the experiential knowledge they acquired through this hands-on SL context provided in-depth understandings of the cultural wealth of families of Mexican origin.

### **Case 2: Hmong newcomer school in California**

Blum also found that SL facilitated counter-storytelling. In this case, pre-service teachers worked with Hmong elementary and high school students who arrived in the California Central Valley with little or no schooling.

#### **Historical background:**

A newcomer school was constructed in the southeast of the city in 2004 in response to the arrival of the last wave of Hmong refugees to Central California. The Hmong played a pivotal role for the U.S. in the “Secret War” that took place in Laos, along with the Vietnam War, to stave off communism. Since 1975, the U.S. government has promised the Hmong resettlement in the United States.

Having participated in the Vietnam War, the Hmong refugees arrive to the U.S. quite surprised that their heroic history is generally unknown or ignored. Solórzano and Yosso (2005) argue that this type of silence reflects racialized and classed dimensions underlying “standard” understandings of a community. Additionally, coming from an agrarian society and having to adjust to starkly different cultural norms, Hmong resettlement in the U.S. has been more precarious than that of many immigrant groups. In fact, between 1998-2002, eight Hmong adolescents in Fresno County committed suicide: four of them within six months. The deaths accounted for nearly half the county’s teenage suicides (US Department of Health and Human Services, State Letter #02-38). In response, Assembly Bill 78 was passed in 2003, requiring that the role of the Hmong in the Vietnam War be taught in California’s public schools.

As very few non-Hmong speak Hmong or understand Hmong culture, and in light of the teenage suicides and imminent new arrivals, a transdisciplinary curriculum was incorporated so that pre-service teachers acquired an in-depth knowledge of Hmong history and culture—knowledge of counter-stories. Also, by working with a non-English-speaking immigrant population, the intention was that this SL experience would encourage the pre-service teachers to act and think in new ways when interacting with immigrant populations.

### **Setting**

While pre-service teachers met once a week for class at the university, they participated in a minimum of six hours of SL at the school tutoring Hmong children in English. Pre-service teachers could tutor during school hours, sitting quietly in one of the classrooms, or after school (3:30PM-5:00PM) in one of the designated portables. The principal at the newcomer school and her schoolteachers were anxious and appreciative of our offering and, were open to their students receiving assistance at any time during the school day.

The newcomer school had employed only teachers who were bilingual in Hmong and English to ease the Hmong children's cultural and language transition. Walking on the campus of portable classrooms, it was a rarity to see a non-Hmong student or teacher. In a "sink or swim" context, where the only language and people the pre-service teachers saw and heard were Hmong, the reflections of these pre-service teachers indicated an intense sense of "sticking out," "not belonging," and not understanding anything.

### **Participants**

The profile of the pre-service teachers in the courses is approximately 54% Caucasian, 40% Latino/a, 5% Asian, and 1% African American. The data presented was collected between January 2005-May 2006 and represents responses from students in three 28-student courses.

Students commonly meet attempts to acknowledge race and racism with resistance. This may be why many teacher educators settle for a pedagogy that celebrates diversity instead. One pre-service teacher's comment echoed the prevailing classroom attitude: "I'm so sick of these diversity courses. I don't know why we have to take so many. We already 'get it'."

To foster openness to these challenging issues, sequencing and pacing were pivotal. Initially, pre-service teachers participated by collecting heritage interviews and creating identity collages. After they shared their own immigration/heritage stories, they were more receptive to seeking and hearing the stories of others. Locally-made digital stories about Hmong community members were then screened in class. The pre-service teachers learned about the Hmong struggle to survive Vietnam as well as immigration and acculturation in the United States. Finally, at the newcomer school, the pre-service teachers spent time with their Hmong students, comparing biographies and connecting them to readings about acculturation in theory and practice (e.g. Banks, 2004; Nieto et al, 2007; Olsen, 1997; Santa Ana, 2004).

#### ***Interrogating dominant discourse by reflecting on own biographies: Heritage interviews***

The family heritage interviews and identity collages were part of an autobiographical piece to analyze "Self" (one's own history and position in society). In small groups, the pre-service teachers, collage in hand, shared their stories while other group members listened. After everyone shared, they wrote "quick writes," documenting insights and possible applications to future teaching. By sharing, one's

history (or Self) was juxtaposed with the histories of the “Other” (those who might be deemed as “different” from oneself). “Other” for these students was their family’s story, which they may have heard many times but oftentimes thought irrelevant to their current reality. The “Other” was also in the stories of classmates, which they assumed that they could accurately guess at first glance. Through reflection and dialogue they develop a critical consciousness that begins to dispel societal myths, or majoritarian stories.

The following is a sample of their (“quick write”) responses: “You think someone looks one way but when you hear about where they come [from] they take on a different identity.” “I want *all* my students to see that they have a story whether it was yesterday or 300 years ago.” “I believe this activity helps us as teachers by appreciating the family histories of others and to realize that we are all immigrants, regardless of when we arrived.” “This really fills in important gaps in history textbooks. You get a heartfelt understanding of how struggle has always been a part of a newcomer’s history. I am now interested in doing this with my own students. I definitely have more compassion as a result of this activity.” This exercise allows students’ histories to be affirmed. Assumptions about classmates are frequently challenged. Once one’s story and, consequently, one’s identity (Self) was acknowledged and validated, this usually paved the way for a more open interaction with and understanding of the “Other.”

Through the heritage interview, collage and small group discussions, students participated in a knowledge approach to the “Self” and the “Other”, examined their feelings (both pride and loss) and fostered a cross-cultural understanding that would prepare them for a SL setting (Arias & Poynor, 2001). Like in the Texas case, the pre-service teachers became “empowered participants, hearing their stories and the stories of others,” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2005, p.75). They became aware of their power (or lack thereof) and position in society. Recognizing the value of oral histories and counter-stories through their own practice in the classroom, they were prepared to “understand what it was like for the other” and document the counter-stories that might emerge in their SL experience with the Hmong students (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 41).

### ***Questioning majoritarian stories through transdisciplinary knowledges: Digital stories***

The use of digital stories followed the heritage interviews and identity collages as part of an interdisciplinary approach to provide the pre-service teachers with needed historical, cultural and political knowledge about the community they would be serving. The digital stories, *Hmong Voices*<sup>4</sup>, were produced as a result of Assembly Bill 78 in 2003 to recognize the contributions of the Hmong and to ensure that the Hmong’s role in Vietnam became a part of California curriculum.

