10-2003

Women in Line Administration: A Longitudinal Study in One State, 1972-2002

Norma T. Mertz
University of Tennessee, nmertz@utk.edu

Women in Line Administration: A Longitudinal Study in One State, 1972-2002

Norma T. Mertz

The article presents the results of a study of the movement of women in and into line administrative positions in one state since the passage of Title IX. The movement is presented in terms of position, year and type of district.

Responding to compelling evidence of gender inequity and a systematic campaign of political pressure to redress these inequities, Congress passed Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681) prohibiting sex discrimination in all aspects of education in institutions receiving federal financial assistance. Although the effect of Title IX on athletics was, and continues to be, the most publicly debated aspect of the legislation, athletics in schools was but one area in which gender discrimination had been noted. At the time Title IX was passed, men had dominated school administration since the Civil War (cf: Feistritzer, 1988; Hansot & Tyack, 1981; Mertz & McNeely, 1988; Ortiz, 1982; Shakeshaft, 1987), and the relative absence of women in the ranks of school administration was at odds with their dominance in the ranks of teachers, the position from which administrators are traditionally drawn. In 1972, women were 88% of the elementary school teachers and 49% of the secondary school teachers; men were 99.9% of the superintendents, 94% of the deputy and associate superintendents, 95% of the assistant superintendents, 98% of the high school principals, 97% of the junior high school principals, and 80% of the elementary school principals (NEA, 1973). And far from gaining a greater foothold, "the percent of women elementary principals," the only line position females held in any numbers, had "sharply declined since 1928" (Fishel & Pottker, 1977, p. 290). In the ensuing years, the question of the extent to which women have made inroads into the male hegemony in school administration has been debated (Cunningham & Hentges, 1984; Edson, 1987; Jones & Montenegro, 1982; McCarthy & Zent, 1981; Mertz, Venditti & McNeely, 1988; Valverde, 1980; WEEA, 1990; Yeakey, Johnston & Adkison,1986). It is clear that women

ISSN: 1541-6224

About the Author

Norma T. Mertz is a professor of Educational Administration and Policy Studies at the University of Tennessee. She has long been involved in research on women in administration and was formerly Director of one of the federally-funded sex desegregation assistance centers established after the passage of Title IX.

---

have made progress in advancing into the ranks of administration since the passage of Title IX and equally clear that they have not achieved parity with men (Jones & Montenegro, 1982; McCarthy & Zent, 1981; Mertz & McNeely, 1994).

The answer to the question would seem to be a simple matter of counting: count the number now; compare it with the number before. However, this rather simple, direct approach is thwarted by the continued absence of reliable, comparative data, and by the theoretical and methodological problems in the ways data have been collected (Jones & Montenegro, 1982; McCarthy & Zent, 1982; Mertz, 1991; Yeakey et al., 1986).

The problems posed by the absence of reliable, comparative data, and the need for longitudinal studies to be able to address the question of whether Title IX was making a difference in administrative gender was the impetus for the study. Data were systematically collected for the 30 year period since the passage of Title IX. The purpose of the study was to determine whether females were being successful in moving into school administration and if progress were being made what was the nature and extent of that progress. As females made progress, the purpose was to determine the nature and extent of that progress.

The Study

The results of the longitudinal study of women in school administration in a stratified sample of school districts in one state, 1972 to 2002, are presented in this article. Following different types of districts in one state was seen as a way to determine if gains that might occur in one type of district, e.g., large districts with many positions, might be matched by gains in other types of districts. Although easier to identify and access, it is important to consider that while large districts (those with student enrollments of 50,000 or more) serve the largest number of students, those

81 or so school districts represent only 4.7% of the type of school districts in the United States (NCES, 1999); and that other types of districts, particularly ones with fewer than 1,000 students, are the more frequent type (51.6%; 8,737 districts).

Using categories defined by McCarthy and Zent (1981) in their study of women in school administration (urban, suburban, medium-size city, rural), a stratified sample of 20 school districts was identified in a southeastern state. In 1972 the sample was comprised of 2 urban, 6 suburban, 5 medium-size city, and 7 rural school districts. In 1986, a medium-city district in the study on the upper-end in terms of size consolidated with a suburban district not in the study to form an urban district. The action changed the sample composition from which paired data were obtained in subsequent years to 3 urban, 6 suburban, 4 medium-city, and 7 rural districts. From 1987 to 2002 this composition was maintained.

The districts were asked to supply data for 9 line administrative positions (number of positions; gender of position holders): superintendent; deputy/associate superintendent; assistant superintendent; high school principal; high school assistant principal; junior high school/middle school principal; junior high school/middle school assistant principal; elementary school principal; elementary school assistant principal. Line administrative positions were used for the study as the best indicator of the movement of women into positions of authority in a school system.

