

Melanie Domenech Rodríguez Speaks at 2023 D. Wynne Thorne Lecture

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Dr. Melanie Domenech Rodríguez (left) and Dr. Lisa Berreau (right), USU Vice President for Research.

As the 2022 recipient of the D. Wynne Thorne Career Research Award, Dr. Melanie Domenech Rodríguez spoke of her work, her life, and her goals at this year's D. Wynne Thorne lecture in April.

Domenech Rodríguez grew up in Puerto Rico, where her father taught her from an early age to fight injustice. He empowered her to face up to a bully classmate, which began Melanie's quest to advocate and negotiate for what is right.

Now a professor in the USU Psychology department's Combined Clinical/Counseling program, Domenech Rodríguez has two main goals in her academic work: to serve the community and to diversify the psychology workforce. Through scholarship, teaching and training, and mentorship, Domenech Rodríguez's work addresses health disparities in access, acceptability, and effectiveness of treatment for ethnic and culturally diverse people.

She acknowledges that there is tension between what therapies and interventions researchers find to be effective and what clinicians actually do as they help their clients; in that tension often lies a need for cultural adaptation to make evidence-based intervention accessible and effective for different populations. For example, in a study of the effectiveness of treatments, she has learned that treatments work better when they have been adapted for the language, methods, and goals of the specific people they are intended to treat. She has also learned how

translating interventions from English to another language can often reveal ways to improve the intervention in its original language.

In addition to these significant contributions to defining cultural adaptation in the field of psychology, Domenech Rodríguez has begun to seek clarity in the relationship between cultural competence and cultural adaptations. Her current thinking is that cultural adaptations can only be effective when carried out by those who exhibit cultural competence. Domenech Rodríguez's courses in multiculturalism and diversity prepare psychologists entering the workforce from the undergraduate or graduate level to attend to diversity and equity in their professional pursuits.

Domenech Rodríguez is particularly proud of the doctoral students she has mentored, all of whom have gone on to make their own impact on their communities and the field of psychology. She has chaired 24 dissertations to completion; 23 added specifically to scholarship on health disparities, and 19 were authored by graduate students of color, 14 of whom were bilingual in English and another language. As she continues on in her work, she looks forward to the new questions that new students will bring.

To learn more about Dr. Melanie Domenech Rodríguez, view her [faculty profile](#) or explore her [published works](#).