

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

Campus News Archive

Campus News, Newsletters, and Events

3-5-2013

Baldelomar to Examine Children's Understanding of Ethnic Categories

University Relations

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news

Recommended Citation

University Relations, "Baldelomar to Examine Children's Understanding of Ethnic Categories" (2013).
Campus News Archive. 304.

https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news/304

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Campus News, Newsletters, and Events at University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. It has been accepted for inclusion in Campus News Archive by an authorized administrator of University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. For more information, please contact skulann@morris.umn.edu.

Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Baldelomar to Examine Children's Understanding of Ethnic Categories

Summary: Oscar Baldelomar received a University of Minnesota IDEA Multicultural Research Award for work regarding children's understanding of ethnic categories.

(March 5, 2013)-Oscar Baldelomar, assistant professor of psychology, received a University of Minnesota Institute for Diversity, Equity, and Advocacy (IDEA) 2013 Multicultural Research Award for his project entitled "Children's Understanding of Their Ethnic Categories." His research will focus on the ways in which first-generation Latino children come to understand ethnic categories and cultural identity.

Baldelomar will examine differences in how Latino and European American children come to understand that their ethnic categories are included in the more inclusive "American" category, forming a mental hierarchical system of categories. Given the complexity of the process, it often takes children several years to develop an understanding of how categories are nested within the hierarchy. To move down a hierarchy (e.g. "American" includes both white and non-white people), children must use logical discrimination, which is not developed until six years of age or later.

According to Baldelomar, this process of classification has significant ramifications on children's understanding of their own ethnic identities. His research shows that, because children can move up the hierarchy much earlier than they can move down, it takes longer for them to understand that people can be both Latino and American simultaneously.

"To say, 'I'm American,' a Mexican American child needs to understand that not all Americans are white, which is a huge step," says Baldelomar. "There is a lag of two years for Latino kids moving down the hierarchy. Because of the lag, Latino children take longer to see their relationship to 'American.' Hopefully, my research will have implications on how we design multicultural curriculum to help minority children see themselves as members of the larger American group and to help European American children see minority children as American, too."

Baldelomar is also interested in the labels children create to identify themselves. Focusing on concrete features like skin color and language, children adopt hyphenated labels both like and unlike those used by adults. Baldelomar believes these labels are an important expression of the self, one that he hopes to better understand as a result of the project.

"I'm very happy and privileged to be doing this research. We are undergoing change here in Minnesota, and growth in the Hispanic community will be significant in the coming years. I want to contribute to the community in terms of how we improve our multicultural teaching so all students can feel included. We need to be effective, and that has to do with inclusion."

The study will compare ways in which first-generation Latino children and European American children in grades 1-9 identify the ethnicity of people represented in various photographs. Baldelomar will start collecting data in west central Minnesota this fall.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow

intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.