DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 291 148 EA 019 874

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TITLE School Administration: Gender, Position, and District.
PUB DATE Nov 87
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Mobile, AL, November 11-13, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Characteristics; *Administrator Selection; Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; Females; *School Districts; *School Statistics; *Sex Bias; Sex Discrimination
IDENTIFIERS Tennessee

ABSTRACT

A 1987 study by Mertz, McNeely, and Venditti revealed an increase in the number and percentage of females in administrative positions in 44 of the largest school districts in the United States from 1972 to 1986. This follow-up study investigates whether the findings from the preceding study were representative of the country as a whole or restricted to large school districts. Accordingly, a proportional selection of 20 school districts in Tennessee were investigated--two urban, six suburban, five medium-size city, and seven rural districts-- for 1972, 1982, and 1986. Data were analyzed by individual district, type of district, and the entire sample of 20 districts to see if there had been changes in the representation of females in each of nine administrative positions during this period. Aggregated data (by position) for the entire sample of 20 districts were compared with data from urban districts to see the statistical effects of urban districts. Although males continued to dominate administrative positions in all four types of districts, holding an average of 80 percent of the positions from 1972 to 1986, results showed that the percentage of females increased steadily in urban and rural districts, and irregularly in suburban and medium-city districts. These findings suggest that the increasing number of females in administrative positions in large districts nationwide do in fact reveal a general trend that is occurring in other kinds of districts, albeit more slowly. Bar charts compare the number of males and females by type of district, while a table shows the results of t-tests to determine the significance of changes in numbers of female position holders by time period and type of district. (TE)

School Administration:

Gender, Position, and District

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Paper presented at

Mid-South Educational Association

(MSERA) Annual Conference

Mobile, Alabama

November, 1987

School Administration: Gender, Position, and District

The absence of reliable, comparative, national data for considering gender as a factor in school administration has been duly documented (Mertz, McNeely, Venditti, 1987; Yeakey, Johnston, Adkison, 1986; Jones & Montenegro, 1982; McCarthy & Zent, 1980). In its absence, claims about the decline of females in school administration or conversely, their increase in school administration, remain irrefutable. Attempts to remedy this lack have resulted in information about certain positions (Cunningham and Hentges, 1984; Jones and Montenegro, 1982) and regions of the country (McCarthy and Zent, 1980).

A study of line administrative positions[1] in forty-four of the largest (student enrollment) school districts in the nation, 1972-1986, added to the missing knowledge-base. In that study, Mertz, McNeely and Venditti (1987) found that the number and percent of females had increased in each position, 1972-1986, and that the increases were significant except for elementary school assistant principals. While recognizing the continued dominance of males in line administrative positions at all levels except in elementary schools, the results suggested a trend toward the increasing representation of females in line administration. In considering the results, it was reasonable to question whether the findings were representative of what was going on in the country, a harbinger of things to come, or idiosyncratic to large school districts. To address that question a follow-up study was undertaken using kind/type of school district as the variable.

Design

The study looked at four types of school districts: rural, suburban, medium-size city, and urban, using definitions identified and applied by McCarthy and Zent (1981)[2] in one state, Tennessee. The number of school districts per type was selected roughly proportionate to its representation in the state at the time of the study, two urban (the sum total of all urban districts in the state)[3], six suburban, five medium-size city, and seven ural.

As with the first study, the period studied was 1972-1986, and the focus of attention was gender in line administrative positions (see note 1). To allow for comparison with the prior study, data were sought for three points in time, 1972, 1982, 1986. In 1972, Title IX was passed by Congress. It called attention to the relative absence of females in school administration and proscribed discrimination on the basis of sex in the appointment of school administrators. The implementing regulations for Title IX came down in 1975, so 1972 predated legislative pressure to appoint females. If 1972 was a year that predated such pressure, 1982 was a year in which both social and legislative pressure to appoint females was evident (Weber, Feldman, Poling, 1981; Ortiz, 1982; Jones & Montenegro, 1982. Time, 1982). It is equally evident that 1986 represents a time in which pressure to appoint females to administrative positions was less obvious.

Data about the total number of positions and the gender of the office holders for 1972, 1982, and 1986 were sought and secured from each of the 20 identified school districts. The state department of education, Directory of Public Schools for 1972 and 1982, and

informants within each school district (contacted by telephone), were used to fill in missing data and verify information provided.