Data were collected for 1972, 1982, 1986, 1996, and 2002. Title IX was passed in 1972. However, it was three years before implementing regulations were handed down to school districts by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Thus 1972 represented an ideal *a priori* point for considering the effects of Title IX on employment. Data were collected for 1972, 1982 and 1986, in response to the suggestion that while Title IX might have fueled some initial changes, the impetus to advance women had dissipated. No data were collected in 1992. To allow for a 10-year comparison, data were collected in 1986. Since 2002 constituted the 30th year, it seemed an appropriate point for the next, possibly last, data collection point.

Paired data, i.e., data from the same school districts for each time period, were collected, however there were changes in the organization of some of the school districts during the time period introducing variations in the data (e.g., 2 districts changed from a K-12 to a K-6 organization). Data were analyzed for the sample (n = 20) and by type of district (urban,

suburban, medium city, rural) to identify change in the representation of females in the 9 line administrative positions, 1972-2002, and from time period to time period, 1972 to 1982, 1982 to 1986, 1986 to 1996, 1996 to 2002.

Findings

An examination of the aggregated data for the 9 positions revealed that (Table 1) the number of positions increased (641-1248), as did the number and percent of females holding these positions. The number of females more than quintupled (120-642.5) and the percent almost tripled (19%-52%). The number of males holding these positions increased moderately (521-607.5) Given the large increase in females holding these positions, the percent of males holding positions decreased (81% to 49%). This is shown graphically in Figure 1.

As may be seen in Table 2, the increases in females holding positions were notable in each type of district: 5 times more in urban districts; nearly 8 times more in suburban districts; 4 times more in medium-city districts; and 10 times more in rural districts. By 2002 females held 53% of the urban positions, 56% of the suburban positions, 50% of the medium-city positions, and 31% of the rural positions. In sheer number, parity would seem to exist in 3 of the 4 types of districts, and while parity has not been achieved in rural districts, given the comparatively smaller number of administrative positions in such districts, the increases in the number of females holding these positions are notable and the upward trend evident.

The pattern and trend of change in the number of and positions and in the number and percent of males and females holding the positions by type of district, for all positions and for each position, by data points, and during the time period, may be seen in Table 2, numerically, and in Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5, visually. Aggregating the data for all positions, while meaningful, obscures variations by district and position. In terms of types of districts, although there were slightly different patterns in each district in the data intervals, in each district, in most intervals, the number of positions increased, the number and percent of females increased, the number of males increased, and the percent of males decreased, replicating the results of the aggregated composite for the 30 year period.

Table 1

Positions and Number and Percentage of Males and Females Holding Those Positions by Type of System, 1972 and 2002

All Positions

	1972			2002		
Type of System	**Total**	**Male # (%)**	**Female # (%)**	**Total**	**Male # (%)**	**Female # (%)**
Urban	371	292.0 (79)	79.0 (21)	730	343 (47)	389.0 (53)
Suburban	109	91.0 (84)	18.0 (17)	244	107 (44)	137.0 (56)
M-C	93	73.0 (78)	20.0 (22)	167	84 (50)	83.0 (50)
Rural	48	65.0 (96)	3.0 (4)	107	73.5 (69)	33.5 (31)
Total	641	521.0 (81)	119.0 (19)	1248	607.5 (49)	642.5 (51)

Figure 1
Percentage of males and females in line administration, 1972 and 2002

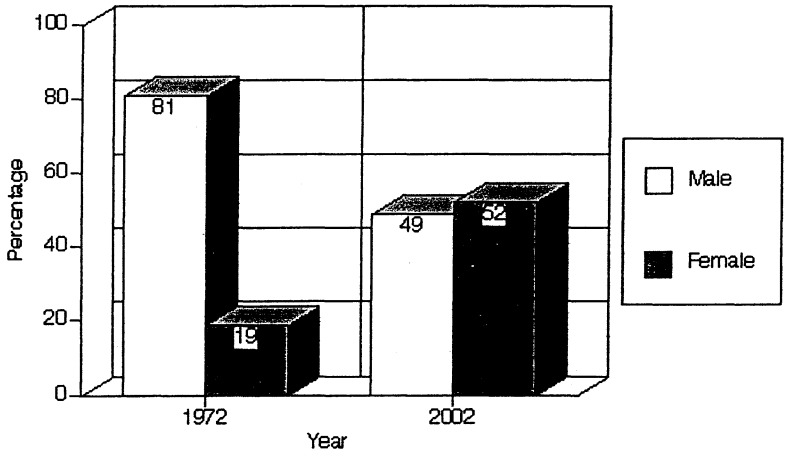


Table 2
Number and Percentage of Males and Females in Line Administration by Year and Type of District

