

CRIMINAL JUSTICE EDUCATION:
A NATIONAL ASSESSMENT

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This paper describes criminal justice higher education in the United States. The focus of the paper is on the number of programs, faculty, and students for the entire country, by region and by program type. Using data from the Anderson Directory of Criminal Justice Education, a survey of major criminal justice doctoral programs, and a review of academic job listing the study concludes that criminal justice higher education is thriving but in need of a greater number of doctoral programs to support the emerging discipline. The study also demonstrates that there is a substantial unsatisfied market for criminal justice Ph.D.s.

INTRODUCTION

For a number of years, several debates have been waged in both criminal justice and criminology regarding their academic statuses and curricula within colleges and universities. A review of the literature reveals that, in addition to their mutual range of interest in crime-related areas, these fields of study have shared, albeit differentially, an "identity crisis" within their respective areas. This article is an outgrowth of research related to a self examination of one criminal justice department. As part of that effort, data were gathered with regard to the demand for criminal justice education, the size and types of programs offering such curricula, and the number and types of faculty and positions available. These data will be presented below.

CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The academic roots of criminology clearly lie in the realm of American sociology. Yet, criminology has long sought to define itself as an autonomous academic discipline. For example, Wolfgang (1963:159-160) asserted that criminology "should be considered as an autonomous, separate discipline of knowledge because it has accumulated its own set of organized data and theoretical conceptualizations that use the scientific method." Accordingly, Ferracuti and Wolfgang (1964) called for an integration of clinical and sociological analysis in criminology and, at roughly the same time, Szabo (1964) stated that several professions (i.e., rehabilitators of offenders, police officers, wardens, and formulators of criminal justice policy and research) required training in criminology.

The apparent consensus did not settle the level of the debate. Reckless (1964:4-6) stated that criminology was still "in a state of groping for identity." Suggesting that criminology will become an identifiable field when persons who identify with it develop a standardized program of training. The standardized program of training will enable criminologists to function with the same level of discourse as well as within currently defined operational limits, independent of whether criminologists are researchers, professors, or program administrators.

The level of academic development sought by these criminologists is still at issue. Jeffrey (1978:157-58) has maintained that "criminology must be an interdisciplinary behavioral science." Elsewhere, Jeffrey (1977) has stated that in order for this transformation to take place, the training of students in criminology must change to reflect the new paradigm: biosocial criminology. While Jeffrey's ideas have not gained widespread support, the debate over the status of criminology as an academic discipline is continuing and has carried over to the field of criminal justice.

The rapid growth experienced in the number of crime related programs is staggering. For instance, in 1960 there were 40 associate and 15 baccalaureate and graduate degree programs in criminal justice or police science, and by 1972 this number had grown to 505 associate, 211 baccalaureate, and 50 graduate degree programs (Foster, 1974). The development of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) and the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) along with the corresponding influx of federal funds for criminal justice education led to a veritable explosion of new programs. By 1973 approximately 700 programs had been established, and by 1978 more than 1,200 programs existed (Foster, 1974; Pelfrey, 1978). In 1984, the Joint Commission on Criminology and Criminal Justice Education and Standards (Ward and Webb, 1984) identified approximately 1,500 institutions that offered at least some course of study in criminology or criminal justice. Most of the growth might be directly attributed to the influx of federal dollars and LEEP. The "explosion" of criminal justice programs also produced a shortage of trained academicians. Recruiting and retention of new faculty for some institutions operated in a crisis atmosphere, with an occasional lapse into the "warm body" syndrome. The quality of academic faculty are not unique to crime-related curricula; indeed both clinical psychology and social work experienced much the same discourse and debate in their earlier, formative years. Some would argue that they are still coming to grips with this issue. This is an important question since it also effects curriculum offerings and course content, as well as related issues of academic excellence.

While some argued that the demise of LEEP funding would sound the death knoll for criminal justice education, there has been no substantial decline in the number of programs. Perhaps, more importantly, there has been a shift in criminal justice education from a vocational orientation of the late 1960s and 70s to the more social science based academic discipline devoted to research and scholarship (Pearson, et al., 1980). While some programs still cling to the notion that only "experienced" personnel can teach in criminal

justice, the shift toward more academically oriented professorate is undeniable.