Data were analyzed by individual district, type of district, and the entire sample of 20 districts to see if there had been changes in the representation of females in each of the nine administrative positions 1972-1986, 1972-1982, 1982-1986. Paired t-tests were used to see if the changes noted were significant. Aggregated data (by position) for the entire sample of 20 districts were compared with data from urban districts to see the statistical effects of urban districts.

Results

Table I shows the total number of administrative positions and the total number and percent of male and female position holders by type of district (urban, suburban, medium-city, rural), 1972, 1982, 1986. The results differentiated urban districts from the other three types of districts. In urban districts the total number of administrative positions increased 1972 to 1982 and 1982 to 1986. The number of females holding these positions increased 1972 to 1982 and 1982 to 1986. The number of males holding these positions increased 1972 to 1982, but decreased below the 1972 level 1982 to 1986. These results replicated the findings of the prior study of the 44 large school districts in the nation (Mertz, McNeely, Venditti, 1987).

Suburban, medium-city, and rural districts differed from urban districts and had more in common with one another than with urban districts. In these three types of districts the total number of administrative positions decreased 1972 to 1982, but increased above

Table I

Total Positions and Male and Female Position Holders by Type of School District and Year

	Total Positions	Male #	Female #	Male %	Female %
Urban (n=2)					
'72	371	292	79	81	19
'82	471	343	128	73	27
'86	509	324	185	64	36
Suburban (n=6)					
'72	109	91	18	83	17
'82	101	73	28	72	28
'86	122	93	29	76	24
Medium City(n=5)					
'72	93	73	20	78	22
'82	82	66	16	80	20
'86	97	73	24	75	25
Rural (n=7)					
'72	68	65	3	96	4
'82	65	60	5	91	8
'86	92	75	17	82	18
Total (n=20)					
'72	641	521	120	82	18
'82	720	542	178	75	25
'86	820	565	255	69	31

the 1972 level 1982 to 1986. The number of female office holders increased in both time periods in suburban and rural districts. The number of females decreased 1972 to 1982, but increased above the 1972 level in medium-city districts. The number of males decreased 1972 to 1982 in all three types of districts, but increased beyond the 1972 level 1982 to 1986 in suburban and rural districts, and to the 1972 level in medium-city districts.

Males continued to dominate administrative positions in each of the four types of districts. In no case did they hold less than 60% of the positions, and on average, over the time period 1972 to 1986, they held 80% of the positions. The percentage of females increased steadily in urban and rural districts, and irregularly in suburban and medium-city districts.

Aggregating the totals for all of the districts obscures differences among kinds of districts by showing steady increases in the numbers of positions 1972 to 1982 and 1982 to 1986, and increases in the number and percent of females holding administrative positions.

Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 compare the number of males and females by type of district. They show graphically the continued dominance of males in all types of districts, the growing representation of females in all types of districts, and the varied pattern of male representation by type of district. Visually, the increases in female representation in urban and rural districts appear most striking despite their widely different numbers.

Table II shows the results of t-tests used to determine the significance of changes in numbers of female position holders by time

