GIRLS IN BUSINESS MEETINGS: BETA PHI THETA RHO SECRETARIES TAKE CHARGE, 1946-1950

Kate Stuart
University of Missouri-Kansas City

In the not so distant past, girls were classified as “little women” and those who did not act in a manner considered becoming of women were thought to be difficult and often labeled “bad.” During the twentieth century, scholars and society as a whole became increasingly aware that girls, both children and adolescents, fit into a far different role than the women they would become. Much early twentieth-century scholarship, such as James Franklin Page’s 1918 book, Socializing for the New Order: or Educational Values of the Juvenile Organization and John M. Eddy’s 1928 article, “Unsupervised Club Life Among Girls Attending Secondary Schools,” revolves around both the anxiety that girls might not become proper women and around the need to supervise girls.

As the century progressed, however, and certainly by the 1990s, scholars became increasingly interested in studying girls as a group separate and, in many ways, different from women. Scholars began to study the writings of girls to see how girls create and record themselves. Diaries have been an especially popular and easily accessible genre with which to work. This can be seen in the amount of scholarship pertaining to girls’ diaries.¹
Some work has been done with other written genres as well. Alexei Khaniutin has studied Russian song-books as an example of teenage sub-culture. Tamar Kattriel and Thomas Farrell have studied the scrapbook as a distinctly feminine expression in twentieth-century America and have explored the ways in which scrapbooks function as a part of a girl’s adolescent experience. The collection, *Reconceptualizing the Literacies of Adolescents’ Lives*, covers adolescents, girls and boys, in terms of schoolwork, observed and recorded interactions with peers, and interviews. These studies almost all explore the adolescents as individuals or in a school setting.

One area which has not been studied is the formal written records of adolescent girls’ clubs and, in particular, their minute books. Josephine Peyton Young studies the tape recorded discussions of an adolescent club in “Discussion as a Practice of Carnival” (*Reconceptualizing* 247-64). In this work, however, the group being discussed did not keep formal written records of their own actions. Studying the records of formal meetings kept by girls provides excellent opportunities to see girls negotiating the line between being a “good” girl and a “bad” girl and almost never wholly constructing themselves as either.

Minute books can be difficult sources to locate. Once located using minute books with any sense of accuracy or “‘reliable’ historical data” presents a whole new set of difficulties (McHenry 7). *In Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African-American Literary Societies*, Elizabeth McHenry writes of the difficulties in locating and using sources such as minute books, “. . . precious few of these have survived. The task of locating these widely scattered fragments . . . is itself daunting, and the process of piecing them together presents its own particular challenges” (7).

Gere also mentions the amount of time and energy spent in searching for and combing through primary source material such as minute books (Gere xii). David C. Hammock devotes an entire article, “Private Organizations, Public Purposes: Nonprofits and Their Archives,” to the problems and rewards of finding such primary sources as minute books (191). While each of these authors has been looking for minute books and other documents concerned with adult behavior, the homage they pay to historic societies as treasure chests waiting to be searched applies to looking at minute books of girls’ clubs as well.

In one such historic society, the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection in Rolla, MO, I found the minute book of the Beta Phi Theta Rho club of Joplin, MO, from January 27, 1946 to December 28, 1950, archived on microfilm. Theta Rho clubs are girls’ clubs associated with the International Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.) and the International Association of Rebekah Assemblies (I.A.R.A.) dedicated to helping the sick and those who are in need of aid (Presenting). At first glance, this minute book seems unassuming, even boring. The actions recorded are most often plans for parties or gatherings, fund raisers, and discussions on ways to get the members more involved in the club.

Exploring the world that the secretaries created through the minutes holds challenges due to the lack of details in the minute book. A typical entry reads as this one does, “We allowed 1.53 for flowers for our sponsor” (June 24, 1946). The secretary does not mention the name of the sponsor, nor the reason the flowers were purchased. The customary dearth of detail suggests that the girls of this club saw the minute book as an internal document kept for the benefit of the girls, not outside parties, and possibly only meant for short-term use such as informing girls who had been absent of the activities of previous meetings or keeping track of on-going discussions.
The lack of detail in the minute book parallels Katriel and Farrell’s explanation for the difficulty of studying scrapbooks, “At times, the pictures and objects included in the scrapbook are accompanied by some written caption or commentary. But even then the ‘story’ they tell is never complete . . . there is a kind of private poignance to all these artifacts that seems to invite and yet defy the onlooker’s gaze” (Katriel 10). Though even close inspection of the minutes raises more questions than it answers, looking at the story these records tell offers a fascinating glimpse into the ways in which adolescent girls create a world of ambiguous gender identity and alternative power constructions in a formal and prescribed setting. The formal literacies found in this minute book give a unique view of the behavior of girls in the formal setting of a business meeting attempting to fulfill the roles of girls while functioning in an atmosphere that is traditionally masculine.