Year	Total	Male Number (Percentage)	Female Number (Percentage)
Urban			
1972	371.0	292.0 (79)	79.0 (21)
1982	471.0	343.0 (73)	128.0 (27)
1986	509.0	324.0 (64)	185.0 (36)
1996	652.0	392.0 (60)	260.0 (40)
2002	730.0	343.0 (47)	389.0 (53)
Suburban			
1972	109.0	91.0 (83)	18.0 (17)
1982	101.0	73.0 (72)	28.0 (28)
1986	122.0	93.0 (76)	29.0 (24)
1996	206.5	97.5 (47)	109.0 (53)
2002	244.0	107.0 (44)	137.0 (56)
Medium City			
1972	93.0	73.0 (78)	20.0 (22)
1982	82.0	66.0 (80)	16.0 (20)
1986	97.0	73.0 (75)	24.0 (25)
1996	139.0	87.0 (63)	52.0 (37)
2002	167.0	84.0 (50)	83.0 (50)

Table 2 continues

Rural			
Year	Total	Male Number (Percentage)	Female Number (Percentage)
1972	68.0	65.0 (96)	3.0 (4)
1982	65.0	60.0 (92)	5.0 (8)
1986	92.0	75.0 (82)	17.0 (18)
1996	89.0	59.0 (66)	30.0 (34)
2002	107.0	73.5 (69)	33.5 (31)

Figure 2
Number of males and females in urban administration

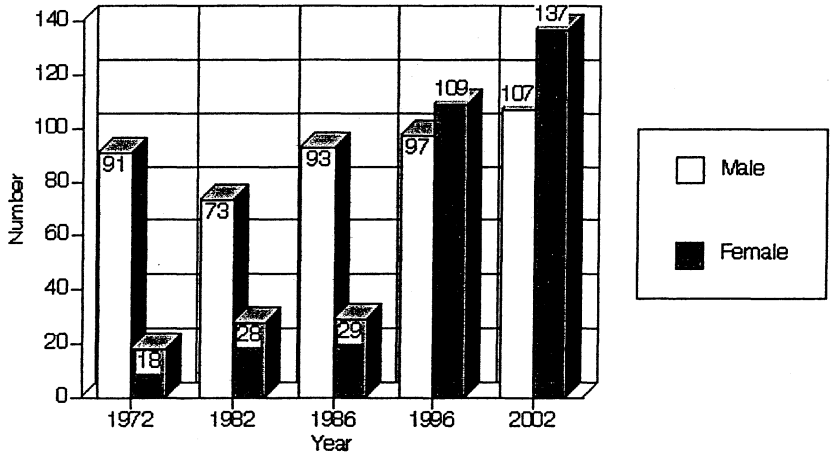


Figure 3
Number of males and females in suburban administration.

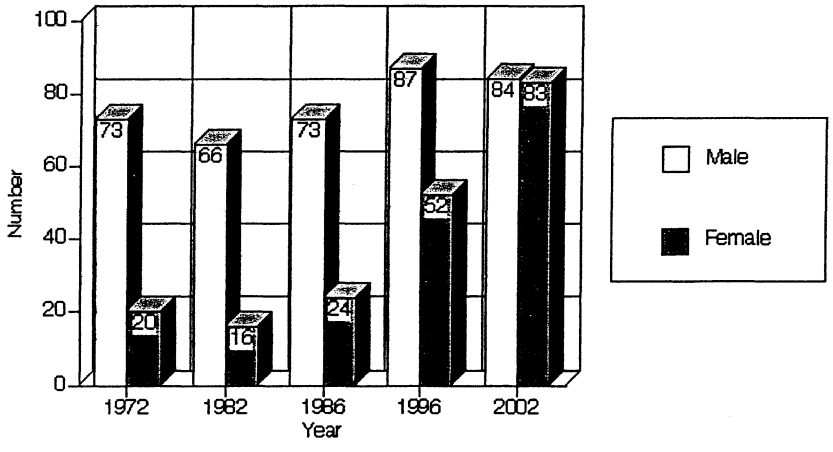


Figure 4
Number of males and females in middle-city administration.