The distinctions between criminology and criminal justice have also become increasingly blurred during the past decade. The fact that many criminal justice programs include criminology, and that many criminologists concern themselves with research in areas of the police, courts and corrections, often, while employed in criminal justice programs, has further muddled the differences. Indeed, the "identity crisis" in criminal justice is directly comparable to that of criminology and other academic areas, such as public administration (McCurdy, 1972). For example, Wood (as cited in Stephens, 1976:13) writes that "criminal justice has no standard definition and it is not likely that its meaning will ever be resolved. Even after years of development, there is no universally accepted definition of what 'criminology' should be." The major bone of contention in each area has been concern over disciplinary status. Several authors, have addressed this particular point of view. To Gibbons and Blake (1977:24), "criminal justice is not a discipline, rather it is a synthetic and multidisciplinary field of study devoted to analysis and control of lawbreaking." Status as a discipline, at least in the traditional sense, requires the compilation and development of a distinctive and unitary body of knowledge, while criminal justice clearly draws from such fields as law, sociology, psychology and public administration.

Related to this issue is the concern over the training of doctoral students for criminal justice. Thomas and Bronick (1984) clearly see sociology as the best locale for criminological and criminal justice doctoral training. Travis, (1987), however, believes that criminal justice is distinct, and that while it is interdisciplinary in nature, doctoral training for criminal justice needs to be separate from traditional sociology.

Authors such as Myren (1978) have cogently argued that the interdisciplinary status of criminal justice is one of its basic strengths and that eventually the area will become

"transdisciplinary" by concentrating in a broad fashion upon the concept of justice itself. In fact, there are also those that argue that disciplinary status for criminal justice may cause some harm. Webb and Hoffman (1978:354) have stated that disciplinary status involves some costs (i.e., exaggerated conformity) and benefits (i.e., improved status and prestige) which should be weighed since "disciplinary status for criminal justice may stifle the vitality and potential of the field."

Despite the criticisms of criminal justice education, it appears to be developing as a distinct field of study. Research by the Joint Commission tended to support many of the findings from the earlier John Jay study (Pearson et al.) that found evidence that criminal justice education is beginning to mature and gain acceptance as a relative newcomer to the academy.

The present study is concerned with describing higher education in criminal justice with an emphasis on graduate criminal justice education. The data relied upon in the study are from the **Anderson Directory of Criminal Justice Education**, a survey of major criminal justice Ph.D. granting universities, and a review of criminal justice academic job listings. These data provide the information necessary to describe the criminal justice higher education industry nationally, assess the need for persons with advanced degrees in criminal justice, and to comment on the current level of production of persons with advanced degrees in criminal justice.

The **Anderson Directory** is a national census of criminal justice programs conducted by Nemeth for Anderson Publishing Company.¹ The directory provides information about the size of the industry (number of students, faculty, programs, degrees awarded) and characteristics of the industry (kinds of degrees offered, degree mix, and staffing patterns).

Data from the **Anderson Directory** were supplemented by a survey of major Ph.D. granting criminal justice programs and a review of criminal justice faculty job listings. The

survey of Ph.D. granting institutions does not include programs that are integrated into departments of other major disciplines. Thus, sociology programs that offer an emphasis in criminology and political science programs that offer an emphasis in criminal justice were not included in the survey. The survey of the eight major criminal justice Ph.D. granting programs provided information on the number of Ph.D.'s awarded between 1985 and 1987 and the number of Blacks receiving Ph.D.'s during the same period.

Information concerning the need for persons with advanced degrees in criminal justice was gleaned from a review of criminal justice job listings. The sources consulted were the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *NELS Bulletin* (Academic positions section), *ACJS Today*, and the *Criminologist* for the period between 1985 and 1987. Each of these sources were reviewed for advertised criminal justice academic positions.

The analysis is presented in two stages. First, is the omnibus picture of criminal justice higher education across the nation. The focus in the first stage of the analysis is on describing the size and character of criminal justice higher education industry nationally. The second part of the analysis focuses on doctoral education in criminal justice. The concerns here are with contrasting the supply of doctoral graduates with the need for doctoral graduates.