**Gender and Minute Books**

In Tamar Katriel and Thomas Farrell’s article on scrapbooks, they discuss the perception of scrapbooks as gender-specific (3). Whereas scrapbooks are seen as albums that women put together, and as such, are gendered feminine, minute books record business meetings, and business is traditionally the realm of men. Though clerical work had been becoming more feminized (Pidgeon 3-4), this trend did not extend to other areas of business. Thus, girls’ clubs provided an ambiguously gendered role for the recording secretary. While the activities of the secretary were not necessarily classified as masculine, the offices to which she would advance after her term as secretary - Vice President and President - were gendered masculine.

Just as women’s clubs provided one of the only spaces where a woman might learn and practice managerial skills (Gere 115), so too for girls in the 1940s: the girls’ club would have been a unique
opportunity to learn to function in the masculine world of business. Yet, running a business meeting did not negate the fact that these were girls and society would have been pressuring them to conform to the template of the “good” girl, including engaging specifically and solely in activities meant for girls and women. This blurring of gendered expectations can be seen in the activities planned and the details recorded in the minute book. While the girls performed traditionally feminine activities, such as planning dances, parties, having candy sales, etc., the girls also perform some masculine activities. For a Halloween party thrown in 1946, the girls are told, “each girl is to invite a date” (Oct. 14, 1946). This means that the girls are instructed to perform the masculine job of inviting a date to a party, thus breaking gender norms. At the same time, gender norms are reinforced by the girls having dates for a social function.

**Background Information**

The minute book of the Beta Phi Theta Rho club has been archived onto a single roll of microfilm. The microfilm begins with a short “Information Sheet” apparently composed by the Webb City Public Library - the institution at which this book was first deposited. Originally printed for the Rebekah Lodges, the book itself has preprinted material to aid in the taking of the minutes. (For examples of the page layout, see Figures 1 and 2.) At the end of the microfilm are copies of a number of “enclosures,” including three loose pages of minutes, six petitions for membership - all dated in October 1950, a list of past presidents, and two programs for district meetings.

To contextualize the girls, I would like to provide some background information on the Theta Rho clubs in general and on the Beta Phi chapter specifically. Essentially, the structure of the affiliated associations works as a pyramid: the Odd Fellows sponsor
Rebekah Lodges and Rebekah Lodges, in turn, sponsor Theta Rho clubs (Rhoades, Part 1). The first Theta Rho club, Alpha Theta Rho, was founded February 12, 1932, in Grand Junction, CO (Alpha Theta). The Alpha club is still active today, though the Beta Phi club of Joplin, MO, is not (“Re: Theta Rho”).

The emblem of the Theta Rho, the Greek letters within a circle, symbolizes “Rebekah’s Daughters” (Rhoades, “A Couple”). While a Theta Rho club must be sponsored by a Rebekah Lodge, a girl does not have to have any familial relation to an Odd Fellow or Rebekah to join the club. A girl can join the Theta Rho club between the ages of 8 and 18. Marriage, however, disqualifies the members from participating in certain activities. Women can join, though their status as members is de-emphasized, they cannot hold office, and they are set a part with the label “Rebekah sister” in the minute book to which I have access.

Girls were brought into the club in a number of ways. With two membership drives in this five-year period, the girls most often recruited new members themselves (Feb. 24, 1947; May 30, 1950). Adults also recommended girls for membership. Rebekah sister Sue Strycker recommended several members at the beginning of
1946 (Jan. 28, 1946; Feb. 11, 1946) and two more on July 26, 1948. Girls would also solicit sisters to join. Ilah Townsend presented her sister, Nancy, for membership (July 24, 1950). It even appears that one member, Jeanne Rataczak, brought in her mother, Emma Rataczak (Mar 22 and Apr. 27, 1948). While Mrs. Rataczak’s petition is not recorded, she is given the title “Mrs.” marking her as an adult.