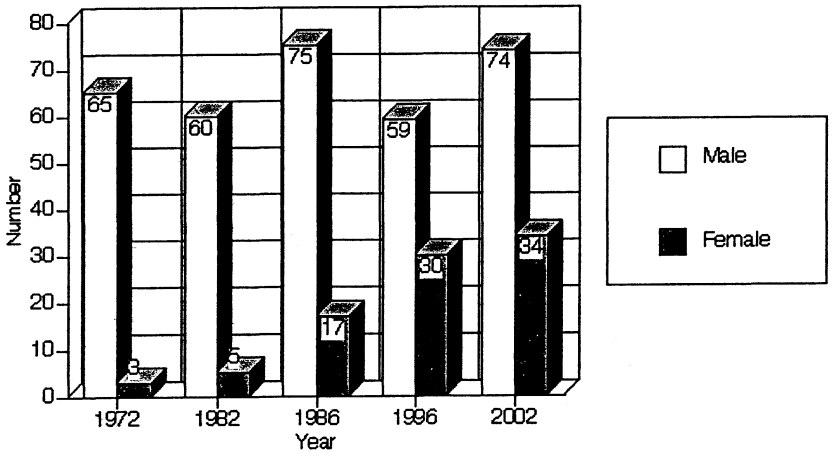
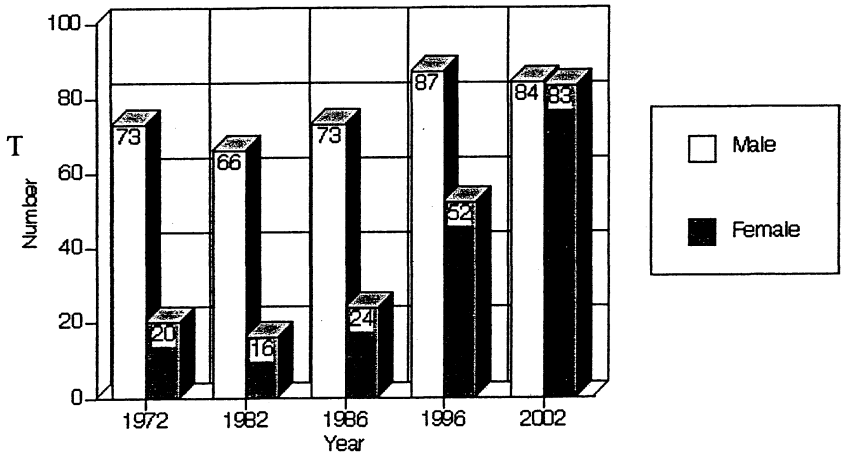


Figure 5
Number of males and females in rural administration.



Women in Line Positions

When the data are considered by position and by type of district during the 30 year period (Table 3), and in data intervals, although the overall trend is marked by increases in the number of females moving into these positions, the patterns are far more variable.

Superintendents

Of all of the positions, that of superintendent has changed least with respect to the advancement of females into the position. Females made modest gains in moving into the ranks of superintendents in the districts studied 1972-2002 (from 1 to 6), with the gains coming largely in medium-city districts (3 of the 4), and rural districts losing the 1 they had in 1972. Although females held 30% of the superintendencies in 2002, the range was from 0% in rural districts to 75% in medium city districts, with urban and suburban districts reporting 33%.

Deputy/Associate Superintendents

In 1972, none of the districts studied had a deputy superintendent position. By 2002, there were 14 such positions, and females held 6 of these (43%). However, although the number of positions and the number and percent of females holding those positions increased markedly in urban and suburban districts, with females holding 40% and 50% of the positions (respectively) in 2002, only 1 rural district had the position in 1986 and again in 2002, and it was held by a male, and medium city districts, which had earlier had the positions (held by males), no longer had the position.

Assistant Superintendents

The number of assistant superintendent positions increased only slightly 1972-2002 (16-19), however the number and percent of females holding the position increased (1-10; 6% to 53%) in each type of district. Females achieved parity or better with males in 3 of the 4 types of districts (urban, suburban, medium-city), and it should be noted that the position was relatively new to rural districts in the state.

High School Principals

The number of high school principal positions increased in every type of district 1972-2002 (76 to 109), as did the number and percent of females holding those positions (0-29; 0% to 27%). In 1972, none of the districts in

Table 3

Number and Percentage of Females by Year, Position and Type of District

Superintendent

	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
Type of System	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**
Urban	2	0 (0)	2	0 (0)	2	0 (0)	3	1 (33)	3	1 (33)
Suburban	6	0 (0)	6	0 (0)	6	0 (0)	6	1 (17)	6	2 (33)
M-C	5	0 (0)	5	0 (0)	5	0 (0)	4	0 (0)	4	3 (75)
Rural	7	1 (14)	7	0 (0)	7	0 (0)	7	1 (14)	7	0 (0)
Total	20	1 (5)	20	0 (0)	20	0 (0)	20	3 (15)	20	6 (30)