Table 1 presents information concerning the size of the criminal justice higher education industry and degree emphasis within the industry. It is evident that the industry is thriving. We estimate that there are in excess of 900 criminal justice programs across the country, in excess of 140,000 students majoring in criminal justice, more than 28,000 criminal justice degrees awarded annually, and more than 10,000 faculty persons involved in teaching criminal justice.²

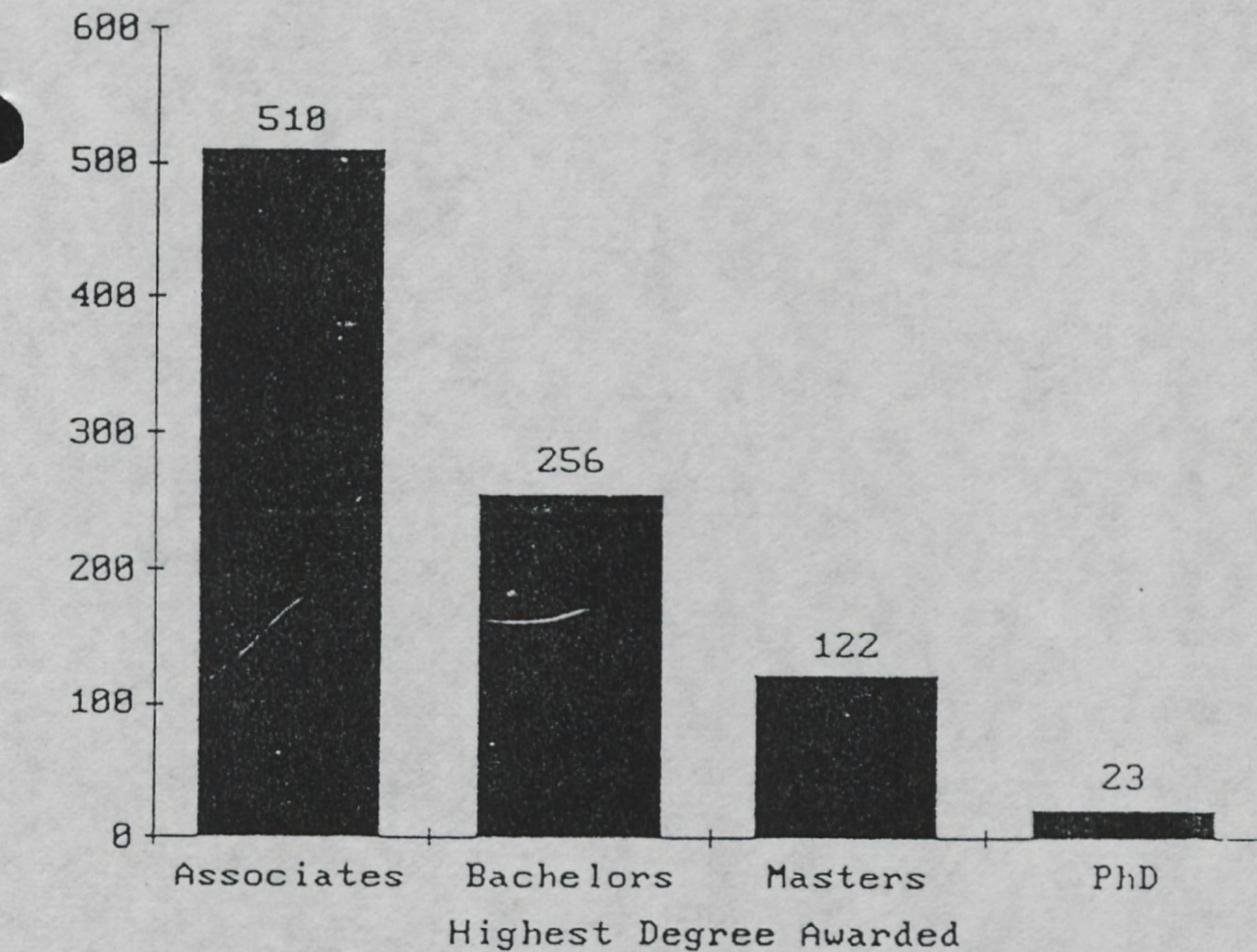
TABLE 1
Criminal Justice Programs by Academy of Criminal Justice Region, 1986-87