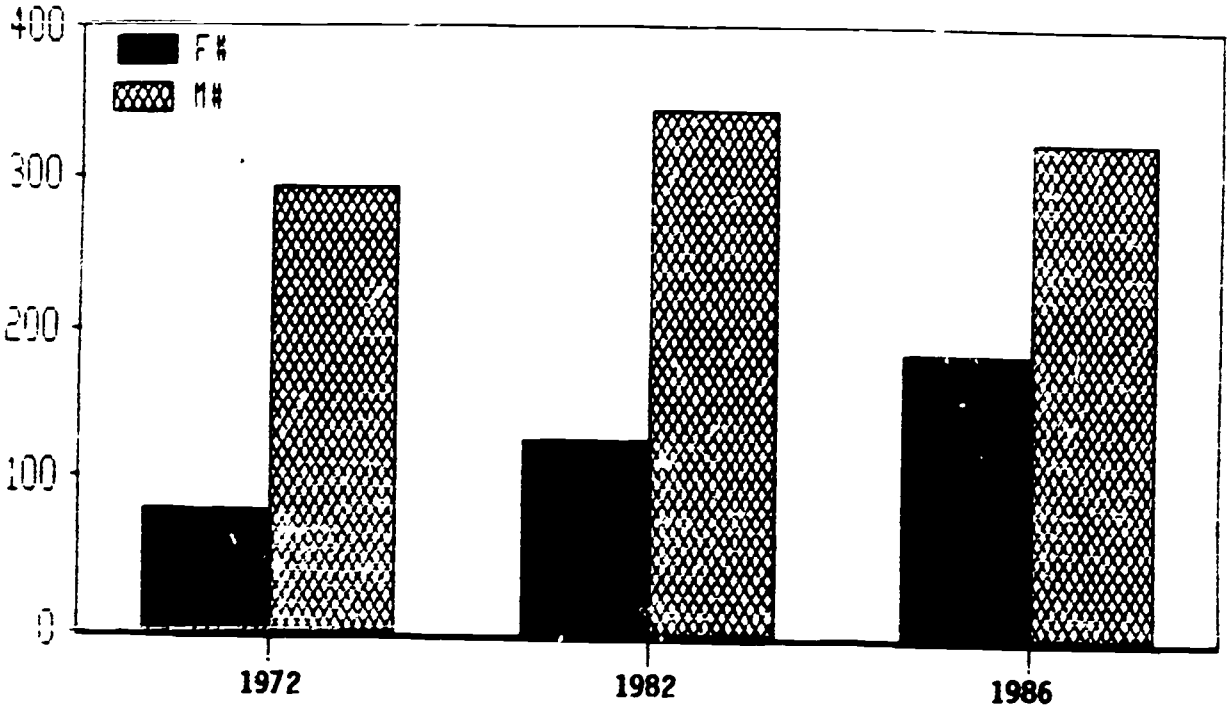

Figure 1. Comparison of Male and Female Administrators in Urban Districts

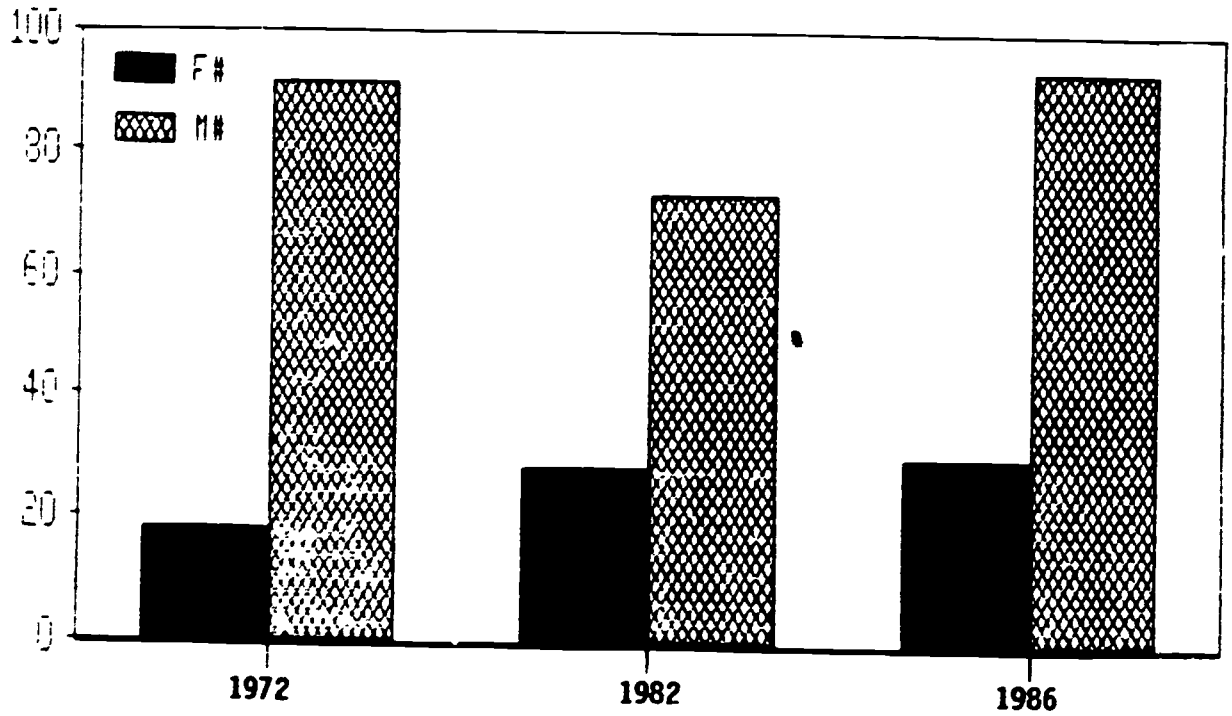

Figure 2. Comparison of Male and Female Administrators in Suburban Districts

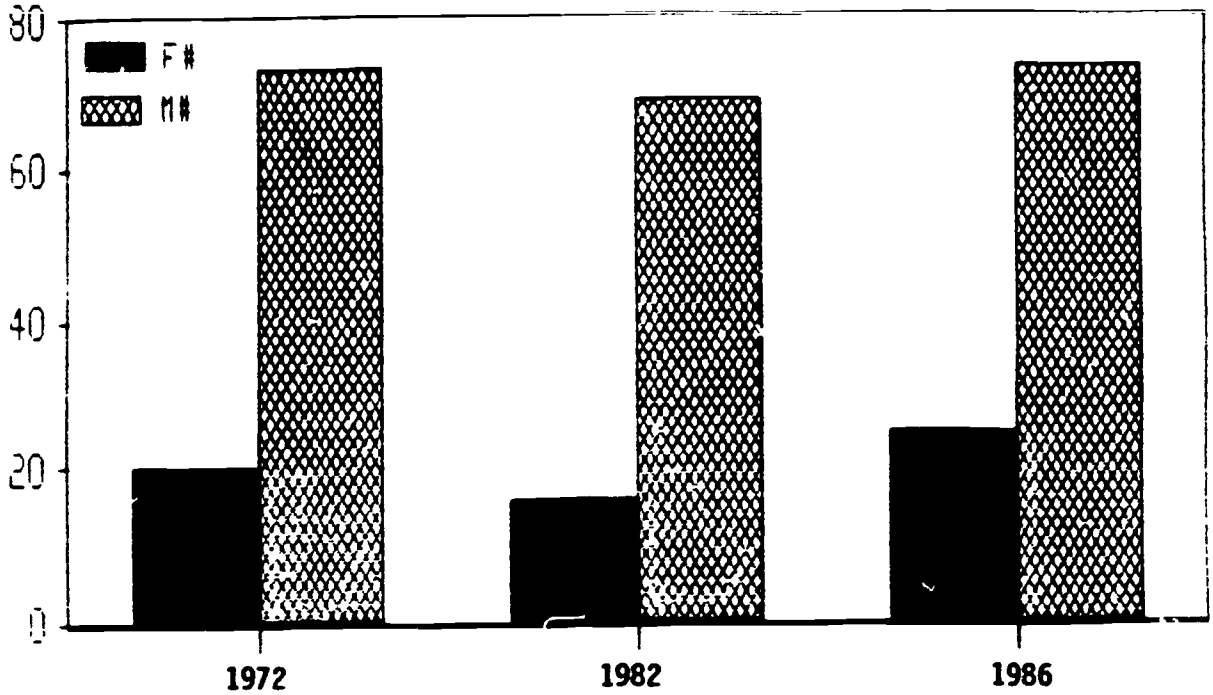

Figure 3. Comparison of Male and Female Administrators in Medium City Districts

Figure 4. Comparison of Male and Female Administrators in Rural Districts

Table II
Tests of Significance of Change
in Varied-Type Districts

District	Period Under Consideration	t Value	Significance Level
Urban	1972-1982	-1.11874	.3796
	1982-1986	-1.30002	.3232
	1972-1986	-4.11284	.0543*
Suburban	1972-1982	-1.58574	.1439
	1982-1986	- .38819	.7060
	1972-1986	-2.13886	.0581*
Medium-City	1972-1982	.05113	.6229
	1982-1986	-1.28284	.2355
	1972-1986	- .04648	.6545
Rural	1972-1982	.293805	.7739
	1982-1986	-1.138690	.2771
	1972-1986	- .396059	.6990
Total	1972-1982	- .513182	.6108
	1982-1986	-1.542670	.1312
	1972-1986	-1.803800	.0792*

* Approaching Statistical Significance

period and type of district. The results show a different pattern of significance for each type of district.