Deputy Superintendent

	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
Type of System	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**
Urban		()	3	0 (0)	1	0 (0)	3.0	1 (33)	5	2 (40)
Suburban		()		()	2	0 (0)	1.0	0 (0)		()
M-C		()		()	1	0 (0)		()	1	0 (0)
Rural		()		()	1	0 (0)		()	1	0 (0)
Total		()	3	0 (0)	7	0 (0)	4.5	1 (22)	14	6 (43)

Assistant Superintendent

	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
Type of System	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**
Urban	7	0 (0)	6	1 (17)	14	3 (21)	9	4 (44)	9	5 (56)
Suburban	1	0 (0)	4	0 (0)	6	1 (17)	8	3 (38)	2	1 (50)
M-C	8	1 (13)	4	0 (0)	8	3 (38)	4	1 (25)	5	3 (60)
Rural		()		()		()	3	1 (33)	3	1 (33)
Total	16	1 (6)	14	1 (7)	28	7 (25)	24	9 (38)	19	10 (53)

High School Principal

	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
Type of System	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)
Urban	39	0 (0)	52	4 (8)	47	8 (17)	56	17 (30)	69	22 (32)
Suburban	10	0 (0)	10	0 (0)	11	0 (0)	12	1 (8)	17	3 (18)
M-C	14	0 (0)	8	1 (12)	7	1 (14)	9	2 (22)	11	3 (27)
Rural	11	0 (0)	7	0 (0)	13	0 (0)	9	0 (0)	12	1 (8)
Total	76	0 (0)	77	5 (7)	78	9 (12)	86	20 (23)	109	29 (27)

High School Assistant Principal

	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
Type of System	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)
Urban	59	5 (8)	110	17 (15)	114	29 (25)	156	42 (27)	14	56.0 (38)
Suburban	6	0 (0)	7	1 (14)	25	5 (20)	41	15 (37)	4	13.0 (29)
M-C	6	0 (0)	6	0 (0)	17	3 (18)	35	8 (23)	4	9.0 (21)
Rural	3	0 (0)	3	0 (0)	13	2 (15)	13	2 (15)	2	6.5 (27)
Total	74	5 (7)	126	18 (14)	169	39 (23)	245	67 (27)	25	84.5 (33)

Middle School Principal

	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
Type of System	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)	Total	F # (%)
Urban	52	6 (12)	39	9 (23)	62	19 (31)	59	19 (32)	79	32 (41)
Suburban	42	9 (21)	29	11 (38)	19	5 (26)	16	5 (31)	21	8 (38)
M-C	10	0 (0)	10	0 (0)	9	2 (22)	13	2 (15)	16	7 (44)
Rural	22	0 (0)	17	1 (6)	6	1 (17)	6	2 (33)	8	0 (0)
Total	127	15 (12)	95	21 (22)	96	27 (28)	94	28 (30)	124	47 (38)

Middle Assistant School Principal

	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
Type of System	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**
Urban	21	5 (24)	37	12 (32)	52	23 (44)	41	7 (17)	98	46 (47)
Suburban	4	0 (0)	6	1 (17)	6	1 (17	23	13 (57)	27	18 (67)
M-C	8	0 (0)	8	0 (0)	10	1 (10)	16	4 (25)	22	8 (36)
Rural	4	0 (0)	5	0 (0)	7	0 (0)	7	1 (14)	8	5 (63)
Total	37	5 (14)	56	13 (23)	75	25 (33)	87	25 (29)	155	77 (50)

Elementary School Principal

	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
Type of System	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**
Urban	190	63 (33)	190	62 (33)	163	66 (40)	234	92 (39)	23	165 (71)
Suburban	26	9 (35)	26	13 (50)	43	15 (35)	53	32 (60)	6	41 (68)
M-C	42	19 (45)	41	15 (37)	39	14 (36)	44	23 (52)	4	34 (72)
Rural	15	2 (13)	18	4 (22)	30	8 (27)	30	13 (43)	3	17 (45)
Total	273	93 (34)	275	94 (34)	275	103 (36)	361	160 (44)	37	257 (68)

Elementary School Assistant Principal

	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
Type of System	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**
Urban		()		()		()	91	67 (74)	88.0	58 (66)
Suburban	4	0 (0)	5	1 (20)	6	2 (33)	47	39 (83)	58.0	47 (81)
M-C		()		()	1	1 (100)	13	12 (92)	20.0	16 (80)
Rural	6	0 (0)	8	0 (0)	16	6 (38)	14	9 (64)	6.5	3 (46)
Total	10	0 (0)	13	1 (8)	22	9 (41)	165	127 (77)	172.5	124 (72)