	U.S. Total	Northeast	Southeast	Midwest	Southwest	Pacific
Criminal Justice Programs (highest degree awarded):						
Associate	56.0	48.7	55.3	53.3	58.7	69.8
Bachelors	28.1	33.9	30.4	30.3	21.1	18.0
Masters	13.4	12.8	13.5	15.6	17.4	7.2
PhD	2.5	4.6	0.8	0.9	2.8	5.0
Number of programs	911	195	237	231	109	139
Students						
Undergraduates	95.7	94.9	96.4	95.1	96.1	96.4
Graduate	4.3	5.1	3.6	4.9	3.9	3.6
Number of students	142,307	34,497	27,824	30,204	15,937	21,554
Degrees awarded:						
Undergraduate	94.8	93.1	96.1	95.0	93.3	95.8
Graduate	5.2	6.9	3.9	5.0	6.7	4.2
Number of degrees	28,163	6,032	6,032	5,126	1,596	2,971
Criminal justice faculty:						
Full-time	3,522	773	807	772	389	551
Part-time	7,179	994	1,671	1,414	429	2,063
Ratio full/part-time	.49	.78	.48	.55	.91	.27

Estimates based on inclusion of an estimate of students, degree, and faculty in criminal justice programs that failed to completely report.
Source: C. Nemeth (1986)

While it is evident that criminal justice education is a thriving industry, review of Figure 1 makes it apparent that two year college programs dominate the industry. Nationally, in excess of fifty percent of criminal justice programs are two-year programs. Less than three percent of the programs surveyed in the Nemeth census offer doctoral degrees in criminal justice.³

Figure 1 Number of Criminal Justice Programs by Highest Degree Offered, U.S., 1986-87



Consistent with the observation that two-year programs dominate, is the dominance of undergraduate students in the student population and the prominence of undergraduate degrees awarded annually. Nationally, approximately 95 percent of persons studying criminal justice are undergraduates with a like proportion of degrees awarded being either two year Associates or four year Bachelors degrees.

Another observation from Table 1 is the extent to which the industry relies upon part-time instructors to meet programmatic needs. Nationally, nearly 70 percent of criminal justice instructors are part-time. The ratio of full-time to part-time instructors is .49 making it apparent that there are nearly twice as many part-time instructors as full-time.

Further review of Table 1 reveals the general consistency of the industry across regions. The only exceptions to this observation are the dominance of two year programs and the heavy reliance on part-time instructors in the Pacific region. To explore the possibility that prominence of the two year programs may account for the difference in reliance on part-time instructors the ratios of full-time to part-time instructors were examined by region and highest degree awarded (Table 2). The ratios⁴ presented in Table 2 reveal an association of the ratios with both degree program and region. It is apparent that as programs move from awarding Associate degrees to awarding Ph.D degrees they also tend to rely more on full-time instructors. It is also apparent that the Pacific region tends to rely more on part-time faculty than do the other regions.

TABLE 2

Ratio of Full-time to Part-time faculty by Region and Highest Degree Awarded, 1986-87

<u>Highest degree</u>	<u>Northeast</u>	<u>Southeast</u>	<u>Midwest</u>	<u>Southwest</u>	<u>Pacific</u>
Associate	.64	.19	.30	.47	.15
Bachelors	.67	1.36	.73	1.14	.75
Masters	.96	1.24	.88	1.39	.70
PhD	1.52*	5.00*	5.00*	3.06*	1.15*

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*Ten or fewer programs.

Review of the data presented above reveal a flourishing industry. To paraphrase, reports of the death of criminal justice education by the departure of LEAA and LEEP were premature. It would appear that indeed the "war on crime" sponsored by the 1968 Omnibus Crime Control Act created a new area for intellectual endeavor that has taken on a life of its own. However, it also appears that while the Crime Control Act may have breathed life into a new substantive discipline the discipline has yet to mature. Disciplinary maturity will come as the field of study continues to develop its body of knowledge and should manifest itself as a growing body of literature, number of scholarly journals, and Ph.D. granting institutions. Clearly our body of literature has grown, and the number of scholarly journals continues to increase. Where we seem to be lagging is in the number of Ph.D. granting programs that serve the discipline.