Over the course of the five-year period covered by the book, ten girls held the office of recording secretary and seventeen girls kept minutes. I will focus on one girl, Jeanne Rataczak, in the form of a case study. In “Playing for Real: Performative Texts and Adolescent Identities,” Lorri Neilson effectively uses two case studies to explore the worlds of adolescents and the texts they read (Reconceptualizing 3-26). Like Neilson, I too have found that a case study allows me to discuss the typical and atypical without overwhelming the reader with statistics or a conglomeration of facts so unwieldy as to be confusing. Additionally, I believe a case study will provide an enticing example of the knowledge to be gained in a new area of research by humanizing the subject of my study.

I have chosen to make Jeanne Rataczak the focus of my study because she has successfully written herself as the most important influence in the club. This is largely due to the fact that she kept the minutes most often during the five years, signing the secretary’s line a total of twelve times. One of only two girls that I know were involved in the Beta Phi club for all five years covered by the minute book, the amount of information Jeanne left about herself helps to create the most complete picture of all the girls. I will focus on two main areas in this paper to show the ways in which girls can negotiate positions of power and identity in a formal, semi-public setting. First, to describe adolescent girls’ flexibility and creativity, I will discuss the ways in which Jeanne rebelled
against and conformed to the prescribed formula of the minute book. Second, to show an adolescent girl creating herself within a prescribed text, I will describe the ways in which Jeanne writes herself into power through the record of her own actions, and through writing others into and out of power.

**Discursive Rebellion and Conformity**

Jeanne Rataczak is mentioned for the first time in the minutes on January 28, 1946 as being on a committee to investigate a girl who has petitioned for membership. She filled the function of recording secretary as pro-tem a handful of times during 1946. Then in the last half of 1948, and in 1949 and 1950 she pro-temmed frequently. I want to point out here that while she kept minutes often, she did not hold the office of recording secretary officially during the late 1940s, though she did hold a number of other offices, including Treasurer (January to July 1946), Vice President (July 1946 to January 1947), and President (January to July 1947).

I believe the fact that Jeanne kept minutes spaced out over the entire five years actually works beneficially toward seeing her adapt and edit her minute-keeping style in a manner unlike the girls who kept minutes only while holding office for one six-month term. Jeanne provides the best picture of the versatility with which the minute book could function as a space of self-creation for the secretaries. The book’s pages were outlined to guide the secretary, as shown in the illustrations, but Jeanne ignored, corrected and rearranged the pages to suit her own agenda. Gere writes of the tendency for secretaries to edit minute-keeping styles. According to Gere, a secretary from the Friday Club in Jackson, Michigan, acknowledged that she had a choice about the way she recorded minutes whether they were to be “poetic fancies . . . [in] quaint humorous style . . . [or] deep wisdom and philosophy” (39). While Jeanne rarely seems to have pondered such possibilities, she did
choose the way she wrote. In the minutes she kept, Jeanne shows an unparalleled willingness both to follow and to ignore the prescribed formula of the book.

For example, the manner in which Jeanne recorded the receipt of petitions for membership varied greatly. The preprinted material reads, “Petition for membership by ____________ received from M ____________ and referred to the following Committee ____________.” On March 11, 1946, Jeanne filled in the blanks in the way intended by the original designers of the page, an action that many of the girls never took. Then July 26, 1948, Jeanne reversed the order of the names in a manner that more closely resembled the work of the other secretaries: “Petition for membership by Sue Stryker received from M Pearl Clark and referred to the following Committee:” Pearl Clark is the petitioner and Sue Strycker is the presenter of the petition. Under the line on which the Committee should be listed, Jeanne completely sidestepped prescribed procedure writing, “Maizie - Helen Gideon - Sue - Pearly Brimby.” These are apparently the names of the girls on the investigative committee. On March 7, 1949, Jeanne recorded the receipt of petitions in the space labeled for the recording of “Members Reported Sick or in Distress,” thus completely overruling the prescription of authority.

Some of the resistance to formula took the form of correcting the grammar of the preprinted material. Looking at the resistance to prescribed grammar provides unique insight into the ways resisting prescribed formula could be forms of both rebellion and compliance. As topics discussed in *The English Journal* reveal, in the 1940s, English teachers, seem to have felt a great deal of anxiety about grammar. The anxiety not only concerned the teaching of grammar, but also the inconsistency and vagaries of grammatical rules, including the fact that so many rules had exceptions. The English language has a certain flexibility and often more than one
way of properly expressing a thought exists. So a secretary’s correction of the prescribed formula could signify a variety of thought processes on her part. The girl could be unfamiliar with the sentence structure being used, and the effect of the change would be to make the written page a more comfortable space for her. She could also be completely unaware of the rules that make the prescribed formula correct, and so she would be proving her intelligence by correcting the book’s “mistakes.”

