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### A Sexist Economist: Hanns F.J. Kropff

- Hanns Kropff, "Frauen als Käuferinnen," in: *Die Reklame. Zeitschrift des Verbandes deutscher Reklamefachleute* (July 1926), pp. 649-50.

Born in 1882 in Gablonz Austria-Hungary, Hanns Ferdinand Josef Kropff was the son of a Prague University professor.<sup>1</sup> Beginning his studies in 1901 at the University of Munich, Kropff traveled around Germany to further his academic career, concluding his studies in 1908 after attending universities in Berlin, Leipzig, and Vienna as well. It would not be long until Kropff himself would become a professor like his father before him, teaching at the University of Frankfurt am Main, where he would be one of the first professors to teach advertising theory at a German university.<sup>2</sup> As a pioneer of the subject, Kropff was prolific in his writing of academic findings and studies centered around advertising theory, with many connecting to historical trends and psychological analysis, breaking new ground as he wrote and published his work.<sup>3</sup>

In 1926 Kropff published the article that will be the focus of this essay, namely "Frauen als Käuferinnen" (translates to "Women as Shoppers"), in the German advertising-centric journal *Die Reklame*.<sup>4</sup> While the journal itself published articles that spanned themes from the effects of the German national colors on consumers to the success of public billboards on drivers in London, the focus of "Frauen als Käuferinnen" is an examination of the shopping habits of German women and how one might be able to sway them through advertising and economic theory.<sup>5</sup> However, while Kropff may seem to speak in facts and findings throughout this article, he has no citations and really relies on only anecdotal evidence and personal opinion. According to the headnote on the GHDI website, Kropff's "psychological" article seems to show nothing

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<sup>1</sup> "Hanns Ferdinand Josef Kropff." De.Wikipedia.org. August 11, 2017.  
[https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanns\\_Ferdinand\\_Josef\\_Kropff](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanns_Ferdinand_Josef_Kropff).

<sup>2</sup> de.wikipedia.org

<sup>3</sup> Melvyl. "Kropff, Hanns Ferdinand Josef." Ucsb-worldcat-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu. <https://ucsb-worldcat-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/wcidentities/viaf-492847>.

<sup>4</sup> Kropff, Hanns FJ. "Women as Shoppers." GHDI. [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/SEX\\_KROPFF\\_EN.pdf](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/SEX_KROPFF_EN.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://magazines.iadb.org/issue/DR/1926-06-01/edition/null/page/21?query=>

more than “Kropff’s patent sexism, [revealing] more about his own prejudices than about the psyches of his female subjects.”<sup>6</sup>

Today, this article can be found in a few locations. Several online databases have posted both the translated and original versions of the document, such as the German History in Documents and Images (GHDI) website and Magazines.iaddb.org. However, through my own personal research spanning multiple online sources such as worldcat, it seems as though the physical copy has been lost to time. Beyond this, the article that has been used for (most of) the translations can be found in a German journal titled *Zeitschrift des Verbandes deutscher Reklamefachleute*, which translates to “Journal of the Association of German Advertising Professionals.” This journal contains articles ranging from 1918 to 1930 regarding German advertising.<sup>7</sup> The most cited and well-known English translation of this article, as well as the one that appears on GHDI, is found in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, translated by Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg.<sup>8</sup>

While “Frauen als Käuferinnen” is not the most notable or widely cited piece of German literature, there are still a few academic writings that make use of Kropff’s “findings” stated within the document. When examining sources that directly reference “Frauen als Käuferinnen,” a common pattern seems to arise, namely that all of them only quote Kropff for a single statistic: “Women make or inspire 75% of all purchases.”<sup>9</sup> What is ironic about this is that while Kropff is noted for being a sexist himself and through many of his writings, all three of the sources that reference this statistic within their own writings are pieces of feminist literature. As this statistic is the first line found in “Frauen als Käuferinnen,” I must wonder if these authors truly read the entirety of Kropff’s work, as the rest of the document relegates women to mere consumers who are more easily manipulated than their male counterparts, something I wouldn’t expect feminist studies papers to condone and reference in their own work. This leads me to believe that either these authors did not read the entire document and only referenced it for the statistic, or that they did not care that Kropff’s work was sexist and only wanted to use it for quotation of said “fact.”