One six-minute digital story that the pre-service teachers watched in class was about a Hmong man, the storyteller, who, as a result of the Vietnam War, was orphaned at twelve years old. He recounts his recruitment for the US military as a child and his stint as a pilot during the war. As an adult trying to protect his family

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<sup>4</sup> Produced by the Center for Multicultural Cooperation, Fresno, CA.

and escape danger, his family was one of the few to cross the Mekong River successfully to a refugee camp in Thailand. Full of hope, the class watches the film as the family reaches the refugee camp only to hear about the miserably unsanitary and inadequate conditions. After a year at the camp the man's newborn son dies and the family decides they must leave the camp in order to survive. The storyteller then narrates with excitement, the fulfilment of the promise to guarantee safe passage to the U.S. for those who supported the war effort. Boarding an airplane to go to a country that represents freedom and safety, the man and his family never expected to be confronted with such difficulty in navigating the language and culture. His family's arrival in the United States was met with indifference by the citizens of the country for which he sacrificed his life. This indifference, if not at times discrimination, coupled with not knowing English, impeded his leadership and his ability to take proper care of his family, causing him and his wife to consider the possibility of returning to the refugee camp in Thailand. Eventually he succeeds in learning English, gaining employment, and becoming a civic leader. This was one of three digital stories pre-service teachers watched and reflected upon in class as part of transdisciplinary curriculum that provides the necessary historical, political, and cultural background for working with the Hmong. At the same time, pre-service teachers hear a non-majoritarian story that draws on biographical data from a group that has been marginalized by society, viewing "this knowledge as a strength" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 473).

After the screening of each digital story, the pre-service teachers were asked to write about what made an impression on them and why, and in what ways they would apply this knowledge to their future as teachers. In their reflections, the pre-service teachers talked about going to school with Hmong students and knowing very little about their heritage and history. This pre-service teacher's "quick write" reflects what many students wrote:

I would have to conclude that the film on the Hmong that we watched was unbelievable and directly affected my joy and heart for the students in the classroom. It definitely went hand-in-hand with my new perception and understanding of the Hmong people. Before the film, I had no idea and was clueless to anything that they represented as a culture and a community. It reminds me of the countless other groups and communities of people who have been and still continue to be misunderstood and persecuted.

The pre-service teacher's ignorance of the Hmong story in a context where she attended school with Hmong students, illustrates the "silencing" or subordination and oppression of one group's story to maintain the dominant discourse. Watching the digital story, the pre-service teacher encountered a counter-story; one that exposed and critiqued normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes and also provided new information about the reality of those who are at the margins of society. The margin can be "more than a site of deprivation . . . it is also the site of radical possibility" (hooks, 1990, p. 149). The pre-service teacher's acknowledgement of "new perception and knowledge" recognizes the potential for counter-stories to "challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 475).

In a classroom context, through critical readings and sharing personal stories, students made connections between the readings, discussions and digital stories. As a part of CRP, this transdisciplinary approach, showed the Hmong's participation in the Vietnam War, and their plight, and provided opportunities for pre-service teachers "to analyze race and racism within both historical and contemporary contexts" and "to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2005, p. 74).

### ***Producing counter-stories through experiential activities in SL: Tutoring***

The SL experience was so powerful that there were students who tutored for more than the six required hours (the average was 17 hours). One pre-service teacher commented, "Whenever my student teaching experience would get me down, I would try to go to the newcomer school. There is such excitement and joy in being with each other. The innocence is still there. Apathy has not set in." Nearing the end of the semester, pre-service teachers had put "a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 475). However, this was not the way the SL started.

Initially, the pre-service teachers were very frustrated with not being able to communicate with the students. They had taken a methods course prior to the class, but when faced with reality, they seemed traumatized and Blum refused to help. Blum wanted them to experience the struggle of communication first-hand and to see, to the best of their ability, what Hmong students were experiencing. There were times when the teachers displayed anger, resistance, and resentment towards Blum, but, in the end, they became resourceful: bringing toys and items from home, drawing pictures to bridge the communication gap, smiling and laughing.

The pre-service teachers kept a journal while mentoring/tutoring students and were given a list of questions to answer about their student (sometimes consulting the Hmong teacher). Pre-service teachers were to juxtapose their autobiographical information and contemplate similarities and differences with the student: family background, parents' employment and education, schooling experience, hobbies, and aspirations. The class debriefed on a regular basis. The final assignment was to write a reflective essay detailing the results of the ongoing interviews, observations, and making connections between readings, majoritarian and counter-stories.

The community context and service facilitated understandings of power that went beyond academic abstractions, resonating with heritage counter narratives and digital stories they shared with each other in class. Melissa writes:

"I, being an American, am what they are learning to be, so even I wasn't what you might think of as a minority because I was still the dominating "culture" at the school. Still it was interesting to be the "outsider" . . . When I would try to speak Hmong or try to communicate with them they would just laugh. It made me feel stupid. I found that I became much more quiet and intimidated. The worst part I think, was that I was trying to "teach" them but I felt like I was the one with little knowledge... Not knowing was so demeaning. If I knew exactly what this all felt like then I guess I wouldn't need to learn this lesson. I

think that when I really thought about teaching all students I only thought of English-speaking students, whether I realized it or not.

Melissa's story demonstrates the role SL played in facilitating her understanding of dominant discourse and its impact on her worldview. Prior to this field experience and counter-story activity, she thought she was prepared to teach all students. This experience revealed her own internalized hegemonic biases. Within the SL newcomer school context pre-service teachers discovered a counter context where their inherent privilege and power were challenged by not speaking Hmong, resulting in a new awareness of the power of language.

Another pre-service teacher, Carlos, expressed resistance from the beginning of the course because he came from an immigrant farming family and commented that he had already learned everything about diversity. At the end of the course he wrote:

I began to relate to what was being told to me about the refugees' living situations and my family's background. As she [administrator at the newcomer school] talked about the living situations and persecution they endured, I began to remember about my grandparents and how their stories were somewhat similar. This experience was a rude awakening to my naiveness. There is some kind of intrapersonal exploration that one endures in such a setting. In order to effectively teach students about cultural diversity, it is necessary for them to experience diversity in ways they are not accustomed to. It is very difficult for students in college to experience a true minority status, regardless of background.

Carlos' previous statement regarding diversity and later acknowledgement of the difficulty of teaching it are evidence of the permanence of race, racism, and other forms of oppression. Educated People of Color can also find it difficult to identify how these forms of domination function to subordinate others, as Allen illustrates: "One of the major concepts I learned is that education is still not equal for all, which I had not thought about much before." The permanence of racism is facilitated by its normalization, which makes it invisible, just as Carlos mentions not giving much thought to issues of equity before. This is particularly important given that he comes from a farming family and is of Mexican-origin.

Pre-service teachers recognized the complex identity issues that immigrant students have to negotiate to be accepted, as illustrated by Susan: "Immigrant students too often suffer from a double-edged sword of contempt. American students don't want to interact with them because they are too foreign, but if they start to act American and 'take off their turbans' (Olsen, 1997, p.39), those students are rejected by their immigrant peers." As Susan and other pre-service teachers unpacked the unequal distribution of power and privilege, they began to recognize how much more these students have to negotiate to "fit in" in a context where they don't even know the language and their identities, if different from the dominant norms, are rarely supported.

Noticing these challenges and the permanence of racism, Moises contemplated how to construct reality in a different way for immigrant students.