Jeanne happens to be the first to correct the grammar of the minute book. On March 25, 1946, recording a ballot on a potential member, Jeanne filled in the blank space, “Ballot being taken on Marilyn King and she was elected to membership.” The preprinted material for recording the ballot on a potential member reads, “Ballot being taken ____________ declared ___ elected.” The intended format would be to write the potential member’s name in the first blank, and to write “duly” or “not” in the second blank. Jeanne may have been resisting prescribed formula or she may have been unsure of the proper way to fill in the blanks. I believe it may have been a combination of possibilities. As a girl, she most likely wanted to show herself intelligent, capable, and independent, but she also probably wanted those over her to appreciate and approve of her. Jeanne actually seems to have been very comfortable with the preprinted grammar compared to the other girls, some of whom correct the preprinted material much more frequently though the results were generally just as ambiguous.

Additional insight is offered into Jeanne’s literacy practices by looking at the first loose leaf recorded minutes, dated November 17, 1950 (the only loose leaf minutes kept by Jeanne). Even completely free of the constraints of the preprinted page, she followed the prescribed formula. She started, “Lodge met in regular session and was opened in due form with Ilah Townsend, Vice President presiding. Roll of officers called and the following noted as absent . . . .”
These are the exact words from the preprinted page. At this point in the minute book, the reader has seen Jeanne rebel against the prescribed formula repeatedly. Yet, given the chance to create her own formula for the minutes, Jeanne retreated to prescription. She followed the path that had been mapped out for her, much as most girls grow up to become the women they have been taught to become, following the template laid out for them by their families and society.

**Self-Creation**

In rebelling against or conforming to the prescribed formula, Jeanne was creating a version of herself. She also used the minute book to explore her own gender boundaries and to create a more masculine record of herself. Beginning October 25, 1948, Jeanne signs her name “Jean,” masculinizing her name and challenging the accepted gender norms of the 1940s. Toward the end of 1950, she drops “Jean” to “J. Rataczak” (Sept. 11, 1950). This desire to masculinize herself, however, seems to have been strictly private. While others could read that she wrote her name in masculine form, only other secretaries were likely to see it. As well, when witnessing a petition for membership on October 23, 1950, she returns to signing her name “Jeanne.” She seems to feel comfortable in changing her identity within the confines of the minute book, but does not let this experimentation extend to the petition, which she may have felt had the status of a legal document since she was witnessing the petitioning girl’s statement that she was eligible to join the Theta Rho club.

Jeanne also created herself as an active member of the club through the words she chose and the ways she recorded the actions of the club. She did not exhibit the tendency to personalize her entries by describing her personal thoughts or beliefs about the club as many of the secretaries Gere quotes in *Intimate Practices* did.¹⁰
She did not use the first person “I,” but instead chose to write her name out whenever recording her own actions. However, she constantly used the first person plural when referring to the actions of the club. “It was brought up that we have a swimming party” (May 27, 1946). “Shirley Merritt thanked us for the flowers we sent her while she was in the hospital” (July 26, 1948). It was uncommon for the other secretaries to record to club actions as personal.\(^{11}\) In a way, this means that Jeanne was the only secretary that made herself consistently responsible for the club’s actions.

Additionally, Jeanne created herself as a powerful member of the Beta Phi chapter by recording as much of her activity as possible. This tendency to write herself as active began with the first date on which she kept minutes. On March 11, 1946, petitions for membership were presented from two girls. For the first, Marilyn King, Jeanne listed herself as the witness. Jeanne did not list a witness for the second girl, Elsie Petty. In October 1948, she mentioned gifts given to her by the club, though she failed to mention the reason for these gifts (October 25, 1948). In November 1950, she wrote that she was the proxy by which Mildred Peters thanked the club. Jeanne, again, did not record the reason for the action (November 27, 1950). Other secretaries also recorded Jeanne’s participation testifying to her power within the club. She volunteered her house as a place for gatherings, often volunteered for committees, and was active recruiting new members. Her power, though, appears most predominately when looking at her own writings.

