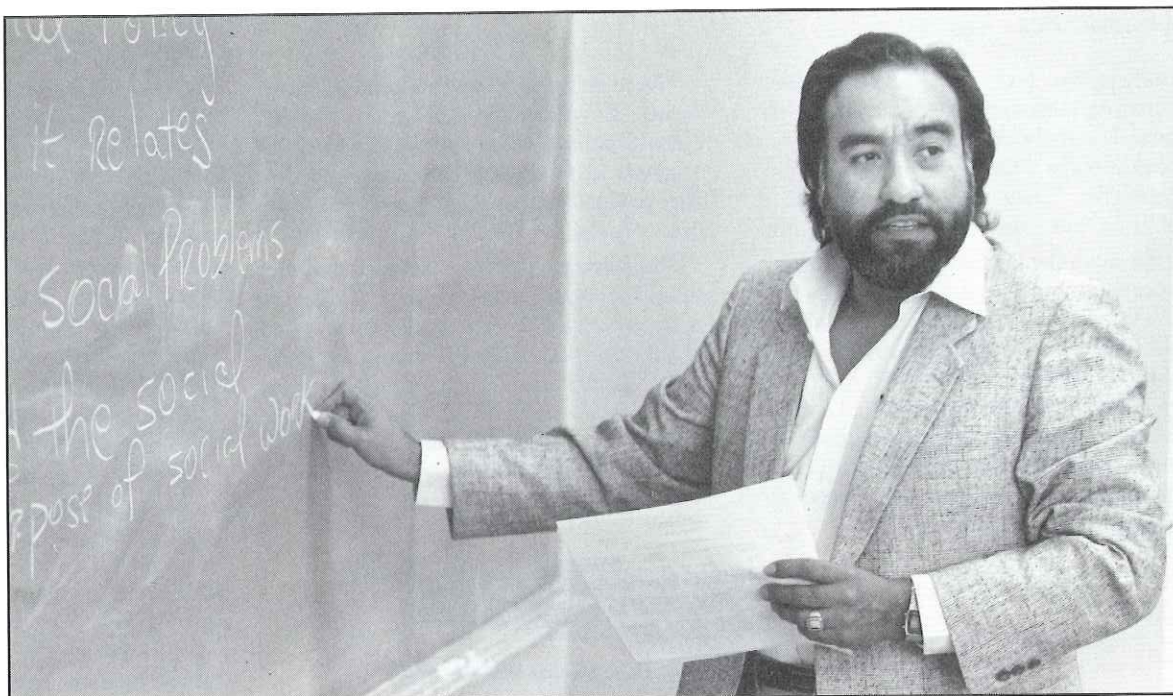


Santos Hernandez

"Education impacts your sense of identity . . . how you view yourself. You're never quite the same after a significant educational experience."



Santos H. Hernandez

Associate Professor, Social Work Education

GIVING SOMETHING back . . . people can make a difference . . . windows of opportunity. For Santos Hernandez these commonplace expressions are a fact of life — his life. Born in Somerset, Texas, Hernandez knows what it is like to grow up in a small, agricultural community.

"The small towns in the San Joaquin Valley remind me of home," he says. "I was surprised at the similarities. The Valley is very scenic, but I'm still struck by the harshness of life in the rural areas. It's a hard life. Jobs don't pay all that well, and there's a high rate of poverty."

It's a life Hernandez knows well. As a young boy and the second youngest of a family of 13, he earned money for school supplies and clothes by working in the fields during the summers.

"That's what everyone did in that community," says the associate professor of

social work education, who has fond memories of his youth and growing up in a very traditional Chicano family, where sense of family and responsibility — one for the other — is deeply rooted.

"My family has had the most influence on me," Hernandez says. "Because my dad died when I was very young, we looked after each other more than otherwise might have been the case. Also, the Chicano community — the extended family — was very supportive."

Hernandez' college education began, in part, because of a sizeable grant to bring Hispanics into college, train them as bilingual educators and return them to their communities to work in the school systems.

"At that point, very few Hispanics were working in the public school systems," Hernandez says. "It was a time when the Chicano movement of the Sixties created a social awareness that we have a responsibility to give something back to the community. As we walk through the doors of higher education and are cognizant of the

struggle that other people went through to open those doors for us, we then have a responsibility to keep those doors open for other people to follow."

The change from elementary education to social work came in Hernandez' senior year because he saw social work as an avenue that could make a difference. Today, he tries to instill this idea through his teaching and through his work with students.

"Education allows us to implant ideas and to cultivate them," he says. "As students are exposed to different perspectives and different ideas, they take that

BORN: November 1, 1949, Somerset, Texas.

RESEARCH: "The Role of Non-Profits in Providing Services to AFDC Clients," 1988; "Survey of Minority Doctoral Student Experiences," 1986-present; "Mental Health Services to Minority Populations: A Survey of Western States," 1986-87.

PUBLICATIONS: Include "Integration of Social Work Practice," manuscript in progress; "Life in Academe," Council on Social Work Education, Washington, D.C.

continued