My goal is to ensure students know that they do not have to assimilate to the “dominant” culture (White, middle class) in order to be successful. I want my students to feel comfortable and take pride in who they are as people. Unfortunately, traditional textbooks and curricula seem to promote the idea that, ‘Skin color, religion, and language seem to define being ‘American’ or not’ (Olsen, 1997, p. 40). They do this by teaching the values and cultural myths of the dominant culture. When other cultures are included, they are represented in fragmented, superficial, even stereotypical ways—making the ‘subordinate’ cultures seem unimportant and not worth learning about.

The reflections of pre-service teachers reveal a critical consciousness that acknowledges that educational institutions operate in contradictory ways, potentially marginalizing and empowering at the same time. Many of them commented on the different activities and the ways they opened their minds to understand reality in a new way. Cindy’s reflection shows a connection from the heritage interview and collage to her interaction at the newcomer school:

It also amazes me to think of how these students must have felt leaving everything behind to come to America. Then, once they arrived, they often find it is not what they expect. Unfortunately, we forget that many of our family members traveled to the Americas and were faced with similar hardships. But we still alienate newcomers because of our differences and don’t provide the same opportunities that we feel we deserve because we have been in the country longer. It is not about giving everyone the same things; it is about being fair and giving everyone what they need.

Cindy shared her written reflection with the class. She enumerates racist practices and identifies their origin, drawing from CRP (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The SL provided an additional means of sharing and supports critically processing their experiences both formally and informally. Furthermore, classmates created collective memories and bonded more so than in a traditional classroom, thus creating a safe and comfortable climate for sharing stories—some not so easy to share as others.

### **Conclusion**

In our teacher education courses, using CRP within a SL context facilitated counter-storytelling. In California, tutoring at a primarily Hmong newcomer school was combined with a classroom method of constant historical and political comparisons using heritage interviews and collages, digital stories, and classroom dialogue. In Texas, students processed their own biographies and “funds of knowledge” while seeking the same information from the community they served. In both cases, anthropological methods were applied to seek, produce and share counter-stories that recognized systemic racism and the hegemonic ideologies that generate the prevalent majoritarian stories.

In both cases, we were able to accomplish what Delgado (cited in Solórzano and Yosso, 2001) states as the five pedagogical functions of counter-stories. We built “community among those at the margins of society”: low-income families of Mexican-origin and the Hmong. Through an interdisciplinary curriculum we were able to have our pre-service teachers engage in “challenging the perceived wisdom of those at society’s center.” Our pre-service teachers’ involvement in counter-

storytelling allowed them to “open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing the possibilities [opportunities for further education and careers] beyond their current living situation and that they are not alone [the pre-service teachers are their advocates] in their position.” “By combining elements from both the story and the current reality,” our pre-service teachers learned that “one can construct another world that is richer than either story or the reality alone.” Lastly, the counter-stories provided “a context to understand and transform established belief systems” (p. 70).

The analysis of the two cases shows that majoritarian stories are everywhere, regardless of the ethnic, socio-economic, and linguistic backgrounds of pre-service teachers. In the California case, the pre-service teachers, in their assignments, revealed having had the typical deficit-thinking majoritarian stories that prevail among pre-service teachers who come from backgrounds different to those of their future students (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Paley 2000). However, a deficit or majoritarian perspective was also prevalent in the Texas case, where pre-service teachers shared similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds with their students. This study, in the Texas case, showed that educators need to identify and question majoritarian stories, even in contexts where teachers and students share the same ethnic background.

Looking at the pre-service teachers’ own biographies was key in both contexts. In the Texas case, future teachers became aware of majoritarian stories that ignored their own biographies and knowledges. In the California case, students examined their position in society, looked at their feelings of pride and loss, thus fostering cross-cultural understanding. In both cases, they became aware of one’s power (or lack thereof) and position in society. Deficit understandings of “Self” and “Other” were challenged in the SL context as they became attuned to the counter-stories of their respective communities. The SL context enabled pre-service teachers, while mining for and producing counter-stories, to examine the factors that shape and create both majoritarian and counter-stories of immigrant families in-depth and holistically. As teacher educators work towards a society and schooling system that takes into account the assets that each cultural, racial, and ethnic group has to offer, counter-storytelling is a pedagogical tool that could potentially help us create a more just system.

Our work as teacher educators is a social justice project that works toward the liberatory potential of schooling (Freire, 1970). We acknowledge the contradictory nature of education, wherein schools frequently oppress and marginalize while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower. Based on our research, counter-storytelling within a CRP framework, used strategically with SL, has the potential to unify existing critical explanations of educational phenomena. Together, they provide more theoretical and experiential grounding and direction for educators concerned with issues of equality and equity in schooling and society; one that incorporates all citizenry.

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## **A Qualitative Investigation of Adult Imprudent Behaviour**

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### **Abstract**

Imprudent behavior, indolence, dilatoriness, being unable to predict the result of behavior, perceiving probable harm far less than its magnitude based upon cognitive distortion, and suchlike are some reasons that lead individuals to indulge in risky behaviors without taking precautionary measures and to look for simple and easy solutions which do not require a radical change in habitual behaviors. The goal of this study is to evaluate adults' tendency to behave prudently/imprudently, their awareness of their behavioral tendency, their observations and ideas of social and environmental responses to their behavioral tendencies, and to explore the reasons why they behave prudently/imprudently. Data were collected through in-depth interviews in late spring 2006. The results were analyzed using a descriptive methodology. The sample of the study consisted of 25 individuals including doctors, nurses, teachers and firemen. Findings indicate that imprudent behavior is the result of a cultural aspect in Turkish society; some variables of which may cause adult imprudent behavior.

**Keywords:** Imprudent behavior, behavioral tendency

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## Introduction

Risky behaviors have been subjected to numerous researches and are an indispensable part of human life and the behavioral repertoire. Risky behaviors are defined as: Behaviors that may result in an undesirable situation such as death, injury, illness, becoming disabled, suffering economical loss or a threat to security. There are many cognitive and motivational factors that cause risky behaviors.

Some risky behaviors are related to a sensation-seeking personality. These type of behaviors are termed “risk-taking” and are determined by a disposition to gain new experiences, innovation, change, and sensational needs. Individuals seek new, complex, intense and sensational situations and they take risks voluntarily (Zuckerman, 1990, 1994, 2000). This risky behavior is usually a characteristic of puberty (Arnet and Balle-Jensen, 1993).

Another form of risky behavior described in the literature is tolerating potential negative consequences in order to seek greater advantages (Kuriychuk, 1989). This type of risky behavior is also called “calculated risk”. Individuals commit risky behaviors voluntarily, depending on their tolerance levels, trying to balance the risks and rewards associated with the risks that a behavior includes (Emerson, 2001). A business person’s investments to expand the firm’s area of involvement, and thus increase transactions and profits in a business in which he/she does not have experience, is one example of calculated risk.