While criminal justice as a discipline has come a long way since its creation by the LEAA, its continued maturing may depend on the expansion of the number of doctoral programs. A discipline's body of knowledge is created by collectives that focus their intellectual interests on the substance of the discipline and train new people in that knowledge. Presently, there are very few of these collectives (8 to 12 Ph.D. programs focused on criminal justice)⁵ producing new knowledge and students of the discipline. Contrast this small number of programs focused on sustaining criminal justice with the number of other social science Ph.D. programs. For example, there are approximately 130 and 80 Ph.D. programs in sociology and political science, respectively. Simply put, if criminal justice is to sustain itself as a thriving discipline, many more programs must emerge that are devoted to producing new knowledge, and training new people in that knowledge.

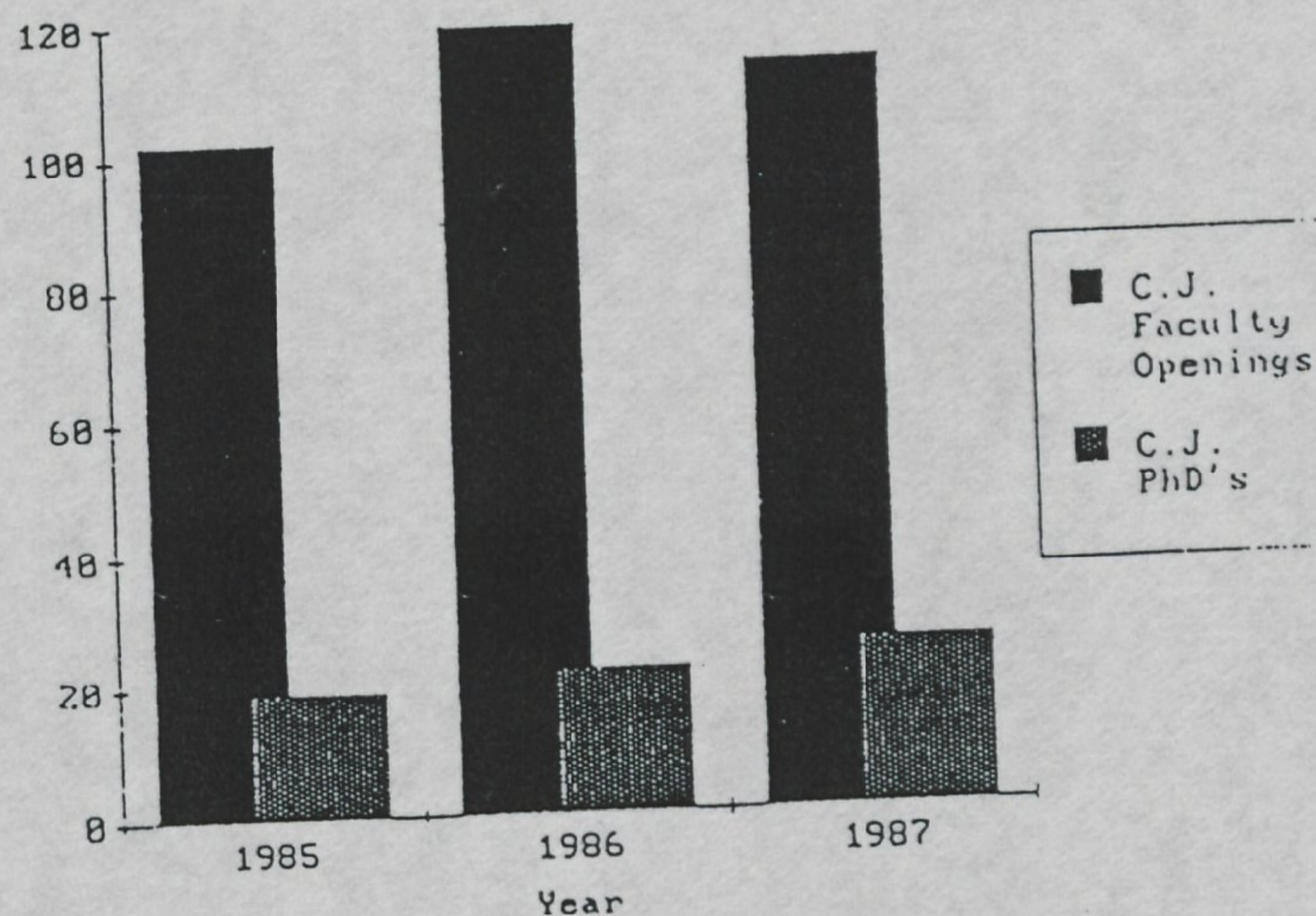
Assuming that increasing the number of criminal justice doctoral programs will speed the maturing of the discipline, the question remains, can additional doctoral programs

be supported? The number of students studying criminal justice suggests that there is considerable intellectual interest in the discipline and clearly criminal justice programs continue to thrive. It remains a fact, however, that many criminal justice students are practice oriented and not devoted to the development of criminal justice knowledge. Nevertheless, with a pool of between 140,000 and 175,000 undergraduate majors to draw on it appears likely that there would be sufficient numbers of students to support more doctoral programs.