The changes in female administrators in urban districts approached significance 1972-1986. They were not significant for any time period for medium-city districts or rural districts. They approacned significance 1972-1986 for suburban districts.

Using aggregated totals, all 20 districts, obscures these differences among types of districts in showing the increases in female office holders to approach significance only in the period 1972-1986.

It is clear from the results that female representation in urban districts is increasing and that the increases are significant. In suburban districts, female representation increased markedly 1972 to 1982. Indeed, their percentage gain (17% to 28%) was higher than in any other type of system. However, 1982 to 1986, the percent of females declined, unlike any other type of district.

Medium-city districts had a higher percentage of females in 1972 than any other type of district. However, there have been no significant changes in female representation in the intervening periods.

There were almost six times as many females in administrative positions in rural districts in 1986 as in 1972. In dealing with rural districts, however, one is dealing with small numbers, therefore, a large increase in the number of females holding positions would be necessary for the changes to be statistically significant.

It is clear that the significant increases in female representation found when aggregated totals were considered owed more to what had

happened in urban districts than what had happened in any other type of district.

Table III looks at each of the nine administrative positions, the total number of positions in the category, and the number and percentage of male and female position holders by year and type of district. In the superintendency, over the period 1972 to 1986, there was no change in the number of positions, one superintendent per district being the rule. During the period studied there was only one female superintendent in any of the four types of districts. By 1982 she no longer held office.

The four kinds of districts did not have the position of Deputy Superintendent in 1972. In 1982 urban districts were the only type of the four to have deputy superintendents. In 1986, all four types of districts had deputy superintendents. Only one female in any of the districts held this position.

Urban, medium-city, and suburban districts had assistant superintendents 1972 to 1986. Rural districts did not. Over the period 1972 to 1986 the number of female assistant superintendents increased in urban, suburban, and medium-city districts. In each type of district the total number of assistant superintendents was small, as was the number of females holding this position.

Overall, the total number of high school principal positions increased by one position 1972 to 1982 and again one, 1982 to 1986. The number of females increased 1972 to 1982 (0 to 5) and 1982 to 1986 (5 to 9). There were no female high school principals in any of the types of districts in 1972. This remained true for suburban and rural

Table III

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

	1972				1982				1986			
	F#	M#	Tot	F%	F#	M#	Tot	F%	F#	M#	Tot	F%
Superintendent												
Urban	0	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2	0
Sub.	0	6	6	0	0	6	6	0	0	6	6	0
M-C	0	5	5	0	0	5	5	0	0	5	5	0
Rural	1	6	7	14	0	7	7	0	0	7	7	0
TOTAL	1	19	20	5	0	20	20	0	0	20	20	0
Deputy Superintendent												
Urban					0	3	3	0	0	1	1	0
Sub.									1	2	3	33
M-C									0	2	2	0
Rural									0	1	1	0
TOTAL					0	3	3	0	1	6	7	14
Assistant Superintendent												
Urban	0	7	7	0	1	[illegible]	6	17	3	11	14	21
Sub.	0	1	1	0	0	4	4	0	1	5	6	17
M-C	1	7	8	14	0	4	4	0	3	5	8	37
Rural												
TOTAL	1	15	16	6	1	13	14	7	7	21	28	25
High School Principal												
Urban	0	39	39	0	4	48	52	8	8	39	47	17
Sub.	0	12	12	0	0	10	10	0	0	11	11	0
M-C	0	14	14	0	1	7	8	12	1	6	7	14
Rural	0	11	11	0	0	7	7	0	0	13	[illegible]	0
TOTAL	0	76	76	0	5	72	77	6.5	9	69	[illegible]	11.5

Table III (Continued)