However, some risky behaviors committed in daily life are different from the ones described earlier since they are based on a different rationale. These type of behaviors are called “imprudent behavior”. Imprudent behavior is characterized as not giving careful consideration; imprudently incurring risk; lacking or showing lack of judgment or discretion and being unwise (Merriam-Webster, 2007).

Imprudent behaviors are also defined as “behaving in an unprepared manner of an impulsive nature, not planned beforehand” (Türk Dil Kurumu, 2005, s.1930). As a result of imprudent behaviors, either the person who committed the imprudent behavior or the person who is subjected to the behavior is likely to come to harm. However, the real intention of these behaviors is not to harm someone. To the contrary, the harm that emerges as a result of this type of behavior may cause grief and remorse on the part of the person who committed the behavior. Despite this fact, some people continue to regularly commit imprudent behaviors (Aypay, 2007).

Imprudent behaviors may be committed by individuals of all ages and educational levels, and in every aspect of life. However, for some individuals, imprudent behavior becomes a conventional mode of behavior or habitual practice (Aypay, 2007).

Examples of imprudent behaviors may be found in the media. However important and valued by their parents, children may suffer from the harmful consequences of their parent’s imprudent behaviors (CNN Turk, 2007). When inflammable materials and cutter tools or chemicals such as pills and detergents are not properly stored by parents (or not stored out of reach of children), children may suffer negative consequences such as poisoning, burns, injuries, or disabilities.

Similarly, although the life-saving role of seatbelts is well-known in reducing the risk of injury, disability or death, many drivers and passengers still neglect to fasten their seatbelts while traveling. This may cause them to suffer irredeemable losses (Sabah, 01 July 2007).

Pressure cookers are commonly used in kitchens to save time while cooking. When they are used carelessly, it is well-known by the user that they may lead to quite dangerous results. Despite this, people who use a pressure cooker at home sometimes open the lid without waiting for the pressure cooker to cool down. Such imprudent behavior may even cause the death of the individual who committed it (Sabah, 14 September 2002). Also, it is clear how dangerous and risky it may be trying to cross the street in heavy traffic with fast-moving cars. However, instead of using designated pedestrian crossings and overpasses and thus behaving prudently, some individuals still choose to use unsafe places to cross the road. It is often these types of behavior that one may read about or see in accident-related news in the media (Hürriyet, 14 October 2005). The behaviors of health professionals directly influence people's lives. Professionals in the health sector need to use additional caution and should be more cautious than other professions. However, when health professionals neglect to use basic precautionary measures, sometimes it may result in very high risks such as being infected with HIV/AIDS and eventually leading to the death of the very people who visit professionals to get health treatment (Hürriyet, 2007).

The tendency of imprudent behavior, as in the examples provided, is for individuals to indulge in behaviors that may have harmful consequences for themselves or others. Although they know how to protect themselves from harm, individuals avoid seeking a new form of behavior which requires precautionary measures and stick with one which is easier and does not require a change in their habitual behaviors (Aypay, 2007). This definition is adopted from Anderson's (2003) definition of behavior avoidance. In other words, the tendency to behave imprudently exists in the context of committing risky behaviors, laziness, dilatoriness, not correctly predicting the results of behavior, or perceiving the consequences of cognitive falsifications as smaller than they actually are (Aypay, 2007).

There are several theoretical studies in the literature that attempt to explain the reasons for risky behaviors. While some of these theoretical explanations are based on rational perspectives such as the health belief model or seeking protection (Adler, Kegeles and Genevro, 1994; Conner, 2005; Umeh, 2004; Feldman, 1985), unrealistic optimism is based on more cognitive and motivational perspectives (Blanton, Axsom, McClive and Price, 2001; Higgins, Amand and Poole, 1997; Hoorens, 1995; Kruger, 1999; Peretti-Watel, 2003; Perloff, 1987; Weinstein, 1980). When the definition of imprudent behavior is taken into account, it appears more logical to consider that this type of behavior is likely to be more related to cognitive and motivational aspects. Some research findings in the literature (Brown and Imber, 2003; Brown, Messman-Moore, Miller and Stasser, 2005; Campbell, Greenauer, Macaluso and End, 2007; Chambers, Windschitl and Suls, 2003; Çok, Gray and Ersever, 2001; Gidycz, McNamara and Edwards, 2006; Hahn and Renner, 1998; Higgins and Watson, 1995; Klar, 1999; Krieger, Parrott and Afifi, 2006; Kruger, 1999; Kruger and Burrus, 2004; McKenna and Albery, 2001; Nelson, Evelyn and Taylor, 1992; Peretti-Watel, 2003; Weinstein, 1980) seem to support this idea.

This goal of this study is to explain the tendency to behave imprudently based on in-depth interviews with individuals who may be classified as having a tendency towards imprudent behavior. The study comprises adults' evaluations of their tendency towards prudent/imprudent behaviors, their awareness of their behavioral tendency, their observations and ideas about social and environmental responses to their behavioral tendencies, and an exploration of the reasons why they behave prudently/imprudently.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

In-dept interviews were conducted with a sample of 25 individuals which included doctors (4), nurses/health officers (5), teachers (11), and firefighters (5).

### **Design and Procedures**

This study was carried out as a part of a larger study that focused on the tendency toward imprudent behavior. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected.

The sample included professionals who directly influence human life such as doctors, nurses/health officers, teachers, and firefighters. The ages of the individuals in the sample ranged from 22 to 55. These individuals were selected from a larger group (396) who were chosen via a convenience sampling and participated in the study based on their scores on a tendency towards imprudent behavior questionnaire. The individuals in the sample were selected from six cities (Ankara, Bartın, Çanakkale, Diyarbakır, Karaman, and Mardin) and four out of the seven regions of Turkey (Central Anatolia, Black Sea, Marmara, South Eastern Anatolia).

The data were collected from 396 individuals by using Tendency of Imprudent Behavior Scale (TIBS) and the List of Imprudent Behaviour (Aypay, 2007). To include contrasting views in the interview sample of 25, individuals who scored at the highest and lowest 25th percentiles on both scales and thus met the criteria were selected.

Based on the scores, individuals who scored within the lowest 25 percentiles were classified as prudent and individuals who scored within the highest 25th percentiles were classified as imprudently behaving individuals. Divergent or excessive sampling provides richer data when compared to regular sampling and allows the researcher to carry out a deeper analysis and understand multiple dimensions. While the interview sample was being determined, the researcher also took care to include individuals from each one of the various professions in the larger sample in order to have the maximum variation. Maximum variation sampling allows the researcher to determine similarities, communalities, and differences (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The in-depth interviews took approximately forty minutes on average and were conducted with individuals in three cities (Ankara, Mardin and Diyarbakır). Two different interview forms were used, including more common questions for both of the behavioral tendencies but with different questions. On the interview forms, the

questions were intended to tap the subjects' own evaluations of prudent and imprudent behavioral tendencies, their awareness and observations of societal/environmental responses, and ideas on their own prudent/imprudent behaviors.