In one instance, Jeanne creates a more complex record of her actions within the club. On July 26, 1948, Jeanne wrote that Shirley Merritt thanked the club for sending her a card while she was in the hospital. While not directly mentioning herself, Jeanne held the position of correspondence secretary at the time (May 24, 1948). Thus, by recording an acknowledgment of correspondence received, Jeanne recorded her own actions.
Jeanne also empowered herself in her recordings of the actions of others. She created the record of the first power shift in the club.\textsuperscript{12} Through her records, I see evidence of Jeanne, Marilyn King, and Ilah Townsend composing a powerful triumvirate that dominated the club throughout the book. In May 1946, Marilyn King’s initiation into Beta Phi took place (May 27, 1946). When Virginia Moffett married, the club members elected Marilyn into the office of Vice President; thus she skipped the office of Recording Secretary (September 9, 1947). As such, she became one of the only girls to hold the offices of Vice President and President without first recording herself into a position of power.

On the meeting of Marilyn’s first recorded absence, Jeanne pro-temmed as President and she witnessed the petition of Ilah Townsend (July 12, 1948). Ilah became another strong force within the club. She volunteered to do many things for the club, such as making a sign advertising a candy sale (November 8, 1948) and being appointed to look for ways for the club to make money (Oct. 25, 1948). Ilah too skipped the office of Recording Secretary. In June 1950, Ilah was elected Treasurer. However Villa Kay, the elected Vice-President, apparently resigned her office, and Ilah then filled the vacant position (June 26 and July 10, 1950).

In looking at the girls separately, the connection between the three may not be obvious. However, attending to the details, I noticed that Jeanne always mentioned at least one of the three in her minutes. Additionally, though all three girls are mentioned by other secretaries, their names do not show up with the same regularity that they do when Jeanne kept the minutes. Both Marilyn and Ilah skipped the office of Recording Secretary and yet, because Jeanne is the third member of this triumvirate, a record of their power exists.

In writing herself and other girls into power, Jeanne almost completely silenced adult influence. Except for very special occa-
sions, adults simply do not exist in connection to the Beta Phi Theta Rho club. Men were not allowed, except for special circumstances, to attend Theta Rho meetings (“Re: Theta”). Even when recorded, women are almost always designated specifically as Rebekah sisters. For example, on August 7, 1948, a vote was taken on fifteen petitions for membership. Jeanne marked the adults with an “(R)” making sure that all were aware of their “other” status.

Even the first date on which Jeanne kept minutes shows a tendency to separate adults from the sanctioned space of the club. On March 11, 1946, she recorded two petitions for membership in the prescribed place as has already been mentioned. Under “Reports of Committees,” she recorded that Francis Bannister was elected to membership, outside the prescribed position of the book. Then, under “New Business,” Jeanne wrote that Francis Bannister was a Rebekah sister. Not only did Jeanne write the adult outside of the official space, she highlighted Francis Bannister’s status as an adult by writing it on a line surrounded by white space. In this way, she used rebellion against form to emphasize rebellion against adult participation in the club.

At a time of anxiety concerning the role of women and at a time when women were being encouraged to return to the domestic sphere (Hartmann 102), it is hard to believe that the girls were not supervised. In fact, records do indicate that women attended club meetings regularly, and it is not hard to imagine that they interfered, at least to some degree, with the girls’ actions. The fact that Jeanne did not record this interference implies that she found the minutes a safe place to escape the influence of adults. In recording the actions of the girls and not the actions of the adults, Jeanne underscored the creation of herself as powerful. She sanctioned the minutes as a place, possibly one of the only places, where she had power and authority.
Conclusion

From her first to her last act as recording secretary, Jeanne shows that use of the prescribed formula parallels a girl’s journey into adulthood. Sometimes, Jeanne followed the formula to the letter, fulfilling the expectations that had been placed upon her. Sometimes, she rebelled flagrantly against this same formula using her rebellion to underscore issues she had with her prescribed role in society. Most of the time, however, Jeanne’s minutes seem to strive both to set herself apart as a powerful individual and to show herself as an integral and proper member of society.

For a more complete understanding of girls, it is important to focus on all aspects of girls’ lives. Elizabeth McHenry gives us a glimpse of the wealth of knowledge to be gained in a more impartial study of African American literacies. She writes, “It is . . . very important to realize that it has never been possible to speak of the black experience, and attempts to do so constitute a gross oversimplification of African American history” (15). Just as McHenry stresses the importance of not oversimplifying African American history, so too have scholars such as Sherrie A. Inness been concerned with creating a more complete picture of the lives of girls in America. Her book, Delinquents and Debutantes, gives us a small sample of the knowledge that can be gained from studying girls as girls. The scholars published in Inness’ book attempt to circumvent the preconceptions that put girls into distinct and separate categories of “good” and “bad” and to show how most girls negotiate both sides of this line. My work with the Beta Phi Thetas Rho minute book adds another piece to the puzzle of American girls’ lives.