All Positions

	1972		1982		1986		1996		2002	
Type of System	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**	**Total**	**F # (%)**
Urban	371	79 (21)	439	95 (22)	455	148 (33)	652	260 (40)	730	389.0 (53)
Suburban	109	18 (18)	93	27 (29)	125	30 (24)	206	109 (53)	244	137.0 (56)
M-C	93	20 (22)	82	16 (20)	97	25 (26)	139	52 (37)	167	83.0 (50)
Rural	68	3 (4)	68	5 (7)	82	17 (21)	89	30 (34)	107	33.5 (31)
Total	641	119 (19)	682	143 (21)	759	220 (29)	1086	451 (42)	1248	642.5 (51)

the study had a female high school principal. In 2002, while the largest increases in number and percent of females occupying the position had occurred in urban districts (0-22; 0% to 32%), there were modest increases in medium-city (0-3; 0% to 27%), suburban (0-3; 0% to 18%), and rural (0-1; 0% to 8%) districts.

High School Assistant Principals

The number of high school assistant principal positions increased more than threefold (74-259.5), and the number and percent of females holding these positions increased markedly (5-84.5; 7% to 33%) during the 30 years. In 1972, only urban districts had female high school assistant principals. In 2002, while those urban districts experienced the largest growth in the movement of females into the position (5-56; 8% to 37%), growth occurred in every other type of district.

Middle School/Junior High School Principals

The only position in which the number of positions declined 1972-2002 was that of middle/junior high principal, however, the decline was minimal (127-124). The number and percent of females holding the position increased (15-47; 12% to 38%). The increases occurred in 2 of the 4 types of districts, urban (6-32; 12% to 41%) and medium-city (0-7; 0% to 44%). In suburban districts, although there was a decline of 1 position (9-8), the percent of females holding the position increased there (21% to 38%). Rural districts, which occasionally had a female in the position at different points in the 30 years, no longer had female principals in middle/junior high schools in 2002.

Middle/Junior High School Assistant Principals

The number of middle school/junior high school assistant principal positions increased fourfold (37-155), and the number and percent of females holding the position increased (5-77; 14% to 50%), with females approaching parity. In 1972, only urban districts had female middle/junior high school assistant principals, and only 5 (of 21) of those. In 2002, all of the types of districts had female middle/junior high school assistant principals. The increases in female assistants were particularly apparent in suburban (0-18; 0% to 67%) and rural (0-5; 0% to 63%) districts; advances were greatest in urban districts (5-46; 24% to 47%).

Elementary School Principals

In 1972, females held 34% of the elementary school principal positions; by 2002 they held 68% of the positions. Although the number of positions had increased during the time period (273-376), the number of females holding the position almost tripled (93-257), and the percent of females doubled (34% to 68%). The large increases in females holding the position appeared in each type of district, and females now predominate in the position in all types of districts save rural, where they are approaching parity.

Elementary School Assistant Principals

There were changes in the position of elementary assistant principal 1972-2002. The number of positions increased 17 times (10-172.5). The number of females holding the position increased from 0 to 124, a percent increase of 72%. The increases in positions and in the number and percent of females holding the position occurred in all types of districts. Although the position was relatively rare in 1972 (there were none in urban or medium-city districts), it was ubiquitous in 2002. Their dominance in the position appeared in 3 of the types: urban (66%); suburban (81%); medium-city (80%); and approached parity in rural districts (46%).

Discussion and Implications

This study in one state during the 30 years since the passage of Title IX suggests that women are moving into line administrative positions, in every position, in each type of district, albeit more slowly in some positions and in some kinds of districts. As might be expected, the increases have been largest in urban districts, but the increases have occurred in the other types as well. Although many factors may have contributed to this change in the gender demographic of line positions, Title IX would appear to have played a part as well. Without the force of law and the nation-wide training and outreach for school districts funded by the federal government through the sex-desegregation assistance centers, it is just as likely that there would have been little change and that the magnitude of change would have been less. Having said this, and realizing that it may be a matter of viewing whether the glass is half empty or half filled, and accepting that fundamental change takes time, it is *30 years* since the passage of Title IX, and one might have expected greater advances in all positions, in all types of districts during the period.

Although the percent of females holding administrative positions overall is at or inching toward parity in all types of districts, the movement of women into specific positions is considerably more varied. Given that there can be only one superintendent per district, and the fact that females have made such modest gains in moving into the position during the 30 years, and those largely in one kind of district, may not be surprising. However, given the turnover in the position, the paucity of females in the position suggests that the superintendency may not only be counter to the trend evident in most other positions, but particularly resistant to the entry of females.