The data were analyzed using a descriptive analysis in the qualitative research method. While developing the analysis categories, the correlates of the concepts were investigated in relation to imprudent behavior in the quantitative study, such as: Self-respect, locus of control, general self-efficacy, death anxiety, unrealistic optimism, sanctions, experience, feeling of responsibility, modeling, upbringing, optimism, participant views on whether precaution is necessary, level of awareness of prudent/imprudent behavior, evaluations of prudent/imprudent behavior, evaluations of the prevalence of prudent/imprudent behavior in Turkish society, and social responses to prudent and imprudent behaviors.

### **Validity and Reliability**

The procedures followed, to ensure the validity and reliability of the study, can be summarized as follows:

- Contradictory and excessive sampling methods (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2000) were used to include both individuals with prudent and imprudent behaviors. All the professions/occupations included in the study and the individuals differ in terms of their tendencies. The scores of individuals on the The Imprudent Behavior List (TIBL) were also used.
- All the participants were voluntary.
- All the interviews were conducted by the researcher herself and thus the interviews were standardized.
- The researcher avoided expressing her views and emotions to avoid researcher bias.
- In order to secure extreme views (Miles and Huberman, 1994), the reasons why the subjects committed prudent/imprudent behaviors were asked. Thus, the reasons why individuals behaved in one way or the other were tapped and whether the explanations provided overlapped or not was checked. The results led the researcher to conclude that the majority of explanations overlapped regarding participants whose behavioral tendencies differed in a specific way. Thus, this finding increased the validity of the findings.
- All the data were transcribed by the researcher. Thus, loss of data was minimized and while the interpretations might have been improved since the author becomes familiarized with the statements while transcribing.
- While creating analysis categories, various categories were included. This variety of categories enabled the researcher to build a strong categorical scheme (Neuendorf, 2002).
- Before analysis, all transcripts of interviews were read five times by the researcher so that the interview data was correctly understood. This ensured the researcher achieved an accurate understanding of the inferences.
- The researcher was flexible while identifying units of analysis and tried to choose units that made sense among themselves. Thus, data loss due to rigid units of analysis was avoided (Kümbetoğlu, 2005).

- In order to ensure reliability, none of the sections of the interview transcripts was removed and they were analyzed as a whole.
- Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that to increase the validity of qualitative research it is important to check with various data sources, different data collection methods, and different analysis strategies. This study collected both qualitative and quantitative data to understand prudent/imprudent behaviors. Qualitative and quantitative data were checked whether they supported each other or not and the results suggest that the findings of both quantitative and qualitative data are parallel and support one another. The overlap between results may also be considered as a criteria for the validity of qualitative findings.
- When the findings were reported, quotes from the participant were extensively used to allow readers to test the appropriateness of the interpretations.
- The researcher reported all the steps in detail that she followed during the course of the study.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Types of Explanations for Prudent/Imprudent Behavioral Tendency**

This section presents the findings gathered from the interviews.

#### **Evaluation of Prudent/Imprudent Behaviors**

Participant statements on prudent/imprudent behaviors and their evaluations were grouped into categories. In order to establish whether there are similarities or differences in their perceptions, both types of behaviors are grouped and presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

The participants' statements point to quite similar evaluations, regardless of prudent/imprudent behavioral tendencies. These findings indicate that imprudent behavior in general was perceived as negative or not endorsed while prudent behavior was seen as a more positive or endorsed type of behavior. However, to a lesser extent, there were participants who perceived prudent behavior also as negative or not endorsed behavior.

Findings in Table 1 and Table 2 suggest that the participants did not show a bias while evaluating their own behavioral tendencies, regardless of their own behavioral preferences.

**Table 1**  
*Evaluation of Participants with Prudent/Imprudent Behavioral Tendencies on Imprudent Behaviors*

Statements used in the evaluation	Participants with Prudent Behavioral Tendency	Participants with Imprudent Behavioral Tendency
Being at fault	√	√
Not taking precautions	√	√
Impulsive behavior	√	√
Insensitivity	√	
Negligence	√	
Willy nilly (unplanned) behavior	√	
Forgetfulness	√	
Dilatoriness	√	
Indifference		√
Carefree (easy going) behavior		√
Careless behavior		√
Unrestrained behavior		√
Unsafe behavior		√
Reflexive behavior		√
Unconscious behavior		√

**Table 2:**  
*Evaluation of Participants with Prudent/Imprudent Behavioral Tendencies on Prudent Behaviors*

Statements used in the evaluation	Participants with Prudent Behavioral Tendency	Participants with Imprudent Behavioral Tendency
Fastidious (nitpicking) behavior	√	√
Obsessive behavior	√	√
Perfectionist behavior	√	√
Careful behavior	√	√
Thoughtful behavior	√	√
Cautious behavior	√	√
Planned behavior	√	
Impeccable behavior	√	
Careful behavior	√	
Orderly behavior	√	
Humanistic behavior	√	
Premeditated behavior		√
Draconian behavior		√
Following Rules		√
Connoisseur behavior		√

**Level of Awareness**

One aim of the interview was to determine whether the participants were aware of their own behavioral tendencies or not. Secondly, participants were asked to evaluate their behaviors in terms of their behavioral tendencies and were required to provide information on the situations in which they behaved prudently/imprudently.

The analyses indicated that all participants were aware of their own behavioral tendencies. In addition, participant awareness may be regrouped into three categories, as follows:

1. "I am aware of my prudent/imprudent behavior. This tendency in my behaviors is quite strong." All the participants with prudent behaviors and two participants with an imprudent behavioral tendency agreed with these statements.

*"I am a quite prudent person. I see myself 100 % as such, I see myself as careful."* (Mr. Aydın, firemen, 45 years old, prudent)

2. "I am aware of my tendency of prudent/imprudent behavior. This tendency is not stronger than 50 % in my behavior." Half of the participants with imprudent behavior agreed with this statement. A good example reflecting this group of behaviors is the statement of Mr. Cemal, who is a fireman: *"I am 50 % imprudent."*

3. "I am aware of my prudent/imprudent behaviors. This tendency of mine is less than 50% of my behaviors." This statement was shared by individuals with imprudent behavior. The following quote may exemplify this group's tendency.

*"Indeed, I prefer prudent behavior; however, when I am in a hurry, I am imprudent. I know that sometimes I do not exercise caution and I behave imprudently."* (Ms. Zübeyde, teacher, 26 years old, imprudent)

When the evaluations of participants with prudent/imprudent behaviors of their own behavioral tendencies are considered together, it could be inferred that all participants were aware of their behavioral tendencies. However, participants with prudent behavior used stronger statements that reflected their behavioral tendencies when compared to individuals with imprudent behaviors.

These findings led the researcher to consider that individuals with prudent behaviors might have embraced their behavioral tendencies more. In contrast, the findings might also imply that since the participants with imprudent behavior were aware of the negative aspect of their own behavioral tendency, they might be trying to present the strength of their tendency as if it were weaker. Alternatively, it may also imply that they do not approve of their own behavioral tendency.