Though the size of the criminal justice undergraduate pool suggests sufficient volume to support more doctoral programs, it remains to be demonstrated that there is a market for more criminal justice Ph.D.'s. In an effort to determine whether there is demand for persons with Ph.D.'s in criminal justice, a review of the academic market for criminal justice Ph.D.'s was conducted. The review compares the production of new criminal justice Ph.D.'s by major criminal justice institutions to the demand for new Ph.D.'s by the academic community. This is a very conservative procedure for it fails to include needs of government agencies or private consulting firms for criminal justice analysts.

Figure 2 highlights the discrepancy between demand for criminal justice doctorates in the academic community and the number of new Ph.D.'s produced by the most productive criminal justice doctoral programs. The disparity between the number of criminal justice faculty openings and the number of new Ph.D.'s is striking. During the period between 1985 and 1987 listings that advertise criminal justice faculty positions publicized in excess of 100 positions a year for persons with doctorates in criminal justice. During this same period the most productive criminal justice Ph.D. programs produced between 20 and 30 new Ph.D.'s. It seems clear that there is considerable demand for scholars with Ph.D. degrees in criminal justice that cannot presently be met.⁶

Figure 2 Number of Criminal Justice Faculty Openings and PhD Degrees Awarded, Selected Programs, 1985-87



CONCLUSIONS

To be sure, criminal justice has emerged as an academic area of inquiry and has demonstrated that it can sustain itself without Federal program support. What is all the more remarkable it that this has occurred in a time when other social science programs have floundered.

That the discipline has sustained itself, if not flourished, cannot be disputed, but it is not at all evident that the discipline has developed the infrastructure needed to sustain the development of a substantial body of knowledge. Presently, the discipline is staffed largely by persons whose training is outside the discipline. While this is essential when a discipline is in its infancy, as the body of knowledge grows and develops it becomes important that this body of knowledge become the focus of attention. This focusing

of attention is accomplished during the training of the next generation of scholars in doctoral programs within the discipline.

It is obvious that criminal justice higher education has grown to a sizeable mass. It is not as evident, however, that this mass is being served by an infrastructure capable of providing it new knowledge. The discipline must develop the capacity to generate new knowledge and pass along this growing body of knowledge to the next generation of scholars if the discipline is to thrive.

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NOTES

1. It is not clear how the list of criminal justice programs was compiled nor is it clear what proportion of questionnaires mailed were completed and returned. Nevertheless, the **Anderson Directory** provides us with the most complete current description of criminal justice programs presently available.
2. National estimates of the number of students, degrees awarded, and faculty were derived by adding to the **Anderson Directory** total an estimate of the number of students attending, degrees awarded, and faculty working in programs that failed to report that information. The estimates were obtained by multiplying the mean number of students, degrees, and faculty of programs reporting that information by the number of programs that failed to report that information. Because different types of programs have different average numbers of students, faculty, and degrees awarded the estimates were by type of program (highest degree awarded). The upper limits appearing in the text were computed by dividing the estimates drawn from Table 1 by .8, Nemeth's estimate of the completeness of his census.
3. The Nemeth census includes programs, particularly at the doctoral level, in other disciplines that offered concentrations in criminology or criminal justice.

4. The ratios presented in Table 2 were computed by dividing the mean number of part-time instructors by the mean number of full-time instructors.

5. The number of criminal justice doctoral programs varies depending on whether a more inclusive definition is used. The data that are presented in this section were drawn from a survey of Clarmont, Florida State (which did not respond), John Jay, Maryland, Michigan State, Rutgers, Sam Houston, SUNY Albany.

6. An additional finding from the survey of the most productive criminal justice doctoral programs was that during the period between 1985 to 1987 just seven Blacks received Ph.D.'s in criminal justice.

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