As with the position of superintendent, most school districts have only one deputy or associate superintendent. Interesting questions arise when certain factors are considered, that is the fact that none of the districts even had such a position in 1972, and the notable movement of women into the position in two of the four types of districts (urban and suburban), offset by their disappearance or the disappearance of the position from the two other types of districts (medium-city and suburban). At least for urban and suburban districts, females would seem to be relatively competitive for the position. Although the statistical data do not allow for clear speculation, since this is the position directly under superintendent, is this positioning female position-holders for moving into the superintendency, at least in some kinds of districts? Or is it something else, perhaps the ultimate, impermeable glass ceiling for female aspirants, with just enough leakage into the superintendency to provide an unprovable hypothesis? The key may lie in how many deputy/associate superintendents positions there are and the areas of responsibility female deputy/associate superintendents hold.

As with the position of deputy/associate superintendent, the small increases in the number of females holding the position of assistant superintendent raises similar questions, but their positioning in all types of districts, seems more suggestive of a greater receptivity to females holding that position. Females have achieved parity or better with males in 3 of the 4 types of districts (urban, suburban, medium-city), and the position is still relatively new in rural districts.

The position of high school principal has been seen as particularly resistant to the advancement of females. The modesty of increases in female position-holders 1972 to 2002, might be suggestive of its continued resistance. Nevertheless, the increases in female office holders are real, in all types of districts, and changes in the situation of females in the gateway

position, high school assistant principal, suggest that the trend is likely to continue.

There were increases in the number of female assistant principals in high schools, and female assistants could be found in all types of districts. Although parity has not been achieved in the position, even after 30 years, the trend toward increasing numbers of females in the position is clear. The position has traditionally served as the gateway to the position of high school principal, and it is reasonable to speculate that increases in the number of female assistant principals will translate into increases in the number of females in high school principals in the future.

Increases in the number of females holding the position of middle/junior high school principal combined with dramatic increases in the number of positions and of females holding assistant principal positions in middle/junior high schools, suggest that the middle school has become far more receptive to females since 1972. It is interesting to note that increases in female assistant principals in the position closely match increases in the number of positions, suggesting that females were more likely than males to get the new positions.

That females now dominate the position of elementary school principal in three of the four types of districts studied may not seem surprising given the number of female elementary teachers. Nevertheless, females were only 34% of the elementary school principals in 1972. The advancement of females suggests more than receptivity in the position. It suggests the impact of Title IX. Is it also, making allowances for differences in resistance, a suggestive portend of the potential for change in other positions?

Similarly, the overwhelming increases in the number of elementary assistant principal positions since 1972, and the clear domination of females in those positions, suggest that elementary school positions are particularly, perhaps stereotypically, receptive to the appointment of females. The movement of females into elementary school administration in the last 30 years, and their domination in those positions, suggest the impact of Title IX. The movement may be a portend of the potential for changing the gender demographics of other positions, making allowances for differences in resistance in those positions.

The variations in change among positions, and of receptivity to females in the positions, appears to be following an interesting pattern. A hierarchy of power and influence exists in school organization. Central-office line positions are perceived to have more power and influence than

staff positions. Within central office line positions, superintendents are perceived to have the greatest power and influence, with associate and assistant superintendents having progressively less. Within school-based line positions, the older the age of students served, the greater the power and influence that is perceived to accrue to the position holder that heads the school. Thus high school principals are perceived to be more influential than middle-school principals, and far more influential than elementary school principals. The relationship between central office and school based office holders is a bit more complex and idiosyncratic to the district.

Looking at the data and the pattern of advancement of women into specific positions, female advances appear to follow the line of perceived power and influence. Females have moved into the positions at the lower rungs of the power and influence ladder (elementary principal, assistant principal and middle school assistant principal) in greater numbers in all districts than into other positions, and it is in these positions that women have not merely achieved parity, but dominance in the last 30 years. However, as one moves up the rungs of the ladder, the extent and rate of progress are slower. There are fewer females holding high school principal positions than, for example, middle school principal positions, and in the later position, females are closer to parity than in the former one. Further, as one moves up the rungs of the ladder, there is greater variability in the percent of females holding the position.

At the central office level, which involves a smaller number of positions, while females have moved into each position, and females have achieved overall parity as assistant superintendents, the reality is that advances in urban and suburban districts obscure the relative lack of progress in rural and medium-city districts, and true parity in all districts in these positions may be a distant goal. The position of superintendent, the so-called "top spot," appears to be the slowest, perhaps the most resistant position (to the advancement of females), parity in medium-city districts in this study not-withstanding, and the question of whether or when parity in the position might be achieved or exceeded remains open.