Analysis of the interview data revealed that specific situations might be the cause of some imprudent behavior. Based on the frequencies, these situations can be listed as:

- ✓ When it was thought that everything would run smoothly,
- ✓ Situations with deadlines (time pressure),
- ✓ When individuals thought that they had to move quickly or were in a hurry,
- ✓ Situations in which imprudent behavior led them to feel comfortable or happy,
- ✓ When indolence existed,
- ✓ When it was considered that an important job had to be completed on time,
- ✓ When the consequences of the behavior was not considered,
- ✓ When precautions made the individual uncomfortable.
- ✓ When an emergency was involved,
- ✓ When the focus had to be on the job,

- ✓ When the loss was small or it was played down,
- ✓ When the cost of being cautious was high,
- ✓ When impatience was involved,
- ✓ When the job was supposed to take a short time,
- ✓ When self-confidence was high,
- ✓ When detachment/forgetfulness was involved,
- ✓ When the individual was fretful,
- ✓ When the work was intensive,
- ✓ When facing the harm, time might be perceived as short,
- ✓ Non-frequent behavioral situations,
- ✓ When individuals were tired,
- ✓ When taking precautions was perceived as losing time.

### **Causal Explanations**

This section includes participants' own explanations as to why they behave prudently/imprudently.

#### **Unrealistic Optimism**

Half of the participants used statements that led the researcher to think unrealistic optimism might have played a role in their prudent/imprudent behaviors.

*“Usually the attitude is that ‘never mind, it won’t happen’ exists. For example, on the elevator it says ‘for four persons.’ Five or six persons get in to elevator... I went to buy gas at the gas station. The attendant was smoking. I asked ‘Don’t you think a fire may erupt?’ The attendant told me ‘Never mind, it won’t happen, I always smoke.’”* (Mr. Hasan, firemen, 43 years old)

Findings indicate that one reason why individuals behave imprudently is that they estimate the possibility of facing negative consequences of imprudent behaviors to themselves is quite low. In another words, they may think that they are somehow immune to the negative consequences. Findings also indicate that some of the participants, while evaluating risk, usually use favorable information that the risks are lower for them and thus they develop a distorted image about their invulnerability. Another finding reveals that in these individuals' commitment to imprudent behaviors, motivational factors of unrealistic optimism may also play a role.

*“ I warn people when someone else does something. ...But when it comes to myself, I think ‘nothing will happen to me.’ I can protect myself... I am more careful than they are, I don’t know how?”* (Mrs. Tulay, Teacher, 34 years old)

Interview results suggest that unrealistic optimism sometimes may lead individuals to think that the perceived protective value of a measure is lower than it actually is or when the task takes a very short time, it makes it easier for individuals to commit imprudent behavior.

*“I do not lock my car when I will be there only for a very short time or I park where I block the way of other parked cars. It crosses my mind that it may be*

*stolen or someone may have a hard time since I am blocking their exit. 'But I think that since it is only for two minutes, it won't happen.' I neglect taking precautions, even though I know the possible risks."* (Mr. Aydın, firemen, 45 years old)

When all the findings are taken together thus far, it may be interpreted that this type of thinking leads to imprudent behavior or facilitates resorting to imprudent behavior.

### **Experience**

Data indicates that past experiences, which came up in all interviews, play a role in the participants' prudent/imprudent behavior. Findings indicate that in any situation requiring precautions, experience plays quite an important role. Over half of the participants stated that they behaved more prudently once they had personally had negative experiences.

*"...While driving the lighted butt of my cigarette fell off, and I bent down. When I looked up, I was in a field. It might have been a cliff. If I were to experience that again, I would not do the same."* (Mr. Hasan, firemen, 43 years old)

The findings suggest that not only direct but indirect experiences also are important in learning to take precautions. Indirect experiences may not only be related to the experiences of someone they know but also others' experiences cited in the media.

A large majority of individuals who have the tendency of prudent behavior also demonstrate a tendency to overgeneralize negative experiences in a specific area to behaviors in other areas. Based on the findings, imprudent behavior may have been experienced directly by the individual and it may also have been learned from others' experiences indirectly. In contrast to this, only two of the participants who admitted a tendency of imprudent behavior stated that the results of an imprudent behavior in any aspect of life caused them to be prudent only in that specific aspect of their life.

All the individuals denoted with imprudent behaviors stated that when they did not perceive the negative experience of an imprudent behavior as serious enough, they continued to carry on with that behavior. However, when they perceived a serious consequence, they ceased that behavior.

*"I had accidents twice while crossing the street; but I still do that... If it repeats, and I face serious harm I do not do those behaviors. But if it is not very serious, I may continue to do."* (Mrs. Zeynep, nurse, 30 years old).

Findings imply that the idea of unrealistic optimism is a reason or a facilitator of imprudent behavior and it is influenced by the experiences of individuals. Half of the participants used statements that remembered an experience as the reason for creating unrealistic optimism. Mrs. Selma, who is a nurse, while explaining the idea of 'It won't happen to me' as a result of imprudent behavior, said that "... it is

*because nothing happened to me so far.*” This statement summarizes this finding. Moreover, findings indicate that the idea of unrealistic optimism in any area may change and become stronger or weaker depending on the experiences (direct or indirect).

Overall, these findings indicate that unrealistic optimism may largely be a result of experiences. In other words, unrealistic optimism is the design of past experiences in the future in a certain area and they may be considered as the forethoughts that guide behavior.

### **Modeling and Upbringing**

Over half of the participants related their modeling behaviors and upbringing to their own prudent/imprudent behaviors. Findings especially indicated that modeling behavior may have played an important role in learning prudent behavior. A great majority of the participants with the tendency of prudent behavior said that they had models who also had the tendency of prudent behavior in their families. That the prudent role models were usually parents and mothers was stated by many individuals.

*“...my mother is quite careful, she behaves quite prudently. Usually I think I got this prudent behavior from my mother...”* (Mr. Mehmet, health officer, 30 years old)

Just a few individuals with a tendency of imprudent behavior claimed that their role models were influential in their imprudent behavior. They also added that the existence of individuals who outwardly displayed imprudent behavior encouraged others towards similarly imprudent behavior.

*“We may have been behaving imprudently since we may have learned from our families. They also do these behaviors. My mother is not very careful. It may be because of that.”* (Ms. Selma, nurse, 25 years old).

Analyses revealed findings that past experiences in teaching consciousness of prudent behavior and responsibility may have played a role in learning prudent behavior.

*“I behave prudently because of the experiences I had in my life and profession. I was a boy scout. I have been taking care of people since I was seven years-old. It may be because of this. Secondly, I am a sportsman... A marine. It is very important to exercise caution in sports ...”* (Mr. Orçun, MD, 55 years old)

Some participants stated that the number of individuals who behave imprudently is large and the reason for that is lack of experience regarding prudence, consciousness and responsibility, as well as insufficient education.

