

EquiLearn Mini-Lecture Series

Dr. Taucia González | University of Arizona

TRANSCRIPTION

Dr. González: Hello. My name is Taucia González, and I'm an Assistant Professor of Special Education at the University of Arizona. I identify as a Chicana Mother-Scholar from working class roots. And I'm joining you today from Tucson, Arizona, which is located on the lands of the O'odham and Yaqui people and in a shared borderland region with Sonora, Mexico.

Dr. González: My research focuses on multilingual young people with and without disabilities. It veers from traditional practices that used to focus on remediating students who struggle academically. And instead, I draw on the scholarship of Chris Gutierrez and her notion of re-hyphen-mediation, which turns attention to re/mediating learning ecologies, rather than students, so that historically resilient young people are supported better in learning environments. Essentially, my scholarship examines what young people can do when their voices, their cultures, and their languages are integrated into policies, practices, and pedagogies.

Dr. González: My research on multilingual learners with and without disabilities, intersects with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, because while we often think about race, sex, religion, and disability in relation to this Act, this Act also protects students from language discrimination, thanks to a class action lawsuit that was passed ten years later in 1974 called *Lau v. Nichols*. *Lau* was a class action lawsuit brought against the San Francisco Unified School District by students who are Chinese American students in classes with no meaningful access to the instruction or curriculum, which was all in English, and they came from Cantonese-speaking households. So, the Supreme Court did rule in favor of the students, arguing that language can serve as a proxy for

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national origin. In other words, students can experience discrimination and exclusion based on language differences.

Dr. González: This year, we're celebrating *Lau's* 50th anniversary, which held schools to a higher standard for multilingual learners. Schools are now required to identify using assess--assessments, which students should be classified as multilingual learners, or what schools call English Language Learners. They're required to provide them with programs and language support services, and to continuously monitor when--for how long students need these services, and when they no longer need to receive them.

Dr. González: Unfortunately, most legal frameworks do not attend to the nuances of students' intersectional lives, experiences, and needs. So, for multilingual learners with disabilities, this can actually lead to very fragmented educational experiences, and sometimes they end up missing out on the language supports mandated by the *Lau* decision and protected under the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Dr. González: One strand of my research seeks to better understand this intersection by working in collaboration with multilingual young people with and without disabilities, using *testimonio* writing as a pedagogy and a methodology to explore and rewrite their educational experiences. This collaborative work emphasizes the future dreaming and expertise of multilingual young people with and without disabilities, and it empowers them to understand that their experiences are uniquely their own, but they're also reflective of the collective experiences of many young people. Their *testimonios* are



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counternarratives to the stories that have been told about them, and to the research done on them rather than with them.

Dr. González: As we commemorate the significant anniversaries of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, of *Brown v. Board of Education*, and of *Lau v. Nichols*, these have paved the way for more equitable opportunities with students, but we must remain vigilant and committed to improving the outcomes and experiences for multiply-marginalized students who have intersectional needs. I thank the Great Lakes Equity Center for the continuous efforts to support schools in creating more equitable systems. Thank you.