

FLORA KRAUCH: DEFENDING THE CHILDREN'S WEAR INDUSTRY FROM
COMMERCIALIZATION THROUGH SOCIAL REFORM METHODS, 1909-1940

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This thesis examines Flora Krauch's use of Progressive Era social reform methods to develop and expand infants' and children's merchandise departments in American department stores and specialty shops. Krauch used the pages of the industry's first trade journal, *The Infants' Department*, to wage her battle against the commercialization of these departments, and to urge the use of mother education and child welfare as their foundation. At the turn of the twentieth century, retailers began to demonstrate their civic leadership in socially responsible ways. By 1916 independently owned department stores faced new forms of competition which led them to build alliances with individuals who highlighted the significance of scientific management methods and commercialization. The Retail Research Association and Harvard Business School spearheaded these merchandising shifts. The effects of these trends are apparent in children's departments. To explore how Krauch rejected commercialization, this thesis analyzes all available newspaper and journal articles Krauch wrote from 1909 to 1940, as well as primary sources from the U.S. Children's Bureau and Harvard Business School. Krauch was a leading force in the effort to challenge commercializing forces through the professionalization of women in retail buying and sales, and through the education of mothers about the health and safety of infants' and children's merchandise.

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Introduction

Research Topic

Tucked away in an L.S. Ayres and Company historical file at the Indiana Historical Society is the following obituary:

Miss Krauch, Merchandise Adviser, Dies. Miss Flora Krauch, a leader in present day methods of infants' wear merchandising, died yesterday in Methodist Hospital after an illness of several months. She was 81 years old. A native of Quincy, Ill., she lived in Indianapolis 50 years. Miss Krauch devised a method of centralizing all infants' wear selling in one department and was hired by L.S. Ayres and Company in 1909 to organize their infants' wear department. She was a merchandising consultant to many large department stores throughout the Midwest. She contributed many articles to trade magazines concerning infants' wear and merchandising problems. She retired in 1946. Miss Krauch was a member of the Lutheran Church. Funeral services will be at 3:30 pm Friday in Flanner and Buchanan Broad Ripple Mortuary. Entombment will be in Crown Hill Mausoleum. Survivors include two brothers, Herbert C. Krauch of Indianapolis and Frank W. Krauch of Memphis, Tenn.; and a sister, Mrs. Caroline Anderson of Pittsford, N.Y.¹

This obituary, published in 1958, had been placed in an L.S. Ayres historical file dated 1909—the year Flora Krauch started her career at the department store. The death notice summarizes Krauch's life's work, emphasizing her role in the creation and spread of present methods of infants' wear merchandising. However, contrary to her obituary's statement, Krauch actually did more than just *contribute* articles to trade magazines. She co-developed the infants' wear industry's first trade journal where she served, intermittently, as editor and feature writer for more than twenty years. Aside from cursory mention in two non-academic works, and another few scholarly articles and books, Flora Krauch has disappeared from the literature on retail and women's history.

¹ Historical Files, 1909, M616, box 1, folder 36, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. Obituary for Flora Krauch dated October 9, 1958.

In fact, a recent year-long exhibit at the Indiana Historical Society that highlighted the early growth and cutting-edge innovations of L.S. Ayres failed to recognize Krauch as the first female executive at the store. Why has she been forgotten?

The question is all the more curious when we consider Krauch's long career combating what her obituary calls "merchandising problems." In fact, Krauch spent most of her career advocating for a professional staff of single, childless women to educate mothers about the health and safety aspects of infants' department merchandise. Krauch's method conflicted with the direction that department stores took soon after her arrival at L.S. Ayres. In 1916, the store adopted a business model that focused on the maximization of profits by marketing fashionable, seasonal, and faddish products in all departments, including infants' and children's wear. This new model, promoted by men in retail, in government, and in universities steered department stores away from reformist work and focused their energies instead on cultivating consumers and higher profit margins.

Krauch spent the latter part of her career combating this trend in infants' and children's departments at L.S. Ayres and other department stores nationally. She waged her campaign in the pages of *The Infants' Department*, an infants' wear industry trade journal that Krauch helped to found and where she served as editor and feature writer from September 1917 to December 1940.² During these years, Krauch argued that infants' departments should carry staple product lines based on the needs of children, not on fashionable trends. She maintained that these departments should educate new parents

² This publication underwent several name changes. *The Infants' Department* changed its name in 1923 to *Infants' and Children's Department*, in 1935 to *Infants', Children's, and Girls' Wear*, in 1965 to *Earnshaw's Infants' and Children's Wear Review*, in 1978 to *Earnshaw's Infants'-Girls'-Boys' Wear Review*, and finally in 1983 to *Earnshaw's Review*.

on the health and safety of children and that a salesforce comprised of single, professional women without children would best fulfil this educational mission. At the same time, she denounced the commercialization of childhood that she saw taking place in the 1930s and 40s, as generic retail buyers and salespeople of ready-to-wear products increasingly displaced the female buyers who specialized in children's products. Thus, at a time when large department stores were reorganizing their merchandising methods in dramatic ways, Krauch stood out as a vocal critic of these changes and as a defender of the women who managed infants' and children's departments.

This project examines Krauch's conflict with others in the infants' wear industry by identifying and examining three key stages in her career: 1) her "professional" stage, where she moved to Indianapolis from Chicago to develop L.S. Ayres and Company's infants' department; 2) her "spokeswoman" stage, where she defended her merchandising method against the Retail Research Association (a group of non-competing department stores dedicated to sharing profitable merchandising strategies) critics' challenges to commercialize infants' and children's departments; and 3) her "crusading" stage, where she argued for the maintenance of education as the foundation for infants' departments.

In addition to these three stages, this thesis highlights the significance of her work in three ways. The first has to do with Krauch's agency as a self-educated woman. The methods and theories that she championed were based on her own experiences, observations, readings, and study. As we shall see, her methods were grounded in Progressive Era ideas of social reform and scientific expertise. She used these ideas to professionalize herself and her sales staff and to position themselves as experts capable of educating mothers about their children's well-being.

Second, Krauch's efforts to professionalize herself were significant because she later used them to argue against the merchandizing methods promoted by elite business schools which partnered with government officials and business leaders to reform department stores. Krauch's resistance reveals that these reforms did not take place without push back from women. As the men implementing these merchandizing reforms actively discredited and dismissed female professionals, Krauch repeatedly fought back to defend the efficacy of her methods and the professional success of women such as herself.

Finally, this thesis highlights how, thanks to Krauch, Indianapolis was an important center of these debates. Although Krauch's conflicts with the RRA became national in scope, she continued to draw on the experiences and information that she gathered from Indianapolis to form her arguments. If Krauch was the "mother of infants' departments," as one observer described her, then Indianapolis was their cradle.

Significance/Literature Review

In spite of Krauch's long career in the infants' wear industry and her prolific output as an author, she has received little attention from scholars. Most of the books that mention her are local studies of L.S. Ayres. Ken L. Turchi's book (made possible by the Ayres Foundation), *L.S. Ayres & Company: The Store at the Crossroads of America*, dedicates two pages to Krauch's development of the children's department. Turchi credits Krauch for preventing the department store from losing ground in the increasingly important infants' and children's clothing markets.³ In his article "'It would break my heart to see you behind a counter!' Business and Reform at L.S. Ayres & Company in the

³ Ken L. Turchi, *L.S. Ayres & Company: The Store at the Crossroads of America* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2012), 26-28.

Early Twentieth Century,” Richard Lindstrom singles out Krauch for her success. As an unmarried woman at L.S. Ayres, Krauch manipulated the idea of women’s roles to overcome overwhelming paternalism. He notes that Krauch used a variety of methods to build the children’s department, including a series of newspaper columns where she quoted scientific experts in order to validate her childrearing advice. Lindstrom mentions that Krauch was the editor of a trade newsletter called *Bigger Business* when she left L.S. Ayres. Here, Krauch promised to share with her readers the techniques she used to develop a successful children’s department. Lindstrom acknowledges that Krauch’s success was undoubtedly due to her retail merchandising skills; however, he suggests that more so, her achievements were a result of heading a department that embodied a role that society and the store deemed appropriate for women—that of a nurturer or teacher. Lindstrom’s thesis allows me to build on his idea and set the stage early as I demonstrate that Krauch’s personal life may not have fit the Victorian ideal, but she used the idea of women’s roles to promote her career advancement, professionalize some women in their careers, and educate others in their roles as mothers.⁴

In terms of books that look at department stores from a national perspective, there is a reference to Krauch in Jan Whitaker’s *Service and Style: How the American Department Store Fashioned the Middle Class*. However, Whitaker only refers to her indirectly as a “child welfare expert” in her discussion of L.S. Ayres’ practice of promoting the safety and healthful attributes of merchandise.⁵ In addition, Krauch

⁴ Richard Lindstrom, “It would break my heart to see you behind a counter!’ Business and Reform at L.S. Ayres & Company in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 93, no. 4 (1997): 345-376.

⁵ Jan Whitaker, *Service and Style: How the American Department Store Fashioned the Middle Class* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006), 247-253.

appears in the scholarly works of Daniel Thomas Cook. In *The Commodification of Childhood: The Children's Clothing Industry and the Rise of the Child Consumer*, Cook argues that the child consumer is the enduring product and legacy of a children's consumer culture that began in 1917 with the children's clothing industry's first trade journal, *The Infants' Department*—the trade journal which Krauch edited and to which she contributed articles.⁶ Specifically, Cook notes that “infants’ and children’s wear retailing could serve as moral cover” when pursuing the maternal consumer through marketing methods that educated mothers about the “healthful qualities of the garments they purchase and about the proper care of children.”⁷ Cook saw Krauch’s work as contributing to the greater commercialization of childhood and child-related consumer products. As we shall see, my analysis of Krauch’s conflict against the new merchandizing methods introduced at L.S. Ayres in 1918 by the RRA challenges this interpretation. Krauch pushed back against what she saw as excessive consumerism in the children’s retail business. She never saw herself as providing “moral cover” for children’s wear retailers. Instead, she saw herself as a true expert in and crusader for the cause of children’s welfare.

Since very little has been written about Krauch herself, I have turned to works on women in department stores more generally to inform my analysis. An important aspect of Krauch’s career and identity over the years was her work as a buyer. In *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* Susan Porter Benson argues that the day-to-day dynamics among saleswomen,

⁶ Daniel Thomas Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood: The Children's Clothing Industry and the Rise of the Child Consumer* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

female customers, and male managers in the Progressive Era department store created an arena for gender and class conflict. Benson claims that buyers were arguably managerial, and “furnished particularly powerful examples of female success since most had started behind the counter and risen through the ranks.”⁸ She also views buyers, both male and female, as working for their own departmental interests and not for the good of the store—an issue that led to a decades-long battle that resulted in the capitulation of the buyer’s departmental hegemony to myriad industry men who were “rationalizing” the retail industry.⁹ Benson’s work provides the context for Krauch’s relationships with other female buyers, sales clerks, and customers, as well as the problems she had with men in executive roles.

William Leach, in *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*, also provides information about female buyers such as Krauch. He argues that the culture of consumer capitalism was created over time through mass retailers’ enticements and their relationships with educators, social reformers, politicians, artists, and religious leaders. He notes that there were almost no female buyers in 1890. However by 1915, women represented almost a third of all buyers.¹⁰ Many men were ambivalent towards these women buyers, and pushed back against their encroachment into “mannish” high-volume departments such as shoes, furniture, and carpets.¹¹ However, women thrived in some departments. Leach claims that the most successful female buyers in Progressive Era department stores were those who worked in fashion departments and

⁸ Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 289.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 48-67.

¹⁰ William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc., 1992), 95.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

who traveled to Europe to bring back goods and information from department stores there.¹² The success of these women's departments along with the "glamorous" quality of their work, which involved frequent travel to large capital cities, bred other forms of jealousy and resentment within department stores.¹³ Although Leach did not focus on children's departments, some of the tensions he described between female and male buyers resonate with those found in the case of Krauch.

Leach's work also describes how the female reformers of the U.S. Children's Bureau cooperated with department stores to create a new and better "child world" through the dissemination of child welfare advice in stores. Some merchants embraced this cooperation "with a fervor equal to that of public officials."¹⁴ He notes that the market success of certain initiatives, such as the bureau's Baby-Week Campaign, led the bureau to worry that their public service message had been coopted by commercial advertising.¹⁵ The bureau women were not the only ones to have these concerns. The case of Krauch reveals that female merchants from within department stores voiced similar concerns about the commercialization of childhood.

I found that Krauch's efforts to fashion herself a child welfare expert in the context of the department store resembled the efforts of women in other professional areas studied by Robyn Muncy in *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935*. Muncy reveals how by tapping into female value systems and accepted societal gender norms, women carved out a niche in work that included social work,

¹² William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc., 1992), 97.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 181.

¹⁵ Ibid.

public health nursing, and home economics—feminine fields of work featuring contact with women and children that men rejected.¹⁶ She also discusses the connections made between the social reformers in the U.S. Children’s Bureau and the owners of department stores, an important context for Krauch’s own professional development. Muncy also describes the congressional backlash to the unmarried, childless female reformers who offered child welfare advice to mothers. This backlash took place in the later years of Krauch’s career and can be seen as the wider background of her struggle against her male critics in the department stores.

The question of the compatibility of retail work with marriage was one that Krauch addressed in her writings. Krauch believed that marriage was not compatible with her line of work. To put her position in context, I draw on Alice Kessler-Harris’s *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*. Kessler-Harris affirms that department store retail buying was a profession that required time commitments that made marriage untenable.¹⁷ Krauch’s views on marriage, thus, conformed to this norm.

Another way in which scholars have examined the relationship between Progressive Era reforms and the rise of department stores had been to focus on reform efforts within department stores themselves. Many of these studies focus on the paternalism that department stores exhibited towards their female workers. Using the L. S. Ayres and Company historical files, Richard Lindstrom reveals the rampant paternalism within the department store aimed at maintaining strict societal propriety

¹⁶ Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), xiii-xiv.

¹⁷ Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 135.

guidelines for women.¹⁸ In “‘The Rest Can Go to the Devil!’: Macy’s Workers Negotiate Gender, Sex, and Class in the Progressive Era,” Val Marie Johnson uses the records of a 1913 moral reform investigation of Macy’s Department Store to demonstrate that similar paternalistic initiatives occurred at Macy’s, but with the help of the workingwomen themselves. She shows that an increasing individualism fostered a developing “consumerism and heteronormativity” at the expense of political alliances based on feminism and/or class.¹⁹ In contrast, Sarah Smith Malino, in “Faces Across the Counter: A Social History of Female Department Store Employees, 1870-1920,” shows how Progressive Era social attitudes toward women spurred social reform workers to push for changes in department store management policy in terms of better working conditions, higher wages, and shorter work hours for females in the department store.²⁰ Here the women worked together to improve their working conditions.

These works demonstrate how department stores were the targets of internally and externally motivated reform measures that were focused on maintaining Victorian Era social mores for women. However, they also show that women could respond to these initiatives in a variety of ways.

Beyond the department store, another important context for situating Krauch’s work was the Progressive Era’s emphasis on providing mothers with expert child-care advice. Barbara Ehrenreich and Dierdre English explain in *For Her Own Good: 150*

¹⁸ Lindstrom, “It would break my heart to see you behind a counter!,” 376.

¹⁹ Val Marie Johnson, “‘The Rest Can Go to the Devil!’: Macy’s Workers Negotiate Gender, Sex, and Class in the Progressive Era,” *Journal of Women’s History* 19, no. 1 (2007): 32-57. Accessed September 27, 2014. muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_womens_history/v019/19.1johnson.pdf.

²⁰ Sarah Smith Malino, “Faces Across the Counter: A Social History of Female Department Store Employees, 1870-1920” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1982). Accessed November 18, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com.proxy2ulib.iupui.edu/pqdt/docview/303227535/fulltextPDF/61161AD0A644665PQ/1Qaccountid=7398>.

Years of the Experts' Advice to Women that during the Progressive Era everything from medicine, management, housekeeping, childrearing, and consumption became more scientific. Male experts in medicine and science condemned traditional, outdated sources of advice and pressed women to seek expert advice in all domestic issues.²¹ Rima Apple concurs in "Constructing Mothers: Scientific Motherhood in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." She notes that mothers were simultaneously held responsible for their children's well-being and told that they were incapable of meeting that responsibility without expert advice.²² Viviana Zelizer explains that mothers were urged to seek expert advice due to the Progressive Era emphasis on children and their well-being. In *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*, Zelizer suggests that late-nineteenth-century experts told women that they could become professional mothers if they heeded expert childrearing advice.²³

While early historians of this trend had argued that the majority of experts giving mothers child-care advice were male doctors, more recent scholars have pointed out that women were also advising mothers in more diverse settings. As mentioned, Muncy identified in *Creating a Female Dominion* a proliferation of female social workers in the Progressive Era who focused on improving the lives of women and children. These social workers mainly worked in settlement houses, while others fought for governmental policy changes for the betterment of women's and children's lives. In a related argument, Janice Williams Rutherford uses a case study to demonstrate that female experts in

²¹ Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1978), 62-69.

²² Rima Apple, "Constructing Mothers: Scientific Motherhood in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Social History of Medicine* 8, no. 2 (1995): 161-162.

²³ Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1985), 1-21.

domestic science urged the professionalization of domestic work. In *Selling Mrs. Consumer: Christine Frederick and the Rise of Household Efficiency*, Rutherford argues that women's homemaking role was redefined as professional mother and household consumer. Here, Rutherford points to women seeking domestic science degrees in universities for the sole purpose of becoming improved housewives. But Apple, in "Constructing Mothers," brings to light that experts could feasibly be found anywhere and came in all stripes as long as one could legitimately attach their expertise to a social ill. Apple suggests that formal education was not crucial when claiming an expertise.²⁴ A few years later in Julia Grant's *Raising Baby by the Book: The Education of American Mothers*, we learn of the commonality to connecting one's work with child welfare and the prevalence to using non-traditional venues for informal mother education in order to address shortcomings in childrearing.²⁵ When we take Apple's and Grant's work into consideration, we can better appreciate why Krauch saw her infants' department in the department store as a valid site for offering child-care advice.

Of all the literature available, Angel Kwolek-Folland's *Incorporating Women: A History of Women and Business in the United States* comes closest to providing a framework that connects each element that developed Krauch's professional persona to the role the department store played in that development. Kwolek-Folland brings into dialogue women's and business history and emphasizes women's business experiences in four areas: as risk-taking entrepreneurs, as family members, as professionalizing

²⁴ Janice Williams Rutherford, *Selling Mrs. Consumer: Christine Frederick and the Rise of Household Efficiency* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 37; Apple, "Constructing Mothers," 169-170.

²⁵ Julia Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book: The Education of American Mothers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 57-58.

managers and executives, and as slaves, laborers, wage earners, and managers.²⁶ Krauch was an entrepreneur; her siblings came to work in her department; as a buyer she was arguably in a managerial position; and throughout her work in retail she was a wage earner. Krauch was a businesswoman with a particular vision to improve the lives of children by educating mothers, and to professionalize women in the infants' department.

Yet Krauch has, until now, remained invisible in the histories of wage-earning women and department stores. Her invisibility may be a result of a shift in department store focus. In *Land of Desire*, Leach shows that the reformist agenda that existed from 1880 to 1910 shifted to a focus on consumerism with calls for efficiency and more scientific ways to conduct business. Department store owners funded the retail management programs at business schools at Harvard University and New York University, where innovations in retail management, accounting methods, and corporate organizations became available solely to men.²⁷ This was the trend that succeeded and Krauch, in spite of all of her efforts, lost her battle against this trend. Vicki Howard's *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store* also helps to explain how Krauch became invisible to us over time. Howard shows how the knowledge that college-educated men hoarded in innovative purchasing strategies, accounting methods, and merchandising methods, combined with centralized pooled buying of fashionable goods instead of staple goods, ushered in the de-skilling of female buyers.²⁸ The shift from reformism to consumerism came at a time when one third of

²⁶ Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Incorporating Women: A History of Women and Business in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 11.

²⁷ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 157-162, 286-289.

²⁸ Vicki Howard, *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 61-71.

retail buyers were women.²⁹ The existing scholarship describes how this shift was successful in edging out women, but it does not often document how women fought back. Through the case of Flora Krauch, we can start bringing women's resistance to these trends back into the light.

Sources

Krauch's hiring at L.S. Ayres and Company in 1909 marked the start of her executive level career in a department store. Advertisements and articles in the *Indianapolis News*, all of which are on microfilm at the Indiana State Library, document Krauch's arrival in Indianapolis; the expectations the department store had in terms of her work; sales events that Krauch sponsored; special educational events occurring in the department; innovations to her department; the centralization of all infant- and child-related products into the department; and Krauch's advice columns. The L.S. Ayres and Company collection at the Indiana Historical Society houses company ledgers, internal news pamphlets and correspondence, and miscellaneous *News* articles. These sources allowed me to reconstruct a timeline for Krauch's employment and achievements at L.S. Ayres between 1909 and 1917. Most importantly, internal correspondence between the L.S. Ayres Research Director and other male executives in the store revealed the conflicts that arose in the department store over Krauch's merchandising policies once the company joined the RRA. These memos detail how the attack on Krauch's methods was also framed as an attack on female buyers more generally by the Research Director.

To examine Krauch's response to these attacks, I turned to her own writings. During her tenure as writer and editor of *The Infants' Department* from 1917-1940, she

²⁹ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 95. By 1915, of the 10,849 retail buyers in the country, one-third were women. By 1924, 41 percent of the total 17,493 buyers in the country were women.

wrote almost 200 articles.³⁰ Krauch edited and wrote articles for *The Infants' Department* from September 1917 through March 1921. These articles reflect merchandising problems that infants' wear buyers in department stores faced when dealing with management and store owners. After March 1921 Krauch left the journal to focus on her manufacturing company, Krauch-Kraft, and her consulting role at Rike-Kumler and Company department store. When Krauch resumed writing articles and intermittent editorship in January 1927, the trade journal's name had changed to *The Infants' and Children's Department*. The name change, which occurred in January 1923, reflected an increase in readership, an increase in the journal's content, and the acceptance of advertisements. Krauch continued working at the journal, through another name change to *Infants', Children's, and Girls' Wear*, until her retirement in December 1940. During the latter two iterations of the journal Krauch exposed merchants' commercialization of a key child welfare opportunity, National Baby Week; she heralded the opportunities that the Self Help clothing movement offered to child welfare; and she motivated neighborhood shops to continue the proven merchandising methods of mother education and child welfare. Overall, she defended the methods she developed at L.S. Ayres, the work of female buyers such as herself, and her vision for the future of infants' and children's departments.

Other useful sources were genealogical websites and city directories. These sources provided details about Krauch's personal life, such as that she lived with family members in Indianapolis and that her siblings also worked in her department at L.S. Ayres. *The New York Times* placed Krauch in New York City on merchandise buying

³⁰ A full run of the trade journal is available at the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C.

trips for the infants' wear specialty shop, A. Starr Best. Progressive Era trade journals provided information about the merchandising innovations that Krauch saw in Chicago and New York City.³¹

Chapter Overview

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Each chapter follows the development of Flora Krauch's distinguishing characteristics in three stages: her professional stage, her spokeswoman stage, and her crusading stage.

Chapter one discusses Krauch's years at L.S. Ayres and Company in Indianapolis, Indiana from 1909 to 1917. In this thesis we will see how Krauch validated her retail and childrearing credentials by using Progressive Era scientific, medical, and reform discourses; developed a complete infants' and children's department; and found opportunities to influence an entire industry. This chapter will also shed light on a key relationship between department stores and the female child welfare reformers in the U.S. Children's Bureau. After developing a merchandising plan to grow the expertise of female retail buyers and the physical space of infants' and children's departments, Krauch took her method nationwide. In 1917, while still at L.S. Ayres, she co-created with George F. Earnshaw of Earnshaw Knitting Company in Chicago, Illinois, *The Infants' Department*, the infants' wear industry's first national trade journal, as her platform.³²

³¹ The genealogical sources and the *New York Times* were accessed at the Indiana Historical Society. Progressive Era trade journals were easily accessed at Hathi Trust Digital Library.

³² Jennifer Cattai, www.earnshaws.com/2012/04/in-focus/lion-heart. April 27, 2012. Accessed 2014; Historical Files, 1914, M616, box 1, folder 41, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana; Flora Krach, "The Question Box," *The Infants' Department* 1, no. 2: 25. According to Cattai, in 1911 George F. Earnshaw founded Earnshaw Knitting Company, based in Chicago, Illinois. He developed a layette line under the label Vanta. The products were developed under the principle that it is safer to dress infants and children without pins and buttons. In 1912 Earnshaw

Chapter two examines Krauch's career at *The Infants' Department*, from 1917 to 1940, from where she shared strategies she found successful to overcoming merchandising issues. Because department stores faced increasing challenges from numerous sources of competition, male merchants began to form information-sharing groups. In chapter two we shall see how L.S. Ayres' entry into one such group, the Retail Research Association (RRA), affected the relationship between male executives and female retail buyers using a Krauch-like merchandising plan. Krauch used her writings as a response to protest criticisms leveled by L.S. Ayres' RRA advocate for not using the RRA model. Instead, by using a merchandising method of her own making, Krauch developed the most successful children's department in the nation. Hers was the department which *The Infants' Department* used as the archetype on which others should base theirs. Krauch used her articles to inform the RRA of her refusal to submit to their method and of her intention to share her method to her readers.

The formation of information sharing groups among male merchants marked the first of many male alliances working against females in retail. Chapter three looks at Krauch's writings at *The Infants' Department* to understand that her conflict with L.S. Ayres' RRA representative was part of a wider debate. This debate involved changes in

patented "twistless tape," which did not curl after washing and was useful in securing infants' and children's garments. From this concept he developed a host of layette products. With a commitment to grow the businesses of his retail customers, Earnshaw, with the help of "veteran retailer Flora Krauch as editor" developed *The Infants' Department*. This was a more elaborate version of a pamphlet Earnshaw Knitting Company circulated called "Bigger Business." In the L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, a photocopy of the first volume of "Bigger Business," in January 1917, confirms Flora Krauch as the consulting editor of "this little publication." Krauch answered questions from and offered suggestions to retail dealers in their pursuit to develop infants' departments. Later, in October 1917, Krauch recounted in an article in *The Infants' Department* that "it is their (Earnshaw Knitting Company) dream and mine that we shall be able, in time, to develop a publication that will be both interesting and helpful to Infants' Wear buyers." These three sources, Cattai's article, the endorsement in the first volume of "Bigger Business," and Krauch's article, lead me to believe that together, Krauch and Earnshaw developed the concept for "Bigger Business" and *The Infants' Department*.

how the United States government promoted child welfare and who they found appropriate to disseminate child welfare advice. We shall see that from 1921 onward the women of the U.S. Children's Bureau and myriad bureau-affiliated organizations attracted the scorn of a few congressmen and senators for conducting the child welfare work the government formerly authorized. The 1920s were business friendly years with focus on consumption and attainment of luxury. Chapter three will also illuminate how male retailers, formerly teamed with child welfare reformers, shifted their alliance to a collaboration with men in the U.S. government and academia. The newly formed tripartite group of men hoarded and used information garnered from case studies which merchants submitted to the men at Harvard Business School (HBS), and others, as one way to hone their retail management skills and exclude women like Krauch from continued reform-based work in department stores. We shall see however, that Krauch fought back against the HBS case study method on their own "turf" by adopting as the premiere case study, the method she created to develop her children's department at L.S. Ayres—a method she shared with an entire industry.

Ending

So why should anyone care about Krauch's work? First, Daniel Thomas Cook portrays the writers, editor, and publisher of *The Infants' Department* as using the mother-education model of merchandising healthful clothing as moral cover for developing the retail structure which commercialized childhood.³³ Cook also questions the integrity of *The Infants' Department's* staff. He suggests that trade journals represent what Erving Goffman refers to as the "backstage" of social encounters—spaces away

³³ Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood*, 54.

from the public's scrutinizing glare where a façade is erected.³⁴ Cook claims that no true trade secrets are revealed in the trade journal because competitors read the trade press. Thus, the truth value of any writer's statements is no stronger or weaker in the trade press than in any other form of discourse.³⁵ In short, Cook's thesis is that the child consumer is the legacy of the children's merchandise industry.³⁶ Contrary to Cook's general opinion about the writers and editors of *The Infants' Department*, Krauch's writings demonstrate her fight against the commercialization of the infants' and children's department. A thorough reading of her more than 200 articles serves as evidence that she unwaveringly promoted the educational foundation upon which these departments were originally developed. In fact, this model was Krauch's creation. Krauch did not contribute to the creation of the "toddler," or any age group, as a consumer, nor as a retail structure as Cook claims. Instead, Krauch recognized this age group as necessitating its own set of healthful merchandise distinct from others. Second, while Leach's descriptions of buyers may have held true for women's fashion, Krauch's experiences reveal that women in other departments suffered a loss of authority and autonomy within department stores at this time. As merchants lost interest in supporting social reform methods aimed at protecting women and children as ways to market products, so too did the retail buyers of those products. In challenging what other scholars have said about Krauch and female buyers, this study reveals Krauch's agency and advocacy. As we shall see, to the extent that Indianapolis was home to L.S. Ayres, a premier Progressive Era department store in

³⁴ Erving Goffman, "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life," (Social Sciences Research Report, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, 1956), 69-80.

³⁵ Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood*, 18.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

infants' and children's departments, it was also home to Flora Krauch, a national advocate for female buyers and for protecting childhood from commercialization.

Chapter One: Reform-Based Merchandising

In 1880, the recently founded L.S. Ayres and Company department store in Indianapolis offered a special premium at the Indiana State Fair to the “the best calico dress made for herself by a girl under twelve years of age, who is a member of an industrial school.”³⁷ Thirty-three years later, L.S. Ayres hosted a Child Welfare Exhibit that drew throngs of people to browse through displays of a wide range of manufactured clothes and products designed especially for infants and children. In its ad for the exhibit, the department store touted the modern, adjustable “Taylor crib,” as well as the opportunity for visitors to meet with Flora Krauch, L.S. Ayres’ buyer for its infants’ and children’s department and the person in charge of the exhibit. Krauch, as the author of a motherhood advice book “Your Baby: A Series of Heart to Heart Talks to Mothers,” would be giving talks on childhood welfare.³⁸

The contrast between the 1880 promotion and the large 1913 exhibit reveals the important developments that took place at L.S. Ayres at the turn of the twentieth century. The selling of children’s wear had become a priority. Products such as children’s clothes and cribs, which were once produced in the home, had become manufactured items. These products had modern and innovative design features that made them worthy to exhibit at the state fair. Understanding the items that were designed for childhood safety and the comfort of the mothers demanded expertise. At L.S. Ayres, the resident expert

³⁷ Public Relations, Indiana State Fair 1920s -1950s, M616, box 21, Folder 3, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. A typed memorandum noted the premium L.S. Ayres offered for the best homemade dress made by a girl 12 years of age and under. Though the memo is anecdotal and should have been placed in a different folder, it may be here to keep all information about the store’s relationship with the Indiana State Fair together. If that is the case, the folder could be re-labeled to indicate that an item from 1880 is within the contents.

³⁸ L.S. Ayres and Company children’s department advertisement, *Indianapolis News*, September 9, 1913, microfilm, p. 6.

was Flora Krauch, a department store buyer who had come to Indianapolis in 1909 via Chicago.

L.S. Ayres and Company Comes to Indianapolis

The Ayres name first became associated with the retail business in Indianapolis in 1872 when Lyman Ayres of Geneva, New York, bought a controlling interest in the Trade Palace, an Indianapolis-based dry goods business operated by N.R. Smith and Company. The partnership name was changed to N.R. Smith and Ayres, with Ayres remaining in New York to serve as the resident buyer for the store. In 1874 Lyman Ayres bought N.R. Smith's interest and changed the name to L.S. Ayres and Company.³⁹

According to Ayres' great-grandson William Taylor, the family strove to pattern the store as "a smaller clone" of the Chicago retail merchant, Marshall Field and Company.⁴⁰ In the decade prior to and after the turn of the century, the L.S. Ayres department store incorporated elements of grandeur and innovation, as well as physical expansion, in a drive to bring Chicago-style retail to Indianapolis.

Where Marshall Field commissioned a magnificent Tiffany domed ceiling, Ayres' focal point was a grand staircase surrounded by marble floors and mahogany marquetry walls.⁴¹ L.S. Ayres introduced modern technology with new lighting, telephones,

³⁹ Historical Files, History of Directors, M616, Box 6, Folder 5, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana; Historical Files, 1872, M616, Box 1, Folder 1, L.S. Ayres and Company, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. Controlling interest in a company refers to an ownership that exceeds fifty percent. While Lyman Ayres had controlling interest in the department store, he was a passive partner in terms of daily affairs since he remained in Geneva, New York, where he served as the resident buyer for the Indianapolis department store. He gained active interest in the store, in tandem with a 100% controlling interest in the store, when he moved to Indianapolis in 1874.

⁴⁰ Turchi, *L.S. Ayres and Company*, 22. Turchi interviewed William Taylor on December 30, 2010. Taylor is Alma Ayres Taylor's son. Alma Ayres Taylor is the daughter of Frederic M. Ayres and Alma Hoegh Ayres. In the 1900s the word "clone" indicated a small branch or twig, broken off of one plant to propagate another. This would explain why L.S. Ayres wanted to "transplant" innovations and personnel from Chicago.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

elevators, pneumatic tubes, and modern showcases almost in tandem with Marshall Field. One-price ticketing on products at both Marshall Field and L.S. Ayres eliminated haggling over prices, browsing permitted customers to enter stores with no obligation to make a purchase, and the acceptance of returns gave customers confidence and generated customer loyalty through exemplary customer service.⁴²

Again, like Marshall Field, L.S. Ayres served the middle- to upper-class citizens of their respective cities. However, to broaden the store's general appeal, L.S. Ayres "brought from the stores in Chicago" a dining innovation, as well as two methods to keep up with public demand for more merchandise. First, patterning itself on Marshall Field, the L.S. Ayres Tearoom provided women "a clean, quiet, and discreet place" to enjoy lunch.⁴³ Second, to meet customer demands and keep pace with innovations in women's clothing, L.S. Ayres "reinforced" the department for women's tailoring with five "skilled tailors" from Chicago.⁴⁴ Finally, again following Marshall Field's lead, L.S. Ayres introduced an economy basement. This recent innovation in merchandising methods permitted product-line expansion and resolved two merchandising problems: first, the main departments could be kept orderly by moving slow-selling or broken assortments to the basement; second, those items not finding a ready market in the main department could be reduced in price and sold in the basement.⁴⁵ The department store invited all classes of white citizens to shop in the economy basement.⁴⁶

⁴² Historical Files, 1872, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁴³ Turchi, *L.S. Ayres & Company*, 191.

⁴⁴ Historical Files, 1901, M616, box 1, folder 28, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁴⁵ Robert W. Twyman, *History of Marshall Field & Co. 1852-1906* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954), 112.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 112, 121-122; Turchi, *L.S. Ayres & Company*, 191, 235-236. Indiana's prevailing attitude toward race in 1905 is apparent in an advertisement for the Tea Room indicating "White waitresses

Both department stores accommodated expansion by erecting or purchasing new buildings.⁴⁷ Indeed, Lyman Ayres began purchasing buildings and empty lots along the main thoroughfare in Indianapolis prior to his death, anticipating the future needs of the business. Eighteen months after the 1896 death of Lyman Ayres, L.S. Ayres and Company expanded. By 1900 the store ran out of room again and searched for ways to expand further.⁴⁸

Expansion provided the space for additional product lines and promoted the novel concept of departments. Adding a variety of stock required some form of systemization; thus, departments served as “the administrative unit for the buying and selling of a given class of goods.”⁴⁹ Historian Susan Porter Benson elaborates that adding a department or expanding an existing one attracted new customers, bolstered sales during lean times, and took advantage of economies of scale.⁵⁰ Attracting new customers made adding new product lines a necessary yet risky aspect to business. The imponderable number of risks could only be absorbed by the most financially stable department stores. However, the addition of organized departments distinguished modernizing department stores from the

are employed.” While it is true that the store had black employees at the turn of the century, they were in non-selling positions such as elevator operators and porters. It is important to note that the first group of African Americans to use the auditorium and eat in the Tea Room as actual patrons of the store was in 1950. Furthermore, Turchi notes that there are a few stories about black women being prohibited from trying on hats or intimate apparel, but he has not been able to substantiate the stories. At any rate, that L.S. Ayres created a bargain basement and a Tea Room prior to 1950 and that attitudes toward race at the turn of the century were divisive, it is reasonable to believe that the store catered to a white clientele with de facto segregation.

⁴⁷ Twyman, *History of Marshall Field & Co.*, 106; Historical Files, 1903, M616, box 1, folder 30, L.S. Ayres & Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana; Turchi, *L.S. Ayres and Company*, 8, 11, 13-14.

⁴⁸ Historical Files, 1900, M616, box 1, folder 27, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁴⁹ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 14.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 14. John Wanamaker of Wanamaker’s Grand Depot in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania said that “with the large property we now have we can do a great deal more business with no more expense for rent, taxes, gas, and only the addition of needed clerk hire.”

potpourri of less organized merchandise found in the general store and the single product line of a specialty shop.⁵¹

Stores that adopted the department system placed these units under the supervision of buyers. Buyers received appropriations to cover departmental expenses and were generally given free rein to manage their departments without executive interference. Benson notes that, “Marshall Field prided himself on having a ‘buyer-run’ store.”⁵² Leading up to the nineteenth century, most store owners believed that buyers’ instincts led them to stock their departments with desirable and appropriately priced merchandise that would sell itself.

In terms of wages, L.S. Ayres followed Marshall Field’s model. The highest ranking personnel, aside from the executives who owned the stores, were the managers. However, Benson argues that department heads, broadly referred to as “buyers,” performed managerial duties.⁵³ No general policy prevailed to determine salaries; however, in the early days, L.S. Ayres’ ledgers indicate that buyers were compensated based on a percentage of sales and a percentage of profits.⁵⁴ Furthermore, buyers in more profitable departments negotiated contracts in which they received a guaranteed base pay

⁵¹ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 16.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 10. Benson remarks that the distinguishing characteristic between managers and buyers were that buyers “presided over their own little fiefdoms, protecting their merchandise and personnel from the other managers who represented the interests of the store as a whole.”

⁵⁴ Ledgers and Department Books 1901-1924, M616, BV 2622, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. The L.S. Ayres and Company ledgers do not provide evidence of base salaries. All evidence suggests that commissions were paid based on sales and profits. However, if L.S. Ayres followed Marshall Field’s blueprint, the managers should have received a base salary, negotiated to not have exceeded a pre-determined ceiling wage.

in addition to their commissions. In any case, buyers' salaries were also contingent on departmental earnings.⁵⁵

The Development of Children's Departments

Children's clothing represented a product line that piqued Marshall Field's interest. At the turn of the century industrialization introduced numerous consumer goods to the marketplace; certain items relieved some women of some of their domestic duties, while other items represented goods formerly produced in the home, such as children's clothing.⁵⁶ The items women found in stores were not found in centralized children's departments, though. In fact, L.S. Ayres sold some children's items as early as 1883, but not in a dedicated children's department.⁵⁷ Burgeoning department stores routinely organized and categorized items based on product lines instead of gender or age groups. Thus, children's shoes would be found in the general shoe department instead of with all other child-related merchandise.⁵⁸

This pattern changed at Marshall Field in 1902 when the store opened a dedicated children's department with select clothing items.⁵⁹ To promote the department, Marshall Field advertised in the local newspapers an annual Children's Day—a day when the store created a carnival-like atmosphere in the children's department. Children's Days actually began after 1900, but became an important strategy to bring in crowds specifically to the children's department after 1902. To understand the significance of Children's Days, one

⁵⁵ Employee Sales Commission Agreements, 1919-1930, M616, box 29, folder 1, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. Employment contracts beginning in 1919 specifying the terms of compensation exist for Anna Krauch and others. I have not found a similar contract for Flora Krauch.

⁵⁶ Ehrenreich and English, *For Her Own Good*, 10, 129.

⁵⁷ Turchi, *L.S. Ayres & Company*, 11; Historical Files, 1904, M616, box 1, folder 31, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁵⁸ Twyman, *History of Marshall Field & Co.*, 110.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

needs only consider that “‘Children’s Day’ in 1904 was attended by ... a record 400,000.”⁶⁰

Flora Krauch Arrives to Indianapolis

L.S. Ayres again followed Marshall Field’s lead with the creation of a children’s department. Just as store owner Frederic M. Ayres had lured five skilled tailors from Chicago to work in Indianapolis, he again looked to Chicago to find a buyer for his new children’s department. He hired Flora Krauch, a native of Quincy, Illinois. Krauch was born Florentine (Flora) Wilhemina Emma Krauch on June 12, 1877, to German immigrant parents. She began her career in retail by selling candies and baked goods in her grandfather’s confectionery/wholesale German bakery situated along the Mississippi River.⁶¹ City directories indicate that she had worked as a clerk at a Quincy dry goods store from 1896 until the family moved to Chicago in 1900.⁶²

There, she found work at Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company department store, first as a stockgirl and then later as a “short clothes” clerk.⁶³ From Carson, Pirie, Scott, she moved to A. Starr Best, purportedly the only establishment exclusively for the sale of

⁶⁰ Twyman, *History of Marshall Field & Company*, 148. Twyman lists the *Chicago Record-Herald*, October 3, 1905, as his source.

⁶¹ Bailey’s Quincy Directory and Business Advertiser, 1861, p. 151. Accessed July 29, 2015. The business directory shows twelve confectioneries doing business in Quincy; Interview uploaded onto Ancestry.com by Henry “Hank” Anderson, son of Flora’s sister Carolina Krauch Anderson, who claimed that Flora, Anna, and Carolina had to work in their grandfather’s bakery, Ancestry.com, Accessed June 8, 2015.

⁶² U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989, p. 282. Ancestry.com, Accessed July 29, 2015. In 1896 Flora Krauch lived at 322 S. 7th Street in Quincy, Illinois. She was employed as a clerk.

⁶³ Jo B. Paoletti and Carol L. Kregloh, “The Children’s Department,” in *Men and Women: Dressing the Part*, ed. Claudia Brush Kidwell and Valerie Steele (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1989), 25. “Short clothes” were ankle length skirts, also known as petticoats, with no diapers underneath. The petticoat was paired with a fitted, back-opening bodice that was frequently boned or stiffened. Girls wore this outfit until about thirteen to fourteen years of age, at which time they transitioned to the front opening gowns adult women wore. Little boys wore the petticoats until they reached between four to seven years of age. At that point, they were “breeched”—mature enough to wear mini-adult male clothes in the vein of coats, vests, and breeches.

children's clothing in Chicago.⁶⁴ By the time Krauch moved to Indianapolis she was a professional buyer of infants' and children's clothing with more than a decade of retail experience in Chicago.

When Krauch arrived at L.S. Ayres, the first thing she did was sell off the scant selection of infants' and children's merchandise that was already in stock. Beginning in January 1909 she initiated a three-month-long clearance event to make room for the apparel she wanted to spotlight in the grand opening of her children's department in March. L.S. Ayres announced this sale in the *Indianapolis News* in three advertisements that featured Krauch's retail experience, her long-term goal, the exclusivity of items, and the faith L.S. Ayres vested in her judgement. According to the first ad:

Her entire business life has been devoted to supplying the dress needs of infants and young children. She is therefore fully qualified to do what she proposes—make the 'Children's Corner' of L.S. Ayres one of the best infants' stores in the country.⁶⁵

Hundreds ... of mothers *happier* by reason of this Change of buyers' sale in the 'Children's Corner.' Everything a baby wears is here ... That this sale is proving such a signal success is due to two facts that are evident to every mother who attends: Miss Krauch knows her business thoroughly—knows what is desirable and knows what it is worth—and her repricings reflect that knowledge. Mothers will do well to visit this children's corner to-morrow.⁶⁶

When Miss Krauch, recently with A. Starr Best, of Chicago, took charge of this section ... she was given free rein to make it second to none ... become acquainted with the numerous baby needfuls and luxuries ... the greatest of its kind ever assembled in Indianapolis.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Josiah Seymour Currey, *Chicago: Its History and its Builders, A Century of Marvelous Growth*, Volume 4 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912), 670-671.

⁶⁵ L.S. Ayres and Company advertisement announcing children's wear closeout sale, *Indianapolis News*, January 1909, Historical Files, M616, box 1, folder 39, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. L.S. Ayres ledgers provide evidence that Krauch was the only female buyer at the store. Buyers received commissions for the departments under their charge.

⁶⁶ L.S. Ayres and Company children's department advertisement, *Indianapolis News*, February 25, 1909, microfilm, p. 16.

⁶⁷ L.S. Ayres and Company children's department advertisement, *Indianapolis News*, March 27, 1909, microfilm, p. 28.

The “free rein” that Krauch allegedly had over her department accords with the findings of Susan Porter Benson who has underscored the autonomy of buyers within stores. Benson compared the buyer’s duties over all functions in his or her department as akin to the power over a fiefdom.⁶⁸

Two days later a more direct effort to sell Krauch as an expert to promote L.S. Ayres’ new infants’ department appeared in print. This advertisement touted Krauch’s expertise in parenting and promised customers that they would enjoy the experience of working with her:

*Why the opening in the Children’s corner is creating intense interest ... Miss Krauch, the new manager of the Children’s Corner, knew what she was doing when she set about to enlarge, improve, restock and beautify this section ... everything that will add to the comfort of the little “monarch of all he surveys” ... every convenience for lightening the cares of the mothers ... During the last eleven years Miss Krauch has probably outfitted more infants than any other woman in the central States. Her knowledge is yours for the asking, any time ... If Miss Krauch has a particular hobby it is the knit band ... she insists with the almost unanimous backing of physicians, should be worn by all children under three years of age. These bands come in flannel, knit cotton, cotton, and wool, all wool or silk and wool. 15 cents to 30 cents ... She has chosen dresses with rare, daintiness and practicality combined. Coats that have all the comfort ... any fond mother could demand.*⁶⁹

In addition to promoting Krauch’s expertise, this advertisement also promises customers that they no longer need to look outside of Indianapolis to find the products that they need:

We’ve entertained more visitors, interested more prospective customers and sold more children’s wear during the last two days than ever before during a similar period. We expected you to be interested in the ... extent of assortments and ... the values offered, but were hardly prepared for the enthusiasm manifested in the latter. One woman ... made her selections with the help of a popular New York catalogue of childwear and saved

⁶⁸ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 50.

⁶⁹ L.S. Ayres and Company children’s department advertisement, *Indianapolis News*, March 19, 1909, microfilm, p. 18.

money. Another found a milk heater of size she was unable to discover in three of Chicago's big stores, a third who was buying her baby's first short dresses ... which she said were the first purchases she had ever made for her child in Indianapolis.⁷⁰

According to this passage, the products that Krauch brought to Indianapolis were not only equal to those found in bigger cities, they were superior. In this way, L.S. Ayres suggests that Krauch's department will make the Indianapolis store stand out nationally as a leader in infants' and children's departments.

Such interest in Krauch's product choices positioned her to satisfy her goal of building the best children's department in L.S. Ayres' Children's Corner. The Children's Corner was literally that—a 500-square-foot corner in the rear of the third floor near the freight elevator.⁷¹ Initially, Krauch carried clothing for newborns to age six and manned the department single-handedly. As sales increased, Krauch required a staff. In 1910, as L.S. Ayres' only female buyer, Krauch hired Lurline Cahill, the first female section manager in the store, in general, and the children's department, in particular. One year later Krauch hired her sister, Anna Krauch, as an assistant buyer in the department.⁷²

Krauch's Children's Department Grows

Krauch and her staff soon found working in the Children's Corner allotted to them to be limiting. Krauch unsuccessfully asked the buyers in adjacent departments to forfeit space to expand hers. Sometime in 1910 Krauch petitioned Frederic M. Ayres for

⁷⁰ L.S. Ayres and Company children's department advertisement, *Indianapolis News*, March 30, 1909, microfilm, p. 18.

⁷¹ Putting Krauch in a 500-square-foot corner seems at odds with L.S. Ayres' publications in the *News* endorsing her as Ayres' child welfare expert with the expectation to build the best children's department in the nation. According to Susan Porter Benson, corner departments suffered a great disadvantage compared to those in the front of the store or at the top of the escalator in terms of attracting customers. More important, remote corner departments also indicated the store's concern with the department's ability to generate profits.

⁷² Historical Files, 1909, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

additional space. Ayres showed her the third floor in the adjacent, as yet unfinished, W.K. Stewart Building, which had been purchased to accommodate L.S. Ayres' future expansion.⁷³ Immediately, Krauch decided to move her department into the new building. She devised a floor plan, received approval, and solicited help from the store's maintenance crew to build her space. Together, Krauch and the crew cleaned the area and constructed display cabinets, shelves, and closets for storage. She retained an old fireplace to lend atmosphere and she appropriated a small balcony to serve as her office and stockroom. She turned a "millinery front" into a layette room, and she had the workers build "low broad steps down to the new department to protect pregnant mothers."⁷⁴ Natural light came from the "light wells" from the second floor to the third. Krauch used glass cases to display dainty merchandise and show tables to present more durable items. She also added sizes 6-14 to her stock and placed mirrors low enough for children to view their outfits.⁷⁵ As soon as Krauch moved to the Stewart Building she arranged for a small play yard with little red chairs in her department where a story teller came every Saturday afternoon to read to the children. Lastly, Krauch persuaded Ayres to install a 5-foot-tall shelf for soft-soled baby shoes. With the addition of infants' and children's shoes, Krauch commenced the centralization all infants' and children's related products into the newly expanded children's department.

⁷³ Ledgers and Department Books 1901-1924, L.S. Ayres & Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. The L.S. Ayres and Company ledgers prove that Flora Krauch was the only female buyer in the department store. As such, any department adjacent to hers was managed by a male buyer. Thus, the only individuals who could have denied Krauch additional floor space to expand her department would have been men.

⁷⁴ Historical Files, 1909, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

A series of advertisements in the January 1911 *Indianapolis News* announced the children's department's move to the Stewart Building. In back-to-back issues, the *News* published articles that announced a sale to facilitate the move.⁷⁶ Krauch used the sale as an opportunity to eliminate all unwanted merchandise in a clearance sale with mark-downs "low in price to insure complete clearance before 'moving day.'"⁷⁷ On the one hand, Krauch expanded her department in the same tradition that the entire store did decades earlier. In the early days the store acquired additional space to broaden product lines and decentralize into multiple "departments." On the other hand, Krauch used her extra space to centralize all infants' and children's products and services from other departments into the children's department.

The expansion coincided with the launch of a new series of articles by Krauch on parenting and children's welfare. An ad in the *Indianapolis News* announced that the articles would be displayed in the children's department regularly.

Baby Questions Most Frequently Asked. We are publishing a series of Baby articles, presenting the questions that thoughtful mothers are asking every day in our infants' department—What is the difference between a binder and an abdominal band? How long is the binder worn? Of what material should the binder be? At what age is the abdominal band put on? How long is it worn? When will the abdominal band take the place of a shirt? Why does the wrong kind of binder cause colic? What is the real mission of the abdominal band? Can you answer all these questions? If not, they will be answered for you with authority by the intelligent saleswomen in Baby's Corner any day. Baby's Corner—Third Floor.⁷⁸

Baby Questions Most Frequently Asked. The Second Group. When assembling a layette much consideration should be given to securing the right shirt. Before buying, ask the following questions: How many

⁷⁶ L.S. Ayres and Company children's department advertisement, *Indianapolis News*, January 6, 1911, microfilm, p. 12. The article in the *News* was titled, "Paving the way for the Removal of the 'Children's Corner.'"

⁷⁷ L.S. Ayres and Company children's department advertisement, *Indianapolis News*, January 7, 1911, microfilm, p. 12.

⁷⁸ Historical Files, 1909, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

models of baby shirts are made? Which are most satisfactory? Have the double front shirts proven a success? What advantage has the tie over the pin? What weight and quality is most desirable? How many are needed? How can the wearing or life of a shirt be prolonged? Why is it so necessary to wear both the shirt and abdominal or teething band? Is it safe during warm weather to remove a shirt? These questions will be answered for you with authority by the intelligent sales-women in Baby's Corner, any day. Baby's Corner—Third Floor.⁷⁹

The promotion of these articles by L.S. Ayres reveals the store's direct effort to promote Krauch's reputation as a child welfare expert as part of its overall campaign to promote the children's department. By publishing often asked questions, L.S. Ayres also suggested that Indianapolis mothers accepted the Progressive Era call for mothers to seek child rearing advice from experts. They let Indianapolis mothers know that Krauch possessed superior childrearing skills in the way she demonstrated how clothing and merchandise affected the physical and psychological well-being of a child.

Historian Rima Apple notes that in 1910, the National Education Association issued a report on the place of industries in public education. With this line of reasoning, a broader assortment of professionals could offer advice to individuals in non-traditional venues. Experts in non-traditional settings could tailor their advice to complement the character of the setting. Thus, children's departments can be viewed as informal educational structures where the retail buyers are viewed as educational experts. In fact, Apple claims that in the early decades of the twentieth century a growing opinion developed claiming that "children's health encompassed more than medicine."⁸⁰ Retail buyers, through careful study of child welfare material, could disseminate information about the safety aspects of infants' and children's merchandise. When viewed in this

⁷⁹ Historical Files, 1909, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁸⁰ Apple, "Constructing Mothers," 169-172.

way, an infants' and children's wear buyer represented the expert in the educative children's department.

Krauch Advises Mothers

Krauch's work as a child welfare expert can be seen as part of a larger movement in Indianapolis and in the United States more generally. In 1915, Julia Lathrop, the director of the U.S. Children's Bureau, acknowledged Indianapolis' participation in bureau-supported baby saving campaigns. Indianapolis' Mayor J.E. Bell endorsed the campaigns and requested support for them from "other organizations especially interested in the welfare of little children."⁸¹ The U.S. Children's Bureau was an agency created in 1912 within the Department of Commerce and Labor. When Lathrop was promoting her new campaign in 1915, she specifically asked department stores to assist in the distribution of printed material and suggested that interested organizations use the exhibition of objects, lectures, demonstrations, and explainers to convey the bureau's message.⁸² Lathrop suggested that exhibits include "proper clothing ... sleeping and bathing arrangements" and "nurses as explainers."⁸³ Lathrop also recommended that department stores solicit medical personnel to educate parents about children's welfare.⁸⁴ Krauch's efforts to promote child welfare at L.S. Ayres predated the bureau's initiative.

⁸¹ U.S. Department of Labor U.S. Children's Bureau, Industrial Series No. 1, Bureau Publication No. 10, Separate No. 55, Baby-Week Campaigns: Suggestions for Communities of Various Sizes, Miscellaneous Series No. 5, Bureau Publication no. 15 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), 5, 56.

⁸² Leach, *Land of Desire*, 180-182. The U.S. Children's Bureau supported the new consumer economy and culture of the early 1900s and monitored injustices inflicted by one group upon another.

⁸³ U.S. Department of Labor U.S. Children's Bureau, Industrial Series No. 1, Bureau Publication No. 10, Separate No. 55, Baby-Week Campaigns: Suggestions for Communities of Various Sizes, Miscellaneous Series No. 5, Bureau Publication no. 15 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), 33-34.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 22, 32-34.

And although Krauch did not fit the bureau's definition of medical personnel, her work nonetheless reflected, if not anticipated, this initiative.

Krauch's work paralleled that of the U.S. Children's Bureau in other ways. Many professionals in the child welfare business were not mothers. Similar to Julia Lathrop, Florence Kelley, and Lillian Wald, Flora Krauch was a single, childless woman advising married women with children to shun traditional sources of child welfare information and instead seek advice from experts. Late-nineteenth-century literature and social reform rhetoric directed certain social problems in ways that cast mothers as the perpetrators of children's ills. These writers and reformers popularized the sentiment that modern mothers required expert scientific and medical knowledge to raise their children.⁸⁵

Although Krauch was not a medical professional, she was careful to consult with such individuals and cite them in her lectures and her writings. Krauch started giving in-store lectures at the time of the move to the Stewart Building. Though we do not have transcripts of her in-store lectures, we do have her advice columns, which she claimed reflected these lectures. Krauch's columns were published in the *Indianapolis News* from November 4, 1911, to April 12, 1913. In all, her 71 articles broadly reveal the experts she identified with and leaned on to validate her expertise, and specifically address how the consumer products she promoted connected to Progressive Era social concerns. Using personal interest stories, Krauch confronted societal apprehensions about the comfort, safety, and health of the next generation.

Within several months of the initial publication of Krauch's articles in the *Indianapolis News*, she edited and published a compilation of her first twenty-one articles

⁸⁵ Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*, xv, 21.

with the title “Your Baby: A Series of Heart to Heart Talks to Mothers.”⁸⁶ Krauch distributed this fifteen-page booklet in her department. Using the Ayres in-house press, Krauch then published a larger, hard-backed book which contained her lectures as well as advertisements featuring products sold in the store. According to a newspaper advertisement, it was “a 30 page hard book of information for mothers of small children.” The catalogue-like book contained “many ... useful children’s items” that Indianapolis mothers were informed, “Seldom will you have the privilege of seeing.”⁸⁷

This catalogue reveals how Krauch’s initiatives in fashioning herself as a child welfare expert was part of the stores’ marketing strategy. The store sought to disseminate this catalogue as broadly as possible through an advertisement in the *Indianapolis News* which noted, “We’ve made the edition large so we can supply all who care for it. Just send us your name and address; the book will follow—free and post-paid.”⁸⁸

In April 1912, L.S. Ayres began running advertisements in the *Indianapolis News* that suggested a new drive to outdo their mentor, Marshall Field. In 1907, according to Marshall Field’s own estimate during the grand opening celebration after renovations of the “New Completed Retail Store,” it was “the world’s greatest store at its best.”⁸⁹ This type of copy illustrated an “institutional” approach to advertising which was designed to create a favorable attitude toward the store.⁹⁰ With this in mind, Marshall Field basked in

⁸⁶ Historical Files, 1909, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana; Historical Files, 1912, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁸⁷ L.S. Ayres and Company children’s department advertisement, *Indianapolis News*, March 29, 1912, microfilm, p. 16.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Twyman, *History of Marshall Field & Co. 1852-1906* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954), 158. This quote was published in the *Chicago Tribune*, September 30, 1907.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

its well-publicized annual commemoration of “Children’s Day.”⁹¹ L.S. Ayres surpassed Marshall Field with, “The Children’s Store Where every day is Children’s Day.”⁹² This advertisement suggests L.S. Ayres’ determined attempt to unleash itself from its prior mimicry of Marshall Field’s to becoming a future pioneer in the retail industry. Krauch’s daily mission to focus on children as opposed to Marshall Field’s one *day a year* seems to be a move in the pacesetting direction.

Child Welfare Exhibit

At the same time that L.S. Ayres looked beyond Chicago to develop its image, it also remained focused on its local ties. One important local relationship for the store was the Indiana State Fair. As mentioned, this relationship dated from the 1880s when the store offered a special premium at the 28th annual Indiana State Fair, to the girl under 12 who made “the best calico dress made for herself [and] ... who is a member of an industrial school.”⁹³ Later, in 1913, the *Indianapolis News* announced L.S. Ayres’ participation at the fair with Krauch’s Child Welfare Exhibit as its feature exhibit:

Throng Interested in Child Welfare Exhibit: Grownups of Both Sexes Visit Ayres’s Novel Display of Babies’ Things. Everywhere and at all times the child these days is the first consideration. Men visitors at the Fair yesterday as well as women, crowded about the Children’s Welfare Exhibit of the L.S. Ayres Children’s store. [The exhibit showcased] many practical and beautiful new contrivances ... A particularly interesting exhibit is a Taylor crib, which rests on a tall standard so that the little one’s bed can be drawn over the mother’s couch or bed and the baby can be lifted from the crib without the mother having to get up ... [t]he exhibit

⁹¹ Twyman, *History of Marshall Field & Company*, 148. Evidence of advertisements for “Children’s Day” exists in the *Chicago Dry Goods Reporter*, XXXIII (October 17, 1903), 72, and the *Chicago Dry Goods Reporter*, XXXVII (October 5, 1907), 61.

⁹² L.S. Ayres and Company children’s department advertisement, *Indianapolis News*, April 26, 1912, microfilm, p. 16.

⁹³ Public Relations, Indiana State Fair 1920s -1950s, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

... in charge of Miss Flora Krauch ... Krauch will give talks on the welfare of the baby to mothers who are interested in the exhibit.⁹⁴

Special exhibits in Art Hall. A Miniature Baby's Store—Child Welfare Exhibit. Miss Krauch author of 'Talks to Mothers' is in charge. Especially featured are ... necessities of an infants' outfit, sanitary beds, and appliances, and conveniences for the baby's mother.⁹⁵

These advertisements shed light on a recurrent theme in Krauch's "Talks to Mothers"—easing childrearing for the mother. They also highlight the universal interest of Krauch's work for parents as both men and women "crowded about" her exhibit.

Recurrent Themes

Many Progressive Era child welfare reformers committed themselves to aiding a different demographic than Krauch. At the turn of the century, the clientele at L.S. Ayres would have been the "carriage-trade," or more affluent Indianapolis women.⁹⁶ Krauch directed her articles toward this clientele, yet she addressed the universality of children's welfare issues by stressing that germs, discomfort, and danger transcended class. Even the child of affluence could fall prey to illness, discomfort, and peril. Krauch weighed in on issues of health, comfort, and safety through the appropriation of psychological and medical rhetoric. Progressive-minded doctors, scientists, and reformers urged mothers to shun traditional methods of childrearing and seek expert advice to maintain the health of their children. As some women spent less time making their children's clothing, toys, and accessories, other women like Krauch stocked children's departments with an array of innovative and formerly unavailable products. Furthermore, Krauch developed her

⁹⁴ L.S. Ayres and Company children's department advertisement, *Indianapolis News*, September 9, 1913, microfilm, p. 6.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁹⁶ Whitaker, *Service and Style*, 31. Whitaker notes that around 1900, every city of one hundred thousand and more had several downtown department stores. At least one of them carried higher quality goods and catered to the gentry, solid middle class to upper class families. These individuals were collectively known as "the carriage trade."

expertise in the merchandising of those products and she advised mothers of their proper and necessary use.

Krauch used psychological tenets to justify how her product endorsements enhanced infants' and children's health, comfort, and safety. For instance, a range of authorities from behaviorists John B. Watson, G. Stanley Hall, and Sigmund Freud, to writers such as newspaper columnist Angelo Patri, offered influential advice about gender identity. Fears about the feminization of little boys as a result of overprotective mothers who created sissies instead of "real boys" dominated late-nineteenth-century psychological discourses.⁹⁷ In fact, after a conversation with an Indianapolis mother regarding the femininity of boys' caps, Krauch noted that the saleswomen in the children's department were prepared to inform "mothers of boy babies [to] understand that fanciful clothes are not for their little ones ... the real boy balks at ruffles and ribbons. He's right!"⁹⁸ L.S. Ayres had already supported Krauch's sentiment about real boys in an advertisement for her department dated from 1911: "real boy clothes so your boy won't wear frilly frocks."⁹⁹

Krauch touched upon the psychological benefits of myriad items. Memory books are one such example. In 1885, Dr. Leroy M. Yale, medical editor for *Babyhood*, endorsed the documentation of children's milestones in a journal to provide "as clear a

⁹⁷ Julia Grant, "Bringing up Boys: Science, Popular Culture, and Gender, 1890-1960," in *When Science Encounters the Child: Education, Parenting, and Child Welfare in 20th-Century America*, edited by Barbara Beatty, Emily D. Cahan, and Julia Grant (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 2006), 215-234.

⁹⁸ Flora Krauch, "The Boy Baby and His Hat," *Indianapolis News*, March 30, 1912, microfilm, p. 28; Flora Krauch, "For a Baby Boy," *Indianapolis News*, April 27, 1912, microfilm, p. 28; Flora Krauch, "Rompers that are Different," *Indianapolis News*, September 14, 1912, microfilm, p. 24; Flora Krauch, "The Question Box," *Indianapolis News*, January 4, 1913, microfilm, p. 24.

⁹⁹ L.S. Ayres and Company children's department advertisement, *Indianapolis News*, March 17, 1911, microfilm, p. 21.

picture of him ... which will be of inestimable value.”¹⁰⁰ Krauch, too, supported systematic documentation noting, “Nothing ... could be more interesting than the chronology of one’s babyhood recorded and supplemented with photographs.” As an example Krauch wrote about a customer who derived much comfort from a memory book her father, long deceased, produced for her.¹⁰¹ As a result of such documentation, historian Janet Golden has uncovered indications of parents’ growing safety-consciousness and germophobia within the pages of Progressive Era baby books. But to Krauch, memory books amounted to preservation of emotional health.¹⁰²

National conversations about child safety, particularly during recreation, allowed Krauch to develop a dialogue about the safety attributes of her products. For example, fond of using personal interest stories, Krauch capitalized on a particular father’s dismay when unable to safely take his son on bike rides or to restaurants due to unsafe infants’ seating. She promoted a portable and collapsible safety seat that was available in her department. For those who found the safety seat too expensive, she also endorsed a new style safety strap that could be used with carriages and highchairs since even “the dull baby” (inactive) required secure seating.¹⁰³ These items spoke to a national population concerned with safe children’s recreation.

¹⁰⁰ Margaret Andrews Allen, “A Mother’s Journal,” *Babyhood: The Care of Infants and Young Children and the General Interests of the Nursery* 1 (December 1884 to November 1885):113-114. Accessed November 10, 2015.

<https://archive.org/stream/babyhooddevoted01unkngoo#page/n90/mode/2up/search/memory+books>.

¹⁰¹ Flora Krauch, “Memory Versus a Baby Book,” *Indianapolis News*, September 7, 1912, microfilm, p. 28.

¹⁰² Nicholas Day, “The First Baby Blogs, Over 100 Years Ago,” accessed November 1, 2015, http://www.slate.com/blogs/how_babies_work/2013/04/17/history_of_baby_books_parents_recorded_childrens_lives_because_they_weren.html. For Slate.com, Nicholas Day interviewed historian Janet Golden on her current project investigating the history of early-twentieth-century baby books.

¹⁰³ Flora Krauch, “A Little Prisoner,” *Indianapolis News*, November 11, 1911, microfilm, p. 28; Flora Krauch, “What a Man Made for His Baby Boy,” *Indianapolis News*, June 1, 1912, microfilm, p. 28.

In another example, Krauch promoted goods available for safe play areas. Historian Viviana Zelizer notes that Progressive Era parents were urged to provide adequate indoor play space for their children. As a suggestion, parents could convert their parlors or front rooms into playrooms.¹⁰⁴ Krauch provided a safe and hygienic play space in her children's department, replete with a storyteller. According to Krauch, social interaction among children and intellectual stimulation through storytelling were two positive byproducts of her play space. (Noted child psychologist G. Stanley Hall believed that storytelling was fundamental to the development of children's intellect.¹⁰⁵) Krauch also wrote about and sold a portable play yard for in-home use. Krauch gave tips on its ease of assembly in home nurseries, the transportability of the play yard to vacation destinations, and proper anchoring techniques to prevent tipping.¹⁰⁶ Indoor play areas gave children safe, hygienic, and socially and intellectually stimulating havens to interact with each other.

Krauch also used medical experts' opinions to endorse her products. Medical discourses, more than psychological rhetoric, allowed Krauch to validate her advice about the health, safety, and comfort attributes of her merchandise. Indianapolis mothers may have recognized pediatrician Dr. Paddock's name in Krauch's articles.¹⁰⁷ Along with Dr. Paddock, Krauch was convinced that children were always healthier after

¹⁰⁴ Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child*, 50-51.

¹⁰⁵ Martha E. Gregor, "Storytelling in the Home, School, and Library, 1890-1920" (master's thesis, University of Oregon, 2010), 5.

¹⁰⁶ Flora Krauch, "A Vacation Hint," *Indianapolis News*, May 25, 1912, microfilm, p. 28.

¹⁰⁷ Rima Apple, *Perfect Motherhood: Science and Childrearing in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 32. According to Apple, it was not uncommon for childrearing advisors to invoke the name of a physician to lend authority to their own advice. A U.S. Census Bureau search for Dr. Paddock has yielded no information; however, Krauch may have used the imprimatur of Dr. Paddock to legitimize her advice.

wearing an abdominal band for at least eighteen months.¹⁰⁸ Through her “close observation [and] special study” she claimed that “out of thoughtlessness” many mothers endangered their babies’ lives by removing the band and exposing the delicate abdomen to the weather.¹⁰⁹ Bands were of particular importance according to Krauch. Not only did she use Dr. Paddock to give weight to her advice, but L.S. Ayres did the same upon her opening the children’s department in 1909.

Shoes, another important product line, could also be tied to health concerns. Krauch urged mothers to provide children with warm slippers after a cold day in the rain to prevent illness. She also supported proper fitting shoes since “the cost is not more than inferior shoes.” Krauch had seen too many children come to her department walking on the side of their feet with toes turned inward to relieve the discomfort of crowded toes and wobbly ankles.¹¹⁰ In later years, U.S. Children’s Bureau reformers also noted that “a large part of adult human suffering is due to deformities which have their origin in infancy and childhood, when the bones of the feet are pressed out of shape by ill-fitting shoes.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Flora Krauch, “Putting Baby in His First Short Clothes,” *Indianapolis News*, April 12, 1913, microfilm, p. 24.

¹⁰⁹ Flora Krauch, “Baby Bands,” *Indianapolis News*, January 20, 1912, microfilm, p. 24; Flora Krauch, “How Much is Your Baby Worth,” *Indianapolis News*, March 23, 1912, microfilm, p. 32; Flora Krauch, “The Question Box,” *Indianapolis News*, January 18, 1913, microfilm, p. 24.

¹¹⁰ Flora Krauch, “Learning to Walk,” *Indianapolis News*, November 18, 1911, microfilm, p. 28; Flora Krauch, “The Little Girl with Copper Shoes,” *Indianapolis News*, September 28, 1912, microfilm, p. 28; Flora Krauch, “After the Rain,” *Indianapolis News*, November 30, 1912, microfilm, p. 24; Historical Files, 1912, M616, box 1, folder 39, L.S. Ayres & Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

¹¹¹ Mrs. Max West, *Infant Care*, 8th ed. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 32.

Additionally, daily rituals became scientific operations in the march to progressivism in health matters. Krauch advised mothers of innovations in beds and bathing techniques that added convenience for mothers and safety for children. She wrote that modern mothers would need a bathboard, hammock-style bathtub, and Taylor bed for their children's health and their own convenience. The innovative Taylor bed, which Krauch saw at the Child's Welfare Exhibit of the Conservation Congress in Chicago during the week of October 5, 1912, was unmatched in quality. Krauch described the Taylor bed as "the acme of convenience and modern hygiene."¹¹² The bed, "a white enameled, airy structure of steel which could be adjusted to any elevation" stood in "vivid sanitary contrast" to the unhealthful wooden trundle beds of the nineteenth century.¹¹³ According to Krauch, the trundle bed was "a stuffy dark colored, box-like affair ... standing but a few inches above the floor."¹¹⁴ To be sure, as early as 1905, writers for *The Delineator*, an American women's magazine, noted that wooden beds harbored disease, germs, bugs, dust and filth.¹¹⁵ Krauch proclaimed, "The Taylor bed for infants ... is so convenient for the mother, so healthful for the child."¹¹⁶ Just as bedtime became more scientific, so, too, did bathing. Medical and scientific authorities touched upon infants' vulnerability to ailments at bath-time.¹¹⁷ Krauch recommended that mothers use a soft-fleeced bath apron during bath-time. Its maximum absorbency

¹¹² Flora Krauch, "Two Nursery Beds," *Indianapolis News*, June 8, 1912, microfilm, p. 24.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Advertisement for Sanitaire Iron Beds, *The Delineator*, October 1905, p. 656, accessed November 6, 2015, <https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=hmxJAQAAMAAJ&rdot=1>.

¹¹⁶ Flora Krauch, "The Taylor Bed in 'The Model Home,'" *Indianapolis News*, October 5, 1912, microfilm, p. 28.

¹¹⁷ Karin Calvert, *Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood, 1600-1900* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 29-30.

protected the mother's clothing and mitigated the baby's taking cold.¹¹⁸ To make bath time fun, Krauch suggested using a waterproof vegetable sponge that was reinvented into a bath toy. She validated her endorsement of the new rubber Featherridge Sponge by referencing an experiment conducted at the Polyclinic Hospital of Chicago. Bacteria was collected from sea sponges and the rubber after three days' use, and cultured in the lab. The sea sponge had 2,000 groups of bacteria growing on it, some of them dangerous. The rubber sponge had just a few harmless bacteria.¹¹⁹

Krauch introduced other exclusive bathing products. These products alleviated the mother's physical stress during the bathing process. Regarding the baby bathboard Krauch wrote, "Of course, you don't know what it is, but you'll have to have one if you are to be truly modern." With the bathboard mothers no longer tired their backs, bent their corset steels, or tore their hose. And the bathboard remedied "perch[ing] baby perilously on table or chair." Though exclusive to L.S. Ayres, Krauch predicted that every modern household would have one. Another innovation in bathing resulted in a new hammock-style bathtub. It, too, eliminated the back bending associated with bath time.¹²⁰ A "prominent" Chicago physician endorsed the safety and comfort of the new bathing device for infants up to one year old. Krauch claimed, "[The] invention will save more backaches than his medicines could ever relieve."¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Flora Krauch, "A Baby's Bath," *Indianapolis News*, January 13, 1912, microfilm, p. 24; Flora Krauch, "The New Way to Bathe the Baby," *Indianapolis News*, February 1, 1913, microfilm, p. 28.

¹¹⁹ Flora Krauch, "The Question Box," *Indianapolis News*, February 8, 1913, microfilm, p. 24.

¹²⁰ Flora Krauch, "The Tub in Tub for Baby's Bath," *Indianapolis News*, March 1, 1913, microfilm, p. 24. The bathboard's nickel frame construction extended across the bathtub with a rubber cloth reaching across rods attached to the frame. The rubber hammock slung securely with the ability to hold 3-4 gallons of water, enough for a one-year-old child. The tub was safe and comfortable for babies up to one year old.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* Again, Krauch uses the imprimatur of a doctor to legitimize her bathboard recommendation.

Unexpected Opportunities

On January 1, 1914, a fire destroyed Krauch's department in the Stewart Building. In the aftermath, firefighters assisted Krauch in salvaging books from her desk, but all her merchandise was destroyed. Fortunately, L.S. Ayres sent Krauch to New York City to replenish her lost stock.¹²²

Krauch now had the unexpected opportunity to expand product offerings through centralization into her children's department. She opened her new children's department next to the famous L.S. Ayres Tea Room on the fifth floor of the main building. At this point Krauch corralled numerous infants' and children's related products into her department. For example, she added a toy department with her brother, Herbert Krauch, as the toy buyer. She also convinced Frederic M. Ayres to add housedresses and corsets to the department. Indeed, the edition of *The Corset and Underwear Review*, a trade journal devoted exclusively to corsets, infants' wear, and allied lines, included in their October 1914 edition sections about baby shops, infants' wear, and housedresses which suggested that these were allied products deserving placement in the same department.¹²³ Krauch complained about the drabness of the grey and navy calico housedresses for

¹²² Historical Files, 1909, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. This was not Krauch's first trip to New York City. In fact, her first trip to New York City occurred in 1908 when she was the retail buyer for the infants' specialty shop, A. Starr Best of Chicago. Evidence of this trip exists on page 9 of the *New York Times*, February 19, 1908 edition.

¹²³ *The Corset and Underwear Review* VIII, no. 1 (October 1, 1914): 28. An advertisement for Berthe May's Maternity Corsets cites their corsets as "allowing women to dress as usual and preserve a normal appearance." "Who Buys the Infants' Wear?," *The Corset and Underwear Review* XII, no. 3 (December 1918): 51. The journal conducted a random nationwide study sampling 134 stores in the nation's eleven largest cities to prove its argument that retail buyers for underwear, corsets, or both also buy infants' wear for their retail outlets. They found that 88 stores, or 65%, employed the same buyer for infants' wear as they did for corsets or underwear or both. An expanded analysis included 465 major cities in 25 states demonstrating that 71% used the same buyer for all three departments. This evidence validates the inclusion of corsets in the infants' wear department.

mothers, then persuaded a manufacturer to create dresses in red, blue, and green polka dots on a white background. The dresses were a success.¹²⁴

Though the space next to the Tea Room was temporary, Krauch's children's department did find a permanent home. A July 26, 1915, article from the *Indianapolis News* announced the doubling of the entire department store's space. Krauch's department was a beneficiary of the store's expansion.

The department of children's wear which will be ready soon on the third floor will have a division known as the Baby Shop where all articles for infants will be on display and sale. As a part of the children's department there will be a playground and a nursery. A special toilet room has been provided for the little people. The children's barber shop will be attached to this department.¹²⁵

Thus, Krauch addressed the themes of comfort and hygiene not only through her lectures and advice columns, but also through the way she designed her infants' and children's department. She developed a space where mothers could maintain some fashion sense with the inclusion of housedresses and maternity corsets, as well as the bath aprons and bathboard which protected the mother's clothes.

Overall, Krauch extended the space of the department store. L.S. Ayres was not just a place where fashionable women came to shop and dine. It became a place where they could combine those activities with children in tow.

Ending

By the end of 1917, L.S. Ayres and Krauch achieved many of their stated goals. The store itself, though not as large as its idol, Marshall Field, was indeed recognized as a

¹²⁴ Historical Files, 1909, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

¹²⁵ Historical Files, 1914, M616, box 1, folder 41, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana; Historical Files, 1915, M616, box 1, folder 42, L.S. Ayres & Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

regionally competitive department store and was considered one of the strongest in the area.¹²⁶ L.S. Ayres expanded physically, added numerous departments, and imported from Chicago a regionally renowned infants' department buyer for its children's department. Indeed, Flora Krauch steered the children's department to success, more so than most departments that males managed.¹²⁷

Krauch came to Indianapolis to create the best infants' department in the region, if not nation. She accomplished her task through the centralization of all infants' and children's related products, completeness of stocks, and an expert staff. Krauch turned the department into an educative site where mothers could seek expert advice about the innovative products she offered. In fact, believing that an item routinely found in Boston department stores' children's departments was too innovative to be found in Indianapolis, a visiting Bostonian congratulated Krauch "for having one of the most complete children's departments."¹²⁸

Visitors were not the only people thanking Krauch. She claimed that not a week passed without receiving letters thanking her for the advice she offered at her Saturday lectures. Krauch also answered letters of inquiry about clothes, style, care, and purpose. She devoted her life to making children comfortable and validated her advice with the

¹²⁶ Historical Files, 1916, M616, box 1, folder 43, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. On September 6, 1916, A. Lincoln Filene of Boston-based Filene's department store invited Frederic M. Ayres to Boston to discuss the formation of an organization for the exchange of information among retailers. Filene recognized L.S. Ayres as one of ten "progressive and influential stores."

¹²⁷ Turchi, *L.S. Ayres & Company*, 27. By the time L.S. Ayres joined the Retail Research Association in 1916, the store's overall sales were twentieth among members, but the children's department ranked seventh. Keep in mind that Krauch was the only female retail buyer at L.S. Ayres which means that at L.S. Ayres, her department outranked those that men operated.

¹²⁸ Flora Krauch, "A Letter from Boston," *Indianapolis News*, August 3, 1912, microfilm, p. 14.

observation that, “one who specializes can accumulate a lot of useful knowledge in that time.”¹²⁹

When L.S. Ayres invited Krauch to Indianapolis, she started with a small department. Ayres provided Krauch with a 500-square-foot experimental space at the rear of the third floor next to the freight elevator where she single-handedly created a children’s department. By the end of 1917, she managed a staff of 40 saleswomen who assisted in the operation of her children’s department. The department encompassed 21,000 square feet of space at L.S. Ayres, the entire third floor.¹³⁰ She had made this department a success through a wide range of activities. In addition to the day-to-day job of buying and managing her department, she also engaged in outreach to the local Indianapolis customers by hosting events, writing columns, and organizing fair exhibits.

¹²⁹ Flora Krauch, “A Question Box,” *Indianapolis News*, December 28, 1912, microfilm, p. 28.

¹³⁰ Flora Krauch, “She Knew it When,” *The Infants’ and Children’s Department* 13, no. 11 (November 1929): 1672.

Chapter Two: Harvard Business School and the Retail Research Association

Nineteen-seventeen was a watershed year in Flora Krauch's life. Not only did Krauch successfully create a complete infants' and children's department, but she firmly established herself as a childrearing expert by using her department at L.S. Ayres, her articles in the *Indianapolis News*, and the Indiana State Fair as venues for Indianapolis women to receive her advice.

At the same time, George F. Earnshaw of Earnshaw Knitting Company in Chicago, Illinois, looked for ways to share similar knowledge. He manufactured a line of infants' and children's clothing which eliminated the use of potentially harmful safety pins, and instead used a Velcro type fastener. Earnshaw founded an in-house publication, *Bigger Business*, and reached out to Krauch to collaborate with him. Together, Earnshaw and Krauch designed a pamphlet to provide peer-to-peer advice by looking for examples of what was working well in the infants' and children's clothing industry. The idea was to share wisdom from successful ventures with other retailers. Krauch's department at L.S. Ayres was *the* example of a successful department that was featured in this publication.

Within nine months *Bigger Business* evolved into the industry's first trade journal, *The Infants' Department*.¹³¹ As feature writer and editor, Krauch championed the techniques she had developed to build her infants' and children's department at L.S. Ayres. She also defended the unique character of infants' and children's departments. Importantly, Krauch remained positive when offering advice and when arguing that

¹³¹ Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood*, 161. *The Infants' Department* was the only trade journal devoted exclusively to children's wear until 1926.

infants' and children's departments should remain autonomous from those departments in department stores which relied on fashionable and seasonal ready-to-wear clothing lines.

Krauch and Earnshaw launched their trade journal just as the Retail Research Association was extending its influence over L.S. Ayres. Established in 1916, the RRA included a group of non-competing department stores who originally exchanged information about markets and operations to determine ways to offset business expenses and the cost of services offered to customers.¹³² In this way, the RRA encouraged the shift from the speculative and intuitive ways of operating towards a scientific approach with the use of data. Sharing business secrets among themselves led to eventual uniformity in record keeping which made department stores resemble their competitors, chain stores. However, this also led to centralized buying. This concept stripped buyers similar to Krauch of their responsibilities which included buying and selling merchandise, dealing with manufacturers, pricing decisions, and the hiring of their salesforce. At stores within the RRA, buyers who had intimate knowledge of their goods and knew their customers' tastes were challenged to accept the new methods to merchandising as well as centralized buying which took place in New York City, America's center of fashion.¹³³

When we read her articles, we see that she devoted much of her energy to defending her vision for infants' departments against the department stores' bulk buyers,

¹³² Howard, *From Main Street to Mall*, 70.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

stock controllers, merchandise men, publicity men, and store managers—men whom she believed sacrificed the needs of mothers and infants to a single-minded pursuit of profits.

Krauch Begins to Write for Trade Journals

In January 1917 Krauch was still working at L.S. Ayres, but she began writing and editing a “little publication each month” called *Bigger Business*.¹³⁴ The pamphlet, issued in the interest of expanding infants’ departments nationwide, provided retail dealers with “the expert services of a very clever Department Buyer—Miss Flora Krauch.”¹³⁵ Through monthly columns Krauch detailed how in seven years she built a successful infants’ department in Indianapolis. The publisher, George F. Earnshaw, said of Krauch,

Her department is a monument not only to her own ability, but also to the foresight of her firm who were able to see the possibilities in the suggestions she made to them. They placed sufficient confidence in her ... she has now worked out, by her own ingenious method, an Infants’ Department that is actually building bigger business for every department in the store.¹³⁶

Earnshaw offered the pamphlet free of charge to start-up merchants in addition to well established merchants so that even the latter had the opportunity to measure their own departments against Krauch’s “fresh inspiration for something that will enable you to surpass even what you have already done.”¹³⁷ Thus, Krauch’s department at L.S. Ayres was viewed as the archetype against which other stores should judge their infants’ and children’s departments.

¹³⁴ Historical Files, 1914, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. A photocopy of the front page of the January 1917 Volume I No. 1 edition of *Bigger Business* exists in the collection.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Historical Files, 1914, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. A photocopy of the front page of the January 1917 Volume I No. 1 edition of *Bigger Business* exists in the collection.

In September 1917, *Bigger Business* expanded to become the infants' wear industry's first trade journal, *The Infants' Department*.¹³⁸ Krauch still worked at L.S. Ayres; however, in her role as chief editor at *The Infants' Department* she now collaborated with a staff of editors, writers, and merchandising experts to ensure the journal's voice was peer-to-peer. Krauch facilitated the exchange of ideas among practicing experts by personally responding to questions submitted to the journal under two recurring segments titled "THE QUESTION BOX" and "BIGGER BUSINESS SUGGESTIONS."¹³⁹ Earnshaw noted that "The little magazine is published for the purpose of helping Infants' Wear buyers. If there is any information you would like to have, write to us, addressing your letter to Miss Flora Krauch."¹⁴⁰ By the turn of the year, the journal's subtitle reflected Krauch's and Earnshaw's aim, "A Monthly Magazine of Merchandising Helps for the Infants' Wear Buyer."¹⁴¹ Krauch had made a similar comment when describing the purpose for *The Infants' Department*'s smaller predecessor, *Bigger Business*. She claimed, "This is why the Earnshaw Knitting Company is publishing this little magazine and it is their dream and mine that we shall be able, in time, to develop a publication that will be both interesting and helpful to Infants' Wear buyers."¹⁴² Both periodicals emerged as outlets for Krauch and Earnshaw to assist Infants' Wear buyers and to shape an entire industry. Indeed, the major voice for the retail industry, the *Dry Goods Economist*, only a few years prior, advised merchants to

¹³⁸ Jennifer Cattai, www.earnshaws.com/2012/04/in-focus/lion-heart. April 27, 2012. Accessed 2014.

¹³⁹ Flora Krauch, "The Question Box," *The Infants' Department* 1, no. 1 (September 1917): 6; Flora Krauch, "Bigger Business Suggestions," *The Infants' Department* 1, no. 3 (November 1917): 44.

¹⁴⁰ George F. Earnshaw, *The Infants' Department* 1, no. 3 (November 1917): 45.

¹⁴¹ *The Infants' Department* 1, no. 5 (January 1918): front cover.

¹⁴² Historical Files, 1914, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. A photocopy of the front page of the January 1917 Volume I No. 1 edition of *Bigger Business* exists in the collection.

invest in children's departments.¹⁴³ Thus, Krauch and Earnshaw did not just attempt to capture the readership of Infants' Wear buyers; they led the charge to develop these departments.

In 1918, Earnshaw intensified his commitment to improve the infants' retail business. Early in the year he doubled the manufacturing capacity of Vantawear, his layette line manufactured without pins and buttons, and publicized his goal to double business in department stores' infants' departments. He offered financial assistance to interested merchants with no obligation to stock Vantawear.¹⁴⁴

Together, Krauch's advice to infants' wear buyers, Earnshaw's financial backing of merchants, and the retail industry's recommendation to open children's departments played roles in stimulating demand for infants' and children's merchandise. To serve *The Infants' Department* optimally, Krauch left L.S. Ayres in January 1918. Her sister, Anna Krauch, took over the department and continued using her education-based merchandising method. At this point Krauch advised her peers about merchandising issues, retail strategies, trends, and tips. Two key themes repeatedly discussed in her 1917-1918 articles included the use of a scrapbook and effective advertising strategies.

Krauch suggested to buyers,

Start a scrap book and paste in it any articles that you come across relating to the baby or to Infants' Wear. Mothers will ask you all sorts of questions if you spend any time at all on the floor your scrap book will often enable you to make a helpful suggestion that convinces your customer she is buying her Infants' Wear at the right place.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Whitaker, *Service and Style*, 265. Whitaker notes the *Dry Goods Economist* in 1914 encouraging department stores to engage in the infants' and children's merchandise trade; Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood*, 45. Cook makes a similar observation as Whitaker. He notes that the children's clothing market did not warrant a section in *The Dry Goods Economist* until 1914.

¹⁴⁴ Jennifer Cattau, www.earnshaws.com/2012/04/in-focus/lion-heart. April 27, 2012. Accessed 2014.

¹⁴⁵ Flora Krauch, "The Question Box," *The Infants' Department* 1, no. 2 (October 1917): 26.

Within the contents, the buyer kept “clippings, and, arranged in the order of their appearance ... every ad ... for three or four years back ... circulars and anything in the form of advertising which had been used, had a place in this interesting record-keeper with comments on their effectiveness.”¹⁴⁶ The scrapbook could be turned to “every month of the year” to gain advertising information “without going to the advertising office, where records are not always convenient.”¹⁴⁷ Krauch’s record keeping system also provided a lesson in cost accounting for buyers,

Use this method to tabulate the cost of [her] advertising, as in most stores, each department is allowed a certain percentage of their sales for advertising. From this record, she knows just what each ad costs her department, and gauges her advertising according to her appropriation. She knows the rates of the different pages, and which paper brings in the best results ... discover ways and means ... to increase the efficiency of her department, regardless of whether the office or her executives have given her the authority to do so.¹⁴⁸

When used properly the scrapbook could help identify pricing problems and eliminate mark-downs on merchandise. Though infants’ wear buyers judiciously purchased items for their department, Krauch discovered that mark-down sales were inherent in her department as much as to any other department in a store. She offered tips for a successful mark-down sale and how to overcome barriers to those sales.

Do not be afraid to reduce, below cost if necessary. Select the day best suited to bargains in your city for your sale ... in the evening paper tell your story in as few words as possible, with the price in large type ... if your advertising man will co-operate.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Flora Krauch, “Keep a Scrap Book of Your Ads,” *The Infants’ Department* 2, no. 2 (October 1918): 36.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Flora Krauch, “The Question Box,” *The Infants’ Department* 1, no. 1 (September 1917): 6.

Krauch recommended circumventing the ad man if he proved intractable and going directly to the store executive, “who I am sure would rather have a fraction of the money which is tied up in the stock, than the goods which are losing value every day and finally will be worthless.”¹⁵⁰ She even admitted,

The very best buyers sometimes make mistakes and left-over stocks are not always due to poor selection. Whatever the reason, it is positively up to the merchandise man, if there is one in the establishment, or the advertising man, to help the buyer in her effort to move this stock. Co-operation is the keynote of successful merchandising, but, unfortunately, it is frequently difficult to obtain ... I’ve known executives to object strongly to the showing of soiled goods ... many are afraid of mark-downs ... it is actually cheaper at times to give things away, if you cannot sell them.¹⁵¹

Krauch knew that buying errors occurred but she also had a keen awareness that evidently bypassed the executives, about the value, and loss thereof, of stale merchandise. She realized the executives’ disconnectedness to what actually occurred in the department.

In fact, the disconnectedness led merchandise men to force buyers into purchasing large “sample” lots of merchandise filled with a potpourri of items instead of the staple items Krauch considered necessary for successful departments. She cautioned,

Please don’t, of your own accord, buy sample lines or job lots. In my estimation, the buying should be the Buyer’s job and the Merchandise Man should not spend one penny of her appropriation ... the Buyer sees, or ought to see, all the worth-while lines ... when a manufacturer or a salesman offers the Merchandise Man a proposition termed “a wonderful buy,” the Merchandise Man is apt to “fall.”¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Flora Krauch, “The Question Box,” *The Infants’ Department* 1, no. 1 (September 1917): 6.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.; Flora Krauch, “Stocking an Infants’ Department,” *The Infants’ Department* 3, no. 3 (November 1919): 57.

¹⁵² Flora Krauch, “Stocking an Infants’ Department,” *The Infants’ Department* 3, no. 3 (November 1919): 57.

Krauch pushed forward the point that it is the buyer and not the merchandising men who knows how to identify quality products.

She also campaigned to separate infants' and children's departments from adult departments and asserted that centralization of all infants' - and children's-related products into a single department served clients best, increased whole-store sales, and facilitated mothers' education about the products.¹⁵³ Krauch advised saleswomen to stress the specialized nature of infants' and children's departments and to stock them with the unique products that parents needed to raise children. Saleswomen also had to educate parents about these specialized products. Thus, a well-stocked infants' department "ought to have everything that a baby needs. There are so many of these necessary articles that should be used, but the average mother does not know of their existence, therefore it behooves you to educate her."¹⁵⁴

Krauch: Inventor, Entrepreneur, and Consultant

Krauch left her job as the buyer for L.S. Ayres' children's department on December 31, 1917.¹⁵⁵ She remained active as an inventor, entrepreneur, and consultant which entailed several years of travel. In order to sell her creations she opened an office in New York City. Krauch also moved to Dayton, Ohio, for a few years to consult Rike Kumler Company in the development of their children's department. All along, Krauch was still writing for *The Infants' Department*.

¹⁵³ Cattai, www.earnshaws.com/2012/04/in-focus/lion-heart. April 27, 2012. Accessed 2014.

¹⁵⁴ Flora Krauch, "The Question Box," *The Infants' Department* 1, no. 2 (October 1917): 25.

¹⁵⁵ Ledgers and Department Books 1901-1924, M616, BV 2623, L.S. Ayres and Company, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. Here we find the last ledger entry compensating Flora Krauch.

When Krauch left L.S. Ayres as a buyer, she focused on other endeavors alongside her work with Earnshaw. She never completely severed her ties with L.S. Ayres. Her relatives still worked there and she maintained a professional relationship with the store, albeit now from a distance.¹⁵⁶ Among these projects were her development of infants' wear products. While still at L.S. Ayres, Krauch had experimented with and patented numerous articles of infants' wear that manufacturers neglected to produce. She was credited with devising a pinning pad which kept babies "comfortable and ke[pt] the outer garments perfectly dry."¹⁵⁷ In 1912 she designed and patented a three-strap garment support which eliminated the use of potentially harmful safety pins.¹⁵⁸ These experiments may have been the basis of her relationship with Earnshaw, since he was experimenting with similar products at the same time. In 1912, he filed for patent protection of his twistless tape—his way of eliminating safety pins in infants' and children's clothing.¹⁵⁹ In 1918 Krauch began manufacturing the items she designed, as well as numerous novelty items which she marketed under the brand name *Krauch-Kraft*.¹⁶⁰ She maintained one office in Indianapolis' Occidental Building, from

¹⁵⁶ *Polk's City Directory 1911 of Indianapolis, Indiana* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Polk's City Directory, 1911), 904; digital images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed May 15, 2015). This city directory lists Anna Krauch as a department manager and Frank William Krauch as a salesman. Both siblings are working at L.S. Ayres.; *Polk's City Directory 1919 of Indianapolis, Indiana* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Polk's City Directory, 1919), 316; digital images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://ancestry.com>: accessed May 15, 2015). This city directory lists Anna Krauch as the infants' department buyer and Herbert Krauch as a salesman. Both are working at L.S. Ayres. Frank William Krauch no longer resides with the family.; *Polk's City Directory 1922 of Indianapolis, Indiana* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Polk's City Directory, 1922), 969; digital images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://ancestry.com>: accessed May 15, 2015). This city directory indicates that Anna Krauch is the infants' department buyer and Herbert Krauch is the toy buyer. Both are working at L.S. Ayres.

¹⁵⁷ Flora Krauch, "A Woman's Invention," *Indianapolis News*, March 16, 1912, microfilm, p. 28.

¹⁵⁸ Krauch, Flora. 1912. Garment-support device for infants' clothing. U.S. Patent 1041104, filed February 3, 1912, and issued October 15, 1912. <http://www.freepatentsonline.com/1041104.pdf>. Accessed February 20, 2015.

¹⁵⁹ Earnshaw, George F. Twistless tape. U.S. Patent 1100060, filed December 18, 1912, and issued June 16, 1914. <https://www.google.com/patents/US1100060>. Accessed February 20, 2015.

¹⁶⁰ *The Corset and Underwear Review* 12, no. 2 (November 1918): 45. A small advertisement is devoted to Krauch's venture stating, "Probably no one has had a wider experience in the merchandising of

where she supplied local retailers with her products, and another in New York City's prestigious Bush Sales Terminal, from where she displayed her wares to national and international infants' and children's wear retail buyers. Thus, as an innovator, creator, and business owner Krauch began extending her activities from the Midwest region to a more nationally oriented audience on the East Coast.

Krauch also served as a consultant to other department stores in the years following her departure from L.S. Ayres. Consulting work gave Krauch the opportunity to help other department stores develop infants' and children's departments according to the methods she founded at L.S. Ayres and wrote about in *The Infants' Department*. Notably, Krauch moved to Dayton, Ohio from 1922-1924 where she was "given free hand to develop the [infants'] Department" at Rike-Kumler Company "as she desires;" and to Chicago, Illinois from 1933-1938 where "her ambition ... would be to revive interest in retail infants' departments" while in charge of the Infants' Wear Section of Carson, Pirie, Scott & Company, Wholesale.¹⁶¹

L.S. Ayres joins the RRA

Krauch's departure from L.S. Ayres in December 1917 coincided with a change of leadership and management style taking place in the department store. The year

infants' wear than Miss Flora Krauch, formerly with A. Starr Best, Chicago; later buyer of infants' wear for L.S. Ayres & Co., Indianapolis, and now with a manufacturing business of her own (Occidental Bldg, Indianapolis) which, under the trade name "Krauch-Kraft," is putting out a line of baby gifts and novelties that have the great merit of being designed by a woman with merchandising experience who knows what the patrons of infants' departments want." Novelty items were not frivolous merchandise. Indeed, these essential products included ear caps, drawstrings, teething rings, thumb guards, bath sponges, and leading straps, among other items too numerous to mention.

¹⁶¹ "Miss Krauch is Back," *The Infants' Department* 6, no. 9 (September 1922): 812. This article notes that Krauch has become head of the Infants' Department at Rike-Kumler Company in Dayton, Ohio. "Editor's Note," *The Infants' and Children's Department* 17, no. 4 (April 1933): 275. The editorial includes an explanation of Krauch's purpose at Carson, Pirie, Scott & Company, Wholesale along with biographical information stating her varied experiences as a buyer, consultant, and manufacturer.

before Krauch began her work at *The Infants' Department*, L.S. Ayres joined the Retail Research Association (RRA). A proliferation of chain stores threatened many long-standing and profitable department stores like L.S. Ayres. Challenged by the growing number of competitors, department store owners pursued ways to combine resources. Some formed cooperative organizations that encouraged members to share “information about markets and operations with noncompeting stores within a region or designated area.”¹⁶² On September 6, 1916, A. Lincoln Filene, the proprietor of Boston-based Filene’s department store, recognized L.S. Ayres as one of ten “progressive and influential stores.”¹⁶³ At Filene’s invitation, Frederic M. Ayres represented his Indianapolis-based store in Boston to discuss the formation of an organization for the exchange of information. This organization was the RRA, whose central office was in New York City. L.S. Ayres already exchanged some business ideas and information with six Midwest stores of comparable size, but membership in the RRA meant L.S. Ayres was recognized as a nationally competitive store. This recognition shifted L.S. Ayres’ emulation away from Marshall Field to Filene’s, and by extension to a more global model. In March 1918, an affiliated organization, the Associated Merchandising Corporation (AMC), was set up to buy cooperatively and keep their accounting records in a similar manner in order to share profit and sales information. Later, in 1920, the AMC opened buying offices in London, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, and Milan. The latter office

¹⁶² Howard, *From Main Street to Mall*, 70.

¹⁶³ Historical Files, 1916, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

moved to Florence at a later date. By 1929 the merchandising group became truly global when the AMC opened an office in China.¹⁶⁴

Other retailers, like Marshall Field III, searched for ways to consolidate department stores. As early as 1918, Field worked with New York City bankers to buy Philadelphia's Wanamaker's department store. One banker wrote to Wanamaker's head executive, "We are in an age of consolidation."¹⁶⁵ Though Wanamaker's remained family-owned and resisted a buy-out, other department store owners shared Field's vision. By 1921 Louis Kirstein, vice-president of Filene's, (who along with A. Lincoln Filene conceived of the RRA) wrote to his friend Paul Mazur at Lehman Brothers, an investment bank, about forming a "gigantic department store corporation."¹⁶⁶ Mazur graduated from Harvard University in 1914 and worked at Filene's under Kirstein's tutelage before landing at Lehman Brothers. Mazur recognized the opportunities for retail consolidation and advocated for mass centralized merchandising, but needed help advancing his proposition. In the mid-1920s Mazur turned to Harvard Business School (HBS) for help. Both HBS and Filene's department store had deep ties because Kirstein sat as the chairman of HBS's fundraising committee.¹⁶⁷ In fact, many merchants as well as the National Retail and Dry Goods Association (NRDGA—the nation's largest retail trade organization) underwrote the finances of HBS and socialized with HBS faculty.¹⁶⁸

Harvard Business School was not the only school to lend a hand to businessmen. Stanford established one of the most prestigious business schools in 1925 with the intent

¹⁶⁴ Historical Files, 1916, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

¹⁶⁵ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 264.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 284.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 284-286.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 287.

to teach the “‘essentials of management’—accounting, marketing, finance, and transport.”¹⁶⁹ By the mid-1920s Northwestern University, Michigan, Wisconsin, California, and Oregon had implemented “‘bureaus of business research’ similar to and modeled after Harvard’s own Bureau of Business Research.”¹⁷⁰ By the end of the decade UCLA had a new school of merchandising.¹⁷¹ These schools had a crucial element in common—the schools were formed to “‘prepar[ing] men for executive positions in business.”¹⁷²

The outlier among schools was New York University. Women were permitted to take night classes in store and window display, chain store merchandising, and the psychology of salesmanship. Men enrolled during day classes taking graduate coursework that prepared “‘retail executives’ to feed the city’s large stores with merchandising managers, buyers, and personnel directors.”¹⁷³ Percy Strauss of Macy’s department store financed the School of Retailing at NYU and treated it “as if it were his own educational fiefdom.”¹⁷⁴

Still, no school compared to Harvard in terms of educational opportunities for men and business alliances with the merchandising sector of the nation. In 1922 Donald Kirk David, an Assistant Professor of Marketing at Harvard Business School, published a “collection of actual executive problems ... gathered from stores located in many parts of the country ... in preparing men for executive positions in business.”¹⁷⁵ David undertook

¹⁶⁹ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 286.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Donald Kirk David, *Retail Store Management Problems* (New York: A.W. Shaw Company, 1922), ii.

¹⁷³ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 287.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ David, *Retail Store Management Problems*, i-xxix.

the search for these problems “primarily to strengthen the material available for teaching purposes in the course in Retail Store Management” at HBS.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, David hoped his book would be of value in executive training within retail stores and in suggesting new ways of handling retail management problems.¹⁷⁷ He addressed such issues as accounting problems, statistical problems, merchandise problems, selling problems, stock problems, general administrative problems, and buying problems. David’s research was made possible through the financial largesse of five Boston department stores and Filene’s led the list.¹⁷⁸

In another effort to court merchants, the school developed the *Harvard Business Review*, the leading academic voice on merchandising and marketing. In 1924 the NRDGA, Lehman Brothers, and HBS collaborated to study new trends in retail merchandising, which led to the *Harvard Business Review*’s article, “Future Developments in Retailing.”¹⁷⁹ For Mazur’s part, in 1927, after eighteen months of research about consumer enticement strategies, he wrote *Principles of Organization Applied to Mass Retailing*, which became the standard method of study for the next 50 years.¹⁸⁰ According to Mazur, retail ownership was not as critical as its specialized functions and management. The most progressive stores, which by this time included L.S. Ayres, embraced this philosophy and quickly hired a stock controller, merchandise manager, publicity manager, and store manager.¹⁸¹ Mazur argued that the specialized

¹⁷⁶ David, *Retail Store Management Problems*, i.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., i-xxix. The list, in order of appreciation, includes Mr. A. Lincoln Filene of Wm. Filene Sons Company; Mr. G. B. Johnson, President of R. H. White Company; Mr. Robert W. Maynard, President of R.H. Stearns Company; Mr. George W. Mitton, President of Jordan, Marsh Company; and Mr. Felix Vorenberg, Vice-President of Gilchrist & Company.

¹⁷⁹ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 287-289.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 289.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 290.

functions of the retail management quartet involved “giv[ing] the world and his wife the funds with which to satisfy every need, desire, and whim, educate the world and his wife to want.”¹⁸² Mazur shaped the retail merchandising scheme by separating daily decision-making from the store functionaries to a foursome of managers who preyed upon the vulnerabilities of consumers constantly trying to maintain status through purchases.

At the same time, Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce from 1921 to 1928 and President from 1929 to 1933, helped to change consumption habits by asserting the moral benefits of capitalism. Writing in 1920, he maintained that capitalism was a moral system and that a capitalist ““cooperated” with others and who thought in “social harmonies”—the most moral individual of all. It was in the government’s interest, therefore, to assist business endeavors because they would lead to the creation of a better humanity.”¹⁸³

Therefore, as Filene’s department store allied with Lehman Brothers, Hoover completed the circle by devising a governmental alliance with businessmen—businessmen including A. Lincoln Filene. In 1921 Hoover addressed businessmen in Atlantic City to create a close alliance between government and businesses with particular interest to deliver crucial information from the government to businesses. Though the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission claimed such exchanges of information would foster collusion and concentration of economic power, the conservative Supreme Court of 1925 sided with Hoover and allowed the industry trade groups to exchange data internally. Furthermore, Hoover endorsed Mazur’s thesis

¹⁸² Leach, *Land of Desire*, 291.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 352-355. Leach formed his opinion and used quotes from pages 1-33 of Herbert Hoover’s 1922 book *American Individualism*.

and contributed to a lasting American tendency for government to consult with business managers instead of business owners in the sharing of data. According to Hoover, the real altruists were business managers who sought what was best for society, not the business owners who chased after wealth. Thus, by 1928 Hoover transformed alliances among business elites, university elites, and the government and created a system where technical and administrative solutions to business problems were solved by experts who understood how the economy worked. The unprecedented amount of information Hoover shifted to businesses would provide merchants like Filene with “facts” that would lead their conduct in the interest of the society as a whole, not just individual profits.¹⁸⁴

Krauch Defends Infants and Children’s Departments

When L.S. Ayres joined the RRA, these large, national trends in merchandising had a local impact on buyers like Flora Krauch. Originally, the only person Krauch needed to approve the implementation of her ideas and initiatives was L.S. Ayres’ owner, Frederic M. Ayres. Ayres had been her most enthusiastic supporter. But with the new trifecta of elites that came into control, the influence of business owners was replaced by that of business managers—the individuals that Krauch had long recognized as obstacles to her merchandising model. That these elites now hoarded and shared their knowledge and facts amongst themselves was something that went against the philosophy of openness that Krauch advocated in her writings:

Without free exchange of ideas there can be but little progress ... If you keep what you know to yourself others will keep what they know to themselves ... why not exchange ideas freely and frankly and put this big business of merchandising Infants’ wear on a better basis?¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 356-358.

¹⁸⁵ Flora Krauch, “Ideas from Indianapolis,” *The Infants’ Department* 1, no. 5 (January 1918): 78-83.

The development of Krauch and Earnshaw's method of merchandising alongside the RRA's scientific method put Krauch on a collision course with the new people at L.S. Ayres. Krauch had always received the support of the store owner, Frederic M. Ayres, but on February 25, 1918, Ayres accepted a Red Cross War Council appointment in Washington, D.C., within the Department of Merchandise. A year later, Ayres was in France assisting the Red Cross to liquidate war supplies. Ayres left the store's management to the RRA men.¹⁸⁶ Ayres' absence from the store fell in step with an overall trend that relieved store owners from daily operations and gave authority to an RRA management team.

Retail Research Association managed department stores and stores using the new HBS-style of merchandising began to constrict their retail buyers' responsibilities. The free rein buyers wielded to develop their own budgets, spend their advertisement monies, and manage their inventories, among other responsibilities, became restricted or eliminated. According to Professor David of HBS, the way to prevent overoptimistic buyers from over-purchasing items for their departments was through a financial plan, devised and approved by the store controller, with suggestions coming from the merchandise manager. In this way, according to David, "the buyer has but little say in this matter."¹⁸⁷ Similarly, "the advertising budget is also made out ... by the controller and advertising manager" to prevent buyers from spending their entire advertising appropriation prior to the end of each advertising period.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, David recommended that the merchandise manager and the controller dictate the amount of

¹⁸⁶ Historical Files, SC 35, folder 1, F. Ayres Collection 1916-5/1919, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

¹⁸⁷ David, *Retail Store Management Problems*, 719.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

stock purchased by the buyer, that mark-down prices require the merchandise manager's approval, and that the merchandise manager accompany the buyer on the latter's trips to New York to advise the buyer as to what merchandise should be purchased.¹⁸⁹

Collectively, the changes were meant to turn a traditional buyer like Krauch into a scientific buyer who based decisions on facts and data instead of intuition. In fact, according to an in-store investigation of retail methods at Filene's, "once the method of science is substituted for the method of personal astuteness in buying, limitless possibilities for refinement of skill are opened up."¹⁹⁰

Krauch represented the more traditional type of buyer. So, when Ed Severns, an advocate of scientific merchandising and buying, came to L.S. Ayres, the buyers who followed Krauch's method faced immediate pushback. Severns, formerly the ready-to-wear buyer and head of research studies in blouses, infants' wear, basement, and men's wear for the RRA stores, came to L.S. Ayres in 1922. As the research director for the entire department store, he altered merchandising through centralized buying and wasted no time excoriating L.S. Ayres' female buyers for their inefficient methods.¹⁹¹

At the start of 1923 Severns circulated an internal memo pinpointing areas of concern and recommendations for improvement. He detailed numerous inaccuracies in the marking of garments. He complained about too many price lines and claimed that buyers did not know their merchandise. Severns recommended fewer price lines since

¹⁸⁹ David, *Retail Store Management Problems*, 719.

¹⁹⁰ Mary La Dame, *The Filene Store: A Study of Employes' Relation to Management in a Retail Store* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1930), 112. La Dame used documentary data, minutes from meetings, personal interview statements, and investigative field work results ascertained from in-store investigations from August 15, 1921 to August 11, 1922. La Dame returned to the store for two months in 1926. All data were reviewed in 1927.

¹⁹¹ L.S. Ayres Ayrograms, volume 2, no. 5, page 7, February 1922, M616, box 7, folder 2, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

“customers get confused, conflicts arise in pricing upstairs and basement items, salespeople can’t remember all the stock, there are too many inaccuracies, and there is too much work for the stock record operator.”¹⁹² He even claimed, “The buyer also thinks she knows her merchandise, but tests have conclusively shown that she does not, however efficient she may be.”¹⁹³

Severns’ most damning accusation targeted the buyers’ method of maintaining stock records:

If one mentions stock records to the average Buyer she will reply that stock records are no good as they are never accurate, or else she will show you some hard kept book or cards which either she or her assistant keeps and which she can decipher but no one else can...and which are never accurate or up to date. There is not one Merchandise Manager in a hundred who could explain to you the records his Buyers keep—if they keep any.¹⁹⁴

Severns also attacked the buyers’ ability to purchase judiciously when at market. He claimed that women buyers purchased items that could not be sold, which resulted in excessive mark-downs to sell them. Criticizing women as thoughtless and easily swayed he wrote:

On the basis of what knowledge has she bought? Absolutely none at all, looking over her stock, memory, intuition (of which women buyers have far more than they have analytical thought), and a size up of the stock the manufacturer offers for her inspection.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² L.S. Ayres Store Stock Book 1920s-1930s, M616, box 26, folder 4, subfolders 9-10, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ L.S. Ayres Store Stock Book 1920s-1930s, M616, box 26, folder 5, subfolder 10, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. Memo dated January 8, 1923, from Edward Severns to L.S. Ayres and Company executive office.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

He continued his diatribe by saying that buyers went to market and let the manufacturers choose items for them because “stores are not the only industries that practice ‘suggestive selling,’ the manufacturers are familiar with that term also.”¹⁹⁶

Severns outlined a two-pronged solution to the perceived problems. His plan created “a receiving and marking room divided into two sections, one for receiving and retailing, in which the buyer has full access, and the other for marking, in which the buyer is absolutely forbidden to enter.”¹⁹⁷ He claimed that his solution would eliminate mark-downs and control the buyer. His correspondence ended with a rant:

And so for every price line, and every color under that price line, and every size under that color—IT NEED NOT BE A GUESS, AN EXACT CONDITION EXISTS IN THE DEPARTMENT, WHY NOT KNOW THAT CONDITION AND CAUSE THE BUYER TO BUY STRICTLY TO REMEDY IT?¹⁹⁸

While Severns may not typify every research director at every department store across the nation, he serves as an example of the type of director with whom a buyer would have had to deal. More importantly, he serves as the person from whom Krauch acquired much of her knowledge given her continued connections with the store.

Indeed, Krauch addressed each of Severns’ accusations regarding buyers’ supposed incompetence and detailed how her merchandising method served the educative purpose of the infants’ department. She claimed that merchandising problems occurred due to the incompetence of industry men who complicated the children’s wear buyers’

¹⁹⁶ L.S. Ayres Store Stock Book 1920s-1930s, M616, box 26, folder 5, subfolder 10, L.S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. Memo dated January 8, 1923, from Edward Severns to L.S. Ayres and Company executive office.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

job. To be sure, she even anticipated many of the issues Severns raised as evidenced by her first few years writing for the *The Infants' Department*.

Krauch addressed Severns' three key areas of concern: multiple price lines, unsystematic record keeping, and careless buying practices. First, Krauch believed that multiple price points represented opportunities to educate mothers and specialize in one's work—contrary to Severns' complaint about the purported confusion created by offering the same item at different prices, the conflicts that arose between prices in the upstairs and downstairs infants' departments, the sales people's and buyers' inability to know all of their stock, and the burden placed on stock controllers. Education ensured that mothers would not get confused and specialization required such a detailed knowledge of the merchandise that it eliminated Severns' concern about sales staff not knowing their stock.¹⁹⁹ Trained saleswomen could find “much of educational value to all ... who are not familiar with a baby's needs.”²⁰⁰ According to Krauch, “months of training are required to train the saleswomen properly. There are many items to be considered, every kind of textile to be learned, and hundreds of other details.”²⁰¹ These details were outlined in recommended reading “published by A. W. Shaw and used by the University of Pittsburgh. This book contains a full outline of textiles used in Infants' Departments.”²⁰² She even suggested that “your girls make out individual inventories for the merchandise we cannot afford to be without, then fill in the sizes, colors and prices.”²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Flora Krauch, “Furniture,” *The Infants' & Children's Department* 13, no. 6 (June 1929): 874.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ Flora Krauch, “Importance of Infants' Departments,” *The Infants' & Children's Department* 12, no. 3 (March 1928): 404.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ Flora Krauch, “January's Problems,” *The Infants' & Children's Department* 12, no. 1 (January 1928): 77.

Inherent to multiple price lines, according to Severns, were supposed price discrepancies between the upstairs and basement departments. Annoyed, Krauch blamed inconsistencies on die-hard merchandise men who gravitated toward mismatched assortments characterized in job lots. In 1928, these lopsided arrangements of merchandise became a point of discussion at an address before the Interstate Merchants' Council in Chicago. Quoting the keynote speaker, Miss Rose Rosenberg, "One cannot feed it [the infants' department] job lots and sample lines, for there are no job lot babies ... there is not profit in job lots."²⁰⁴

To avoid duplications between the upstairs and downstairs departments Krauch recommended "an itemized inventory of the stock on hand, and divide it into price lines and classifications. Then study the upstairs department, not to copy, but to dovetail, and to build up on its weaknesses if any."²⁰⁵ In fact, Krauch suggested for the basement,

Cater to the consumer who must of necessity seek lower price levels ... before completing plans for price lines it would be advisable to study your nearest or most quoted, chain stores ... selecting to suit your particular clientele, while the chain store merchandise is bought at one central point and shipped to all its stores regardless of its local clientele.²⁰⁶

Merchandise replications between departments may have resulted from the merchandise man's folly, not so much the buyer's. Furthermore, Severns claimed that the stock controller had too much work due to the multiple price lines created through the numerous products marketed in and between the upstairs and basement departments, but

²⁰⁴ Flora Krauch, "Importance of Infants' Departments," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 12, no. 3 (March 1928): 403.

²⁰⁵ Flora Krauch, "Profit from the Downstairs Store," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 24, no. 10 (October 1940): 67-68.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Krauch countered that the same was not true for the trained saleswomen of the infants' departments.

Second, Krauch claimed that she had devised an accurate, decipherable, and up-to-date record keeping method in spite of Severns' allegations to the contrary. A loyal advocate for the scrap book record keeper, Krauch reiterated its multiple uses a decade after she had first described it in one of her articles for *The Infants' Department*:

In this book, posted in orderly sequence ... are all the advertisements ... Opposite each advertisement, one finds notes, data, information or comments ... include[d] local news items or events in which children or mothers figure. Perhaps a certain sale was successful and would bear repeating. A demonstration may have proved educational, and hence valuable, to the department. By glancing over the actual records of the previous year before going to market and at the time of planning the next few months' activities, one will at least gain some inspiration plus the information that will lead to the elimination of some events or to the elaboration of others. Another helpful suggestion is to look over, far enough in advance, the want or call slips for each month. For the legitimate calls and from your perusal of your scrap book of the corresponding months your buying and planning will be easier and more intelligent.²⁰⁷

Krauch's 12" x 18" scrapbook, when used "religiously," also provided an efficient means for a successful advertising campaign.²⁰⁸

She asserted, "Only an infants' wear buyer knows the thousand and one items that must be selected, planned, bought and housed in her department ... for a well-balanced stock."²⁰⁹ By her own admission the scrapbook and every other element in her merchandising method was "not based on theory, but on a well thought out plan that I

²⁰⁷ Flora Krauch, "Planning Advertisements," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 12, no. 8 (August 1928): 1141-1142.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1141.

²⁰⁹ Flora Krauch, "Basic Fall Stock is Most Important," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 20, no. 6 (June 1936): 42.

have followed often.”²¹⁰ In Krauch’s estimation, when used according to her instructions, the scrapbook bridged the gap in knowledge between female buyers who lacked business school management skills and male graduates who learned those skills in business schools. Furthermore, when kept meticulously, any merchandise man could walk into his buyer’s office and without confusion learn exactly what information was contained in his buyer’s scrapbook.

Third, when followed, Krauch’s method more often than not corrected for Severns’ reservations about the imprudent way that buyers purchased their stock. She explained how merchandise was selected, how to avoid the suggestive selling ploys of manufacturers, and the need for the occasional mark-down. To understand the types of staple merchandise infants and children required, Krauch suggested frequent tours of department stores and specialty shops in small and large markets, a visit to a manufacturing plant, and “go[ing] through several large [textile] mills,” when formulating plans for departmental purchases.²¹¹ Watching children “at their sports, their parties or even their schools;” viewing children play at the beach, the park, or at sporting events; or observing children walk to school lent ideas for the types of comfortable and healthful clothing a child might need.²¹² Welfare exhibits, the World’s Fair, and buyers’ conferences provided opportunities that aided in sensible decision making.²¹³ She also recommended that buyers read trade journals dealing with mothers’ issues, child care,

²¹⁰ Flora Krauch, “Design for a Buyer,” *Earnshaw’s Infants’, Children’s & Girls’ Wear* 24, no. 8 (August 1940): 74.

²¹¹ Flora Krauch, “The Mill Behind the Trade Mark,” *The Infants’ & Children’s Department* 14, no. 8 (August 1930): 1153.

²¹² Flora Krauch, “Babies—Buyers—Sunshine,” *The Infants’ & Children’s Department* 14, no. 3 (March 1930): 408.

²¹³ Flora Krauch, “A Neglected Age,” *The Infants’ & Children’s Department* 14, no. 2 (February 1930): 248.

and merchandising methods to remain informed. When put together, the scrap book, the observations, the experiences, and the reading equated to a thoughtfully developed scheme that remedied reliance on intuition and mitigated the risk of succumbing to a manufacturer's suggestive selling. Krauch surmised,

It is difficult to compare methods of doing business and of merchandising in the Infants' and Children's Department with that of other departments of the store, which differ so widely. There are too many ages, sizes, types and classifications to consider. Unfortunately, most Infants' and Children's Departments are merchandised and planned as a whole instead of being treated like so many departments, each complete in itself.²¹⁴ Infants' departments consisted of six parts which required "having complete stocks *when the customer needs them.*"²¹⁵

A Unique Department unlike Others

Over the course of her career at *The Infants' Department*, Krauch defended her merchandising method against the criticisms of the numerous infants' wear industry men typified by Severns. After he discredited the female buyers of L.S. Ayres, he proposed a store-wide implementation of ready-to-wear style merchandising methods. Krauch never relented in her defense of how the infants' department, which was a female managed department, differed from other departments in the store.

In what may be viewed at Krauch's effort to level the playing field between female buyers and the coterie of business school educated men they dealt with, Krauch detailed the numerous aspects of her merchandising method. She identified the divisions

²¹⁴ Flora Krauch, "The Young Army," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 13, no. 10 (October 1928): 1463.

²¹⁵ Flora Krauch, "The Question Box," *The Infants' Department* 1, no. 1 (September 1917): 6; Flora Krauch, "Development of Gift Section," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 22, no. 6 (June 1937): 62, 104; Flora Krauch, "The Second Stepping Stone," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 22, no. 8 (August 1937): 62, 90; Flora Krauch, "Catering to Toddlers: The Third Stepping Stone," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 22, no. 10 (October 1937): 54, 92; Flora Krauch, "The Fourth Stepping Stone," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 22, no. 11 (November 1937): 31.

to and issues with developing a complete infants' department, she analytically explained why resources were scarce and prices high, and she formulated strategies for weathering the Great Depression.

First, Krauch teased apart the elements required to establish a profitable infants' department and the issues involved in the process. Krauch identified a gift section; a layette section; a toddler section; a three to six age group section; an in-between seven to ten age group section; and a junior section as key divisions to a complete infants' department.²¹⁶ To Krauch, the infants' department was a "complete store in itself, a department embracing many, many divisions. Each division serves a different purpose ... [with] various price lines in every age group within that division."²¹⁷ Krauch's line of thinking can be traced to an *Indianapolis News* article from July 26, 1915, which specifically noted the children's department as a "shop within a shop" being "one of the inviting features of [the] Ayres Store."²¹⁸ She detected often "the powers that be" denying the existence of, let alone the importance of, each section which resulted in suspiciously timed delays in merchandise acquisition. For example, in 1917 Krauch wrote, "The merchandise man holds the order a few days, and thus you encounter obstacles."²¹⁹ A decade later she still warned, "It is a lamentable fact that orders and re-

²¹⁶ Flora Krauch, "Development of Gift Section," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 22, no. 6 (June 1937): 62, 104. See also, Flora Krauch, "Gadgets Have No Off Season," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 22, no. 7 (July 1937): 62-63, 81; Flora Krauch, "The Second Stepping Stone," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 22, no. 8 (August 1937): 62, 90; Flora Krauch, "Catering to Toddlers: The Third Stepping Stone," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 22, no. 10 (October 1937