	1972				1982				1986			
	F#	M#	Tot	F%	F#	M#	Tot	F%	F#	M#	Tot	F%
High School Asistant Principal												
Urban	5	54	59	8	17	93	110	15	29	85	114	25
Sub.	0	6	6	0	1	6	7	14	5	20	25	20
M-C	0	6	6	0	0	6	6	0	3	14	17	18
Rural	0	3	3	0	0	3	3	0	2	11	13	15
TOTAL	5	69	74	6.5	18	108	126	14	39	130	169	23
Middle School Principal												
Urban	6	46	52	12	9	30	30	23	19	43	62	31
Sub.	9	34	42	21	11	18	29	38	5	14	19	26
M-C	0	10	10	0	0	10	10	0	2	7	9	22
Rural	0	22	22	0	1	16	17	6	1	5	6	17
TOTAL	15	112	127	12	21	74	95	22	27	69	96	28
Middle School Assistant Principal												
Urban	5	16	21	24	12	25	37	32	23	29	52	44
Sub.	0	4	4	0	1	5	6	17	1	5	6	17
M-C	0	8	8	0	0	8	8	0	1	9	10	10
Rural	0	4	4	0	0	5	5	0	0	7	7	0
TOTAL	5	32	37	13.5	13	43	56	23	25	50	75	33
Elementary School Principal												
Urban	63	127	190	33	62	128	190	33	66	97	163	40
Sub.	9	17	26	35	13	13	26	50	15	28	43	35
M-C	19	23	42	45	15	26	41	37	14	25	39	36
Rural	2	13	15	13	4	14	18	22	8	22	30	37
TOTAL	93	180	273	34	94	181	275	34	103	172	275	35.7
Elementary School Assistant Principal												
Urban												
Sub.	0	4	4	0	1	4	5	20	2	4	6	33
M-C									1	0	1	100
Rural	0	6	6	0	0	8	8	0	6	9	15	40
TOTAL	0	10	10	0	1	12	13	7.5	9	13	22	41

districts in 1982 and 1986. In medium-city districts there was one female high school principal in 1982. She was still in the position in 1986. In urban districts the number of females increased (0 to 4) 1972 to 1982. The number doubled 1982 to 1986 (4 to 8) despite the fact that the total number of high school positions decreased (52 to 47).

Overall, the total number of assistant principal positions increased markedly 1972 to 1982 and 1982 to 1986. The change 1972 to 1982 was fueled almost totally by additions in the urban districts (59 to 110). In the period 1982 to 1986, the number of assistant principal positions in urban districts remained virtually the same, but the number of positions in the other three types of districts increased noticeably.

The number of female high school assistant principals increased 1972 to 1982 and 1982 to 1986. In 1972, only five females held positions as assistant principals. These were all in urban districts. Medium-city, suburban, and rural districts had no female assistant principals. By 1982, suburban districts had one female high school assistant principal and urban districts had increased the number of females to 17. By 1986, all four types of districts had female assistant principals.

The number of middle school principal positions decreased 1972 to 1982 and increased by one position 1982 to 1986. The number of females increased 1972 to 1982 and 1982 to 1986. The number of males holding middle school principal positions decreased 1972 to 1982 and 1982 to 1986.

Medium-city and rural districts had no female middle school principals in 1972. Suburban districts had 9 and urban districts 6. In 1982, medium-city districts still had none, but there was 1 in a rural district, and both suburban and urban districts increased the number of female middle school principals. By 1986, all four types of districts had female middle school principals. From 1982 to 1986 urban districts increased the number of females, suburban decreased the number of female middle school principals, medium-city increased the number of females, and rural stayed the same.

The number of middle school assistant principal positions increased in each period, as did the number of females. The number of females in urban systems increased noticeably 1972 to 1982 and 1982 to 1986. These noticeable changes were not visible in the other types of districts. Suburban districts had no female middle school assistant principals in 1972, and only 1 in 1982 and 1986. Medium-city districts had none in 1972 or 1982, but 1 by 1986. Rural districts had no female middle school assistant principals in 1972, and that situation hadn't changed by 1986.

The number of elementary school principal positions increased slightly 1972 to 1982, and stayed the same 1982 to 1986. The number of females increased in each period. In urban districts, the number of females decreased 1972 to 1982, and increased 1982 to 1986. Suburban and rural districts increased the number of female elementary school principals in each time period. Female elementary school principals in medium-city districts decreased in each time period.

The number of elementary assistant principal positions increased 1972 to 1982 and 1982 to 1986. The number of females increased in each time period, as well. There were no elementary assistant principals in urban districts during the period of the study. Medium-city districts did not have elementary assistant principals until 1986. In that year, they created 1 position, filling it with a female. Suburban districts modestly increased the number of female assistant principals 1972 to 1982 and 1982 to 1986. Rural districts had no female assistant principals in 1972 or 1982, but increased the number markedly 1982 to 1986.