When modeling and upbringing practices are taken into consideration together, it is important to provide role models so that children in their early years can identify with and internalize attitudes and behaviors of prudent behavior. Once again,

parents as role models are important. In teaching the responsibility for prudent behavior and consciousness, a child's training in his or her early years is important. Especially in schools, in addition to basic life skills an awareness of prudent behavior should also be taught. Moreover, in order to encourage children to take responsibility and contribute to their learning of prudent behavior, scouting and other group sport activities may be useful.

### **Sense of Responsibility**

A large majority of participants linked their explanations of prudent/imprudent behavior to a feeling of responsibility. The findings support this claim in that if a person feels responsible for their own or someone else's security (in terms of both life and property), this is related to prudent and imprudent behaviors. In particular, individuals who have the tendency of prudent behavior explained that the reason for their prudent behavior was because they had a feeling of responsibility.

*"Since I am a teacher, I may be prudent because I teach children between the ages of 6 to 14. I have to be prudent in general. ... Because I am responsible for them... Definitely, I feel the responsibility of prudent behavior to society."* (Mr. Metin, teacher, 30 years old)

Findings are consistent in that individuals who committed imprudent behavior do not feel that they are responsible.

*"I used to behave imprudently. Then, I would always leave caution to others, thinking that others were responsible."* (Mr. Yılmaz, teacher 29 years old).

Almost all the participants who had the tendency of imprudent behavior said that they would behave imprudently when it was related to themselves; however, in cases where there is the possibility of others' being affected, they usually try to be more prudent. Findings indicate that conscience may have been involved in cases where others were involved; even individuals who had an imprudent behavior tendency started to be more careful. Very few individuals claimed that when someone with a high level of feeling responsible existed regarding prudence, they themselves might have postponed developing the same feeling of responsibility regarding prudent behavior.

*"When I am with my family and friends, I know that they are prudent. Because everyone thinks that they are responsible for others. Because of that, certainly one of them is careful. For example, if I am not, my mother, and if she is not, my sisters. If my mother is careful about everything, then I may not think I myself should be careful."* (Ms. Zehra, teacher, 26 years old).

This finding indicates that in order to acquire prudent behavior habitually, individuals should be conscious of a feeling of responsibility to themselves and others.

When the relationship between prudent/imprudent behavior and responsibility is taken into account in its totality, the following may be inferred: that individuals see their prudent/imprudent behavior in a situation partially depends on their decision as to whether they view the responsibility for taking cautionary measures as being

shouldered by themselves or others. Whatever the reason, it helps individuals to develop a conscious responsibility towards taking precautionary measures themselves or in others. Such a conscience may be taught/learned not only in early childhood but also in adulthood, following more experience of life.

### **Self-Esteem**

One-fourth of the participants used statements that lead the researcher to think that self-esteem may be related to prudent/imprudent behavior. Only one of these participants has the tendency of prudent behavior, others have the tendency of imprudent behavior.

*“I look at life positively. But is it contradictory for someone who looks positively not to value herself?... I mean, when I think that I do not value myself, then I may behave imprudently ...”* (Mrs. Reyhan, teacher, 36 years old)

Except for one, all participants who referred to self-esteem also stated that low self-esteem may be related to imprudent behavior. This finding is interesting since it may be inferred that cultivating individuals with high self-esteem may also help individuals develop prudent behavior.

### **Control Belief**

Half of the participants stated that their prudent/imprudent behaviors are related to control belief. A large majority of individuals who referred to control belief have the tendency of prudent behavior. There is a common characteristic in these explanations. All statements point to the role of internal control belief in prudent behavior. In contrast, none of these statements involve the role of external control belief. This finding may therefore be worthy of further investigation.

*‘In the end, I should not say why I didn’t do it. First, I should exercise caution ... I mean, instead of regretting, I am taking caution in the beginning... but I exercise caution thinking that I can prevent many things.’* (Mr. Mehmet, health officer, 30 years old).

Two participants who have a tendency of imprudent behavior similar to the previous examples made statements on the relationship between prudent behavior and internal control belief. However, these statements signify that the relationship between internal control belief and prudent behavior is specific to an area where the individuals faced serious harm.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Findings suggest that a few participants related their prudent behavior to high self-efficacy in their explanations.

*‘It may be because I work at a hospital that I do not like going to a doctor... If I am not too sick, I do not go... Doctors prescribe medicine; but they also tell patients to drink a lot of water and eat vegetables. I already know this...’*

*Indeed, I may not know this but I do it because I think I know it ... For example, a doctor prescribes medicine, I do not use that medicine much. I mean, I choose the ones I think are necessary. I know the treatment more or less. I learned how to deal with illnesses. I trust my knowledge. So I do not rush to the doctor when I get sick. I have the idea that I know this business.”* (Mr. İbrahim, health officer, 27 years old).

The finding summarized in the quotation above suggests participants sometimes think that when they have a specific ability and knowledge of an area, they may do imprudent behaviors anchored in self-efficacy. Based on this finding, it is possible to think that self-efficacy may be a predictor of imprudent behaviors in a specific area.

### **Sanction**

Very few participants related prudent/imprudent behaviors with sanctions. These participants said that sanctions might lead individuals to exercise caution. However, when the explanations on this were investigated, they suggested to the researcher that the prudent behaviors were obedience behaviors rather than espoused behaviors.

*“Sanctions have been introduced recently. For example, individuals in the construction sector have to obey the rules as much as possible. The employer sets up scaffolding, buys helmets, and has the workers use a strong rope when they work. These businesses were less controlled in the past.”* (Mr. Mehmet, teacher, 55 years old)

*“We wear safety belts only since we are afraid of penalties. I wear them for the same reason when driving long distances.”* (Mr. Hasan, firemen, 43 years old).

When the findings from the above-quoted statements are summarized, sanction may make sometimes individuals prudent. However, these cautionary measures are only taken as long as the sanctions exist and they do not go beyond obedient behavior.

### **Optimism**

While the interview form was being prepared, one of the goals was to get information on whether the participants' approach to life was optimistic or pessimistic. Thus, participants were asked to make predictions about their own futures. When the participants' predictions concerning their own future are analyzed, with the exception of one participant with a tendency of imprudent behavior, they all made positive predictions about their own futures.

*“Not ten years from now, or even two years from now, my situation will be different. Things will get better. Will be better, I will be happier...”* (Mr. Abdullah, teacher, 25 years old).

A great majority of participants with prudent behavior answered that they had pessimistic ideas about their future when asked about their own predictions.

*“My heart tells me that I will be more unhappy. I do not see my future as being good... I think I will, even Turkey will, be worse off than Iraq after a decade...”* (Mr. Tevfik, firemen, 40 years old).

*“I think it is highly likely that in the future I will be worse off... The future will be worse ...”* (Mrs. Figen, teacher, 40 years old).

