

Criminal Justice Studies: A Quietly Emerging Field

Academia has its fashions: black studies and environmental studies programs are much in vogue, and criminal justice studies have been showing a quiet upward trend.

In 1964, 78 degree-granting programs in criminal justice studies existed; now there are 310 degree programs, and 747 universities and colleges are receiving federal aid for some type of criminal justice studies programs—\$17.5 million in aid in 1970. About 65,000 persons are currently enrolled in these programs.

The term "criminal justice studies" embraces programs for policemen, court officials, corrections officers, and social workers. Until recently, such programs stressed training; but now there is a movement toward academic education and research and development.

In most cases the criminal justice studies programs have grown peacefully and quietly out of police institutes or academies, short courses, or summer school offerings. In at least one major instance, however, a new program has caused a campus controversy.

The University of Minnesota this year found itself involved in a dispute over criminal justice studies which resembled, in many ways, the dispute on campus over black studies a year before, except that the advocates and antagonists had switched roles.

The university began a black studies department last year, following a takeover of the administration building by black students. Many—faculty, administrators, and students—opposed the implication that violence could hurry the academic process of creating a new department. This year, without any fanfare, the university opened an office for criminal justice studies. The fledgling department had been established by administrative action and placed under a vice president's office. Opposition quickly rallied: professors objected to the "back-door" establishment of the department; radical students objected to its goals.

The department's initial request for course accreditation and listing in the course bulletin was turned down in December by the Social Sciences Divisional Council in the College of Liberal Arts. The Council invited the department to apply for status in the regular, established way, while criticizing the lack of faculty consultation. One professor said that last year he had spent hours with the black students explaining that a department could not be created by administrative fiat—that the proposal had to go through faculty committees; now, he said, the administration had apparently created a department by fiat, weakening the university's credibility with black students.

The Council's objections were somewhat overcome shortly before Christmas, when it was shown that several faculty groups had studied the subject, one as far back as 1960, and had recommended that the university become involved in a broad program of educating criminal justice workers. The direct impetus for the program had come from the Minnesota Legislature, which (unasked) had appropriated money for a "police academy" in 1965. So the Council reconsidered, and approved provisional accreditation for 2 years for the courses—not the department.

The criminal justice studies department does not at present offer a major, and does not have any plans for graduate education or research. Its three major components are sociology, political science, and law. Students are required to take courses from the departments of Afro-American studies, American Indian studies, anthropology, family studies, history, philosophy, psychology, political science, and sociology. The department's chairman, David Ward, estimates that 40 to 50 students are in the program now; about 30 are policemen.

The Social Sciences Council has appointed a special committee to investigate the academic qualifications of the department. Ward, who welcomes this move, insists that students in his courses will receive no vocational training. "There won't be any courses in measuring skid marks or pursuit of fleeing cars," he says.

Another major problem which concerned the Social Sciences Council is the location of the department. It is now under an administration officer, and Social Sciences Council members consider this inappropriate. The ideal home for the department, Ward said, would probably be the School of Public Affairs, which is now being organized. This school is degree-granting and autonomous, and may eventually offer graduate degrees. Ward has promised the Social Sciences Council, however, that his department will choose its home this year, before the School of Public Affairs has finished organizing.

The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Sociology Liberation Movement (a local radical group, comprised mostly of graduate students) oppose the criminal justice studies department, but had welcomed black studies. Several members of the faculty, mostly from the liberal Faculty Action Caucus, agree that the department does not belong on campus. One member has facetiously suggested that it become part of the Law School and that the name of the latter be changed to the School of Law and Order.

SDS also questions the integrity of the program, chiefly because of the Legislature's role in establishing it. The Minnesota Legislature has always been conservative and predominantly rural. SDS suspects that its motives in offering money for a "police academy" did not include concern for minority groups.

Minnesota received \$133,400 in federal aid to finance studies by criminal justice workers in 1970. This aid, well above the average amount, is administered by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA).

Henry Ruth, Jr., director of the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice of the LEAA, said the Institute is trying to help colleges develop criminal justice studies programs by giving them planning grants and sample curricula, drawn up by those who have successfully established such programs.

The programs have been established peacefully. At Michigan State University, minor rumblings of protest have occurred at infrequent intervals; but MSU and Minnesota seem to be the exceptions to the rule. A quiet revolution has occurred: criminal justice studies have established a beachhead in academia.—NANCY GRUCHOW