The findings of the study apply solely to one state and to the districts selected at one point in time to represent that state. They can not be said to be predictive of what has happened in other states, but they are, perhaps, suggestive of the pattern of change in other states, with the greatest gains being made in urban districts and the smallest gains in rural districts. Given the results of this study, and of the studies of the patterns of movement in the largest districts, considerable gains for females are anticipated in the

large school districts. Again, however, it is important to note that urban districts are the least frequent type.

Concluding Thought

When the study was begun 30 years ago, we wondered whether and what impact Title IX would have in affecting change in the long-standing hegemony of males in line administrative positions; and after changes became evident, whether the changes would be sustained or transitory and how long it might take for females to hold a large enough number of positions so that they were not "exceptions." As co-director of the Southeast Sex Desegregation Assistance Center, in the wake of Title IX, the federally-funded agency charged with "helping" school districts throughout the 8-state Southeast understand and comply with Title IX, I was both hopeful and skeptical: hopeful that progress would be made; skeptical about the hope and about the time it would take to make progress. Progress was not inevitable; particularly as attention to Title IX and to its enforcement waned, except perhaps with respect to athletics. The progress that has been made in the state used in the study, in all types of districts, is heartening, as is the portend for continued progress in the future. That it has taken 30 years to get to this point — more than my naive hopefulness anticipated — in no way diminishes that achievement. However, it does beg the question of how long, if ever, it will take for women to fulfill Ella Flagg's (1905) prophecy that they are "destined to rule the schools of every city" (cited in Hansot & Tyack, 1981).

Endnotes

Note: All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number in the text and tables.

References

Cunningham, L., & Hentges, J. T. (1984). *The American superintendency: 1982.* Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

Edson, S. K. (1987, Winter). Voices from the present: Tracking the female administrative aspirant. *Journal of Educational Equity and Leadership, 7*(4), 261-277.

Feistritzer, E. (1988). *Administrators of public schools. A report.* Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Information.

Fishel, A., & Pottker, J. (1977). Performance of women principals: A review of behavioral and attitudinal studies. In A. Fishel & J. Pottker (Eds.), *Sex bias in the schools: The research evidence.* Rutherford, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press.

Hansot, E., & Tyack, D. (1981). *The dream deferred: A golden age for women in school administration.* Stanford, CA: Institute for Research on Educational Finance and Governance.

Jones, E. H., & Montenegro, X. P. (1982). *Recent trends in the representation of women and minorities in school administration and problems in documentation.* Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

McCarthy, M., & Zent, A. (1981, Fall). School administrators: 1980 Profile. *Planning and Changing, 12*(3), 145-161.

Mertz, N. T. (1991). Females in school administration: Making sense of the numbers. *Planning and Changing, 22*(2), 34-45.

Mertz, N. T., & McNeely, S. R. (1988, Fall). What's happening to school administration: Gender in line administration. *Planning and Changing, 19*(3), 166-177.

Mertz, N. T., & McNeely, S. R. (1994, January). How are we doing? Women in urban school administration. *Urban Education, 28*(4), 361-372.

Mertz, N. T., & McNeely, S. R. (1995, October). *Gender and administration: A longitudinal study.* Paper presented at the AERA-SIG: Research on Women, Fall Conference. Birmingham, AL.

Mertz, N. T., Venditti, F. P., & McNeely, S. R. (1988, April). *The changing profile of school administration.* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting. New Orleans, LA

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (1999). *Common Core of Data.* Http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/address.html

National Education Association (NEA). (1973). *25th Biennial salary survey of professional personnel 1972-1973.* Washington, DC: NEA Research Division.

Ortiz, F. I. (1982). *Career patterns in education.* New York, NY: Praeger.

Shakeshaft, C. (1987). *Women in educational administration.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. (20 U.S.C. 1681).

Valverde, L. (1980, Fall). Promotion socialization: The informal process in large urban districts and its adverse affect on non-whites and women. *Journal of Educational Equity and Leadership, 1*(1), 36-46.

Women's Educational Equity Act Publishing Center Digest (WEEA). (1990, August). Women in school administration. Overcoming the barriers to advancement. *Women's Educational Equity Act Publishing Center Digest.* Newton, MA: Education Development Center.

Yeakey, C. C., Johnston, G. S., & Adkison, J. A. (1986, Summer). In pursuit of equity: A review of research on minorities and women in educational administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 22*(3), 110-149.