Minute books, as I have shown, provide an intriguing peek into a world fraught with issues of gendering, self-definition, and control. Of the members belonging to the Beta Phi chapter, the secretary has more power than any of the other girls. Through her words,
the club is represented to outside audiences, including today’s scholars. From looking at the ways in which girls maneuver through prescribed formulas to examining their use of formal, business space to create themselves, the minutes of the Beta Phi Theta Rho girls’ club become a fascinating study of the complexities of adolescent girls’ literacies. This enticing glimpse into the power structures, gender constructions, and expressions of girls’ literacies can be gained by studying the formal, extracurricular girls’ clubs’ minute books.

Notes
1. Jane H. Hunter’s “Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian America;” Barbara Sicherman’s “Reading and Ambition: M. Carey Thomas and Female Heroism;” and Judy Nolte Temple and Suzanne L. Bunkers’ “Mothers, Daughters, Diaries: Literacy, Relationship, and Cultural Context” all cover the genre of girls’ diaries.
2. According to Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon’s statistics, 54% of clerical positions were filled by women in 1940; 62% in 1950. By 1950, 30% of working women held clerical jobs and less than 10% of working men, encouraging an increased perception of clerical work as women’s work.
3. Minutes kept on the original pages of the book date from Jan. 26, 1946 to October, 1950. Minutes of the three meetings directly following the end of the book were kept on note-book paper and filed with the book. They were dated Nov. 27, Dec. 11, and Dec. 27, 1950.
4. The enclosures are a fascinating study all to themselves. In addition to those documents listed, also included are handwritten descriptions of the conductor’s position, the Left Support to the President, and the handwritten purpose of the Theta Rho clubs, one type-written receipt from the Odd Fellows Home for donated gifts, and a piece of scrap paper with a list of officers and an addition of application fees received and dues received.
5. Carlene Rhoades is a Rebekah Sister in the Theta Rho girls’ club in Trenton, MO. She has been very helpful in sending me information about the Theta Rho clubs, which provided background information for my paper.
6. Sue Stryker appears periodically throughout the minutes. She was given the adult label “Sister” and took on adult responsibilities, such as talking to the girls when the Duenweg club extended and then retracted an invitation. The minutes, however, do not make clear who she was or how she was related to the girls.
7. The other girl is Maizie Frisby. While in her own right an extremely interesting girl, she only keeps minutes five times, all of those are instances of her being a pro-tem in 1948 and 1949.
8. From 1945 to 1950, English Journal printed 428 articles. Of those, 148, or over one-third, covered the issue of grammar. As well, many of the round table discussions and anecdotes printed also dealt with grammatical issues.
9. Maizie Frisby provides a more subtle example of the types of ambiguity that can be communicated by correcting the grammar. On February 14, 1949, she wrote, “Minutes of meet-
ing held Feb. 1st were read and approved.” While it is obvious that Maizie is correcting
the grammar, the reasons for the correction remain unclear.

10. At the beginning of each chapter, Gere quotes from her primary sources. The first quote of
the first chapter is a typical example of the personal and reflective nature of the minute
books she quotes. An excerpt from a minute book from the Friday Club of Jackson,
Michigan, it reads, in part, “I confess to having been more interested in . . . new-old faces,
than at first in the reading . . . it seems to me that we as a club have benefited from our
association, in the matter of conversation - of being able to think aloud with less timidity
and more directness. . . .” (17).

11. Many of the entries have the same impersonal approach as this one: “The club planned a
picnic and swimming party at Schifferdecker park June 10th.” (May 30, 1950).

12. I use the term “power shift” because Marilyn and Ilah did not belong to the club at the
beginning of the minute book and so it seems that power transferred to the three girls. I
refer to this as the first power shift because records indicate that in 1949 and 1950 some of
the younger girls may have been resisting the authority of the older girls and attempting to
shift power to themselves.

13. One man does get mentioned in the minutes. On Dec. 9, 1946, Virginia Buxton recorded
that Jack Gartley donated $1.00 toward a penny supper the girls had arranged as a fund
raiser. This ability to invade space that they had been excluded from shows the dominance
of men in the girls’ lives.

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