Table IV shows the percent of males and females in each position in each year by total and type of district. The percent of females (total) increased steadily in every position except superintendent 1972 to 1982 and 1982 to 1986. The increases were not marked in every position, but they were clearly visible.

When looked at by type of district, the trend toward increasing representation of females is strongest in urban districts. The percentages in each position most closely replicate the overall totals. However, increasing representation of females in most positions can be seen in the other types of districts. There are positions in which suburban, medium-city and rural districts do not have any females, but in terms of the overall trend and companion positions, e.g. middle school principal and assistant principal, these districts show a disposition to increasing female representation, small as it may be given the number of positions involved.

Table IV

Percent of Males and Females
by Year, Position, and Type of District

	Total %		Urban		Suburban		Medium-City		Rural	
Superintendent										
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1972	5	95	0	100	0	100	0	100	14	86
1982	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	100
1986	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	100
Deputy Superintendent										
1972	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
1982	0	100	0	100	--	--	--	--	--	--
1986	14	86	0	100	33	67	0	100	0	100
Assistant Superintendent										
1972	6	94	0	100	0	100	14	86	--	--
1982	6	94	17	83	0	100	0	100	--	--
1986	10	90	21	79	17	83	37	63	--	--
High School Principal										
1972	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	100
1982	6.5	93.5	8	92	0	100	12	88	0	100
1986	11.5	88.5	7	83	0	100	14	86	0	100
High School Assistant Principal										
1972	6.5	93.5	8	92	0	100	0	100	0	100
1982	14	86	15	85	14	86	0	100	0	100
1986	23	77	25	75	20	80	18	82	15	85

Table IV (Continued)

	Total %		Urban		Suburban		Medium-City		Rural	
Middle School Principal										
1972	12	88	12	88	21	79	0	100	0	100
1982	22	78	23	77	38	62	0	100	6	94
1986	28	72	31	69	26	74	22	78	17	83
Middle School Assistant Principal										
1972	13.5	86.5	24	76	0	100	0	100	0	100
1982	23	77	32	68	17	83	0	100	0	100
1986	33	67	44	56	17	83	10	90	0	100
Elementary School Principal										
1972	34	66	33	67	35	65	45	55	13	87
1982	34	66	33	67	50	50	37	63	22	78
1986	37.5	62.5	40	60	35	65	36	64	27	73
Elementary School Assistant Principal										
1972	0	100	--	--	0	100	--	--	0	100
1982	7.5	92.5	--	--	20	80	--	--	0	100
1986	41	59	--	--	33	67	100	0	40	60

Conclusion

In conclusion, in terms of the question which generated this study, were the trends toward significant increases in female representation in all positions except assistant principal, found in the 44 largest school districts, idiosyncratic to large districts, representative of what was going on in all kinds of districts, or a harbinger of things to come, our results suggest the latter is the case. What has occurred in the large districts in the nation appears to be occurring in other types of districts. Occurring more slowly, but nonetheless, occurring.

We appear to be in a transition period marked by the movement of females into line administrative positions, in particular, into positions traditionally associated with males. It is reasonable to suggest that the results signal a change from the traditional description of school administrator as "male," to a new, non-gender defined description that focuses on work-related attributes.

Notes

1. Line administrative positions include: superintendent; associate superintendent; assistant superintendent; high school, middle school, and elementary school principal; high school, middle school, and elementary school assistant principal.

2. McCarthy and Zent (1981) used the following definitions of kind of district in their study, "School Administrators: 1980 Profile."

    1. Urban - Population of 185,000 or more. The city in which the school district is located is recognized as a major population center by the United States Bureau of Census and is the center of what is defined by the Bureau of Budget as a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA).

    2. Suburban - Located within 30 miles of a major urban city (as defined above) and included in the urban city's SMSA.

    3. Medium City - Population of 29,000-160,000 and not part of an urban city's SMSA.

    4. Rural - Population below 12,000 and not located within 50 miles of any larger center of population.

3. There is now a third urban school district in the state. It was not a single district in 1986. The new urban district was created by the merging of two long-standing, viable districts. One of the former school districts is in a city, but it does not fit the definition of medium city or urban city, (its population is less than 185,000). The other district surrounds the city, but because the city could not be classified as urban, it could not be classified as suburban. The districts literally fell into a definitional limbo, so for purposes of this study they were excluded.