When the findings are evaluated together with the quotations above, the participants with imprudent behavioral tendency were more optimistic in their view toward life. As pointed out earlier, findings indicated that imprudent behaviors related to unrealistic optimism and experiences might have influenced the unrealistic optimism. When all these findings are taken together, the researcher is of the opinion that the concept of unrealistic optimism might be a metamorphosized version of optimism. It is also possible that individuals who developed a more positive attitude towards life may have been developing the idea of unrealistic optimism through their experiences.

### **Necessity of Prudent Behavior**

The interviews also aimed to discover to what extent participants believed in the necessity of prudent behavior. Participants who had a tendency of imprudent behavior to use short answers implied that indeed they were aware of the possible negative consequences of imprudent behaviors. However, they still did not have internalized beliefs that they should exercise caution in the areas in which they behaved imprudently. It is as if these participants have the following understanding: *“It is necessary to exercise caution; however, this necessity is rather for others than myself.”*

All the participants with imprudent behavior, while explaining the necessity of exercising caution, began by saying that indeed, they believed it was necessary. However, as they progressed they provided various reasons why it was not necessary to exercise caution in the cases where they behaved imprudently. As understood from the participants' statements on this topic, this type of thinking either led them towards imprudent behavior or facilitated their resorting to imprudent behaviors.

*“I view wearing gloves and masks as things that are really required by medicine... I really believe that imprudence should be avoided and thereby mistakes in medicine... But we wear them only if we know that a person has a really bad illness, then of course we may feel that we need to exercise caution. For example, if the patient has AIDS or a disease which is contagious through skin, then we feel the need to exercise caution. But except for that, we do not wear gloves and masks.”* (Mr. Murat, MD, 35 years old).

(However,) When the statements of participants exhibiting prudent behavior regarding necessity are analyzed, the answers for this group show that they really believe in the necessity of prudent behavior.

*“The consequences of imprudent behavior are quite heavy. For example, our profession always requires caution. There are rules for even a small needle. You need to stick it back to its protection in its casing. Dressing a wound should be done with gloves because all diseases like the hepatitis virus are spread by contagion. It is very important to wash one’s hands after examining a patient, I mean one needs to be prudent. Because diseases are highly contagious. One needs to exercise extra caution under the conditions we work.” (Mr. Ali, MD, 36 years old).*

The findings above suggest that whether individuals have an internalized belief partially or not explains their prudent/imprudent behaviors.

### **Participant Evaluations on the Prevalence of Prudent/Imprudent Behaviors in Society**

In the interviews, participant evaluations were collected on how common behaviors that reflected their own behavioral tendencies were in society. Participant responses showed that groups with both tendencies made remarks that overlap. Mr. Yılmaz’s remark *“Imprudence is knee-length (meaning quite high). I mean that imprudence is much more, certainly there is much more.”* This statement summarizes the common view shared by both behavioral tendency groups.

All the participants with the tendency of prudent behavior claimed that the number of individuals with prudent behaviors was quite low in society. At the same time, all the participants with the tendency of imprudent behavior claimed that individuals with imprudent behaviors were rather higher in number than individuals with prudent behavior in Turkish society. When all the responses are evaluated together, it may be inferred that from the perspective of the participants, imprudent behavior is quite common in Turkish society.

### **Social Responses to Prudent/Imprudent Behaviors**

The analysis of interviews indicated that social responses for both prudent and imprudent behaviors were negative. Even though participant explanations for both types of behaviors point to negative responses, the characteristics of these responses may be different.

Some examples of social response statements for participant explanations are provided below in groups.

**Examples of Social Responses to Prudent Behaviors:** *“It is not your business? Why it is needed? Why are you so cautious? Are you going to salvage this institution? As if you know everything. It won’t happen to me, enough! You have been bothering people around you! I mean, you have been creating unnecessary stress and torturing people around you. Why do you exaggerate so much? It is enough. Never mind. Why do you fret yourself? God knows, how difficult life must be for your spouse?”*

**Examples of Social Responses to Imprudent Behaviors:** *“Why don’t you be more careful? Look, you do this like this; but it is very dangerous! Don’t please for*

*God's sake! How can you do things like that? Why do you tire yourself out? If you don't consider yourself, think about your children. I will complain about you to your spouse."*

When the response statements were evaluated together, there were more social responses to prudent behaviors and individuals around were quite uncomfortable because of prudent behaviors. When this finding is considered with another finding which indicated the prevalence of imprudent behaviors in Turkish society, since imprudent behaviors are prevalent, individuals might become surfeited with this type of behaviors. As a result, society may have undergone a desensitization of sorts.

### **Manner in which Participants were Influenced by Societal Responses**

Interviews determined that participants with both types of tendencies did not seem to be influenced by societal responses. Examples of statements provided by the participants on how they were influenced by social responses are as follows:

**Manner in which Prudent Participants were Influenced by Societal Responses:** *"I will certainly continue with the way I am used to." "I will definitely do as I know." "I am more determined." and "I think I will be prudent until I die."*

**Manner in which Imprudent Participants were Influenced by Societal Responses:** *"When my spouse tells me something, I sometimes say 'OK' not to upset her. However, if she does not tell me the next day, I don't take any notice. I complete my work claiming that 'it is almost over.'" "I continue with the same set of behaviors." "Even though my spouse warns me saying 'don't do it!', I always do."*

Although the participant answers denote that their behaviors were resistant to social responses, there are signs that prudent behavior might have been a stronger tendency than the imprudent behavior. One possibility is that prudent behavior might have been more internalized than imprudent behavior.

### **Conclusion**

Findings indicate the influence of many factors while prudent/imprudent behavior was being formed. Findings also indicate that the quality of early childhood life (in the family circle and the existence of role models who behave prudently/imprudently, the quality of upbringing, direct or indirect experiences), as well as the quality of adulthood life experiences were all important in the process of forming prudent/imprudent behavior. Moreover, findings also point to self-respect, self-efficacy, control belief and having an optimistic/pessimistic outlook towards life being influential on imprudent behavior. Another important point the findings indicate alludes to the idea that unrealistic optimism might have a role in the imprudent behaviors of individuals, determined by some cognitive and motivational evaluational biases (Blanton, Axsom, McClive and Price, 2001; Higgins, Amand, and Poole, 1997).

When this finding is taken into account for individuals with the tendency of imprudent behavior, they did not have an internalized idea of the necessity of taking precautionary measures. This internalized idea did not include them exercising caution. Furthermore, the importance of unrealistic optimism in taking self-protective

measures (McKenna, 1993; Tyler and Cook, 1984; Weinstein, 1989) was also supported by the findings of this study.

The statement that individuals with the tendency of imprudent behavior did not have an internalized idea of taking precautionary measures while committing risky behaviors reminds us of Festinger's claim that individuals change their beliefs in order to be consistent with their behaviors (cited in Festinger and Carlsmith, 1959). Thus, rather than attempting to change individuals' imprudent behavioral habits, it would be more functional to teach prudential behavioral habits. Finally, quantitative research should also be carried out to investigate the relationship between the tendency of imprudent behavior and many other related concepts such as control belief, self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, death anxiety.

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## Miscellany

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