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<sup>6</sup> Kropff, Hanns FJ. “Women as Shoppers.” GHDI.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.tib.eu/en/search/id/TIBKAT%3A13024760X/Die-Reklame-Zeitschrift-des-Vereins-Deutscher-Reklamefachleute/>

<sup>8</sup> Kaes, Anton., Martin Jay, and Edward. Dimendberg. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Weimar and Now ; 3. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> “Frauen als Käuferinnen,” *Die Reklame. Zeitschrift des Verbandes deutscher Reklamefachleute* (July 1926), pp. 649-50.

### Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order

Kropff, Hanns F. J., and Bruno W. Randolph. 1926. *Wie werde ich Reklame-Chef?* Wien: C. Barth Verlag.

Another of Kropff's work, this one published during the same year as the focus of this source exploration. The main discussion of this article focuses on how to be successful in the advertising industry, with the intended audience being those already working within the industry.

Kropff, Hanns F. J. 1960. *Angewandte Psychologie und Soziologie in Werbung und Vertrieb: der gegenwärtige Entwicklungsstand der Werbepsychologie unter Einbezug soziopsychologischer Erfahrungen*. Stuttgart: Poeschel.

Another one of Kropff's works, this book focuses on the development of advertising techniques and theory, looking at the subject through the lenses of psychology and sociology.

Kaes, Anton., Martin Jay, and Edward. Dimendberg. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook. Weimar and Now*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

This book contains a variety of different translated historical sources coming from the Weimar period of German history as well as the first English translation of Kropff's article, being the one that is most referenced by English articles as well as the version posted on the GHDI website.

Bertschik, Julia. *Mode und Moderne: Kleidung als Spiegel des Zeitgeistes in der deutschsprachigen Literatur, (1770-1945)*. Böhlau Verlag Köln Weimar, 2005.

A book with the main idea being around contemporary fashion and its advancements throughout the twentieth century. The author make references to Kropff and his work when discussing how women's shopping habits were connected to which fashions were able to succeed in Germany.

Ross, Corey. "Mass Politics and the Techniques of Leadership: The Promise and Perils of Propaganda in Weimar Germany." *German History* 24, no. 2 (2006): 184-211.

This article, focuses on "ideas of publicity" through both a professional and scientific context during the Weimar era of German history. Kropff is referenced by the author in regard to his psychological theories and how they explain some of the actions carried out by average German citizens when in public during the 1920s.

Lane, Yvette. "'NO FERTILE SOIL FOR PATHOGENS': RAYON, ADVERTISING, AND BIOPOLITICS IN LATE WEIMAR GERMANY." *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 2 (2010): 545-62,653.

This article discusses the role of “consumerist desires and fantasies” in the context of interwar Europe, being the time in which Kropff wrote this article. The author references Kropff within the article, restating many of the major ideas found within “Frauen als Käuferinnen” in the section of her article in which she focuses on the shopping habits of women and how they had an effect on the interwar economy.

Rycroft, Sophie. "Self-expression and profession: female photographers' self-portraits in Berlin 1929-1933." PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2014.

This dissertation discusses exactly what the title says, female photographers in Berlin during the interwar period and how they used their art to express themselves. Kropff is mentioned within this essay in reference to his popularly cited statistic (“seventy-five percent of all things are purchased by women”), but is not referenced again afterward.

"Hanns Ferdinand Josef Kropff." De.Wikipedia.org. August 11, 2017.

This German Wikipedia page gives a basic description of Kropff's life and work as an economist, though it is not very in depth. This page does not include any citations for its claims as well, leading me to believe that it may not contain the most reliable information on Kropff, though none of the facts on here contradict any of my other findings.

Melvyl. "Kropff, Hanns Ferdinand Josef." Ucsb-worldcat-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu.

<https://ucsb-worldcat-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/wcidentities/viaf-492847>.

This is the page that I viewed when clicking the “find out more about” on Kropff using the worldcat servers, gave me plenty of information about the man himself and his multiple works, with the collection holding more of his later works in its entirety. This can be found by clicking on the “find out more about” button on any works related to Kropff on the UC Santa Barbara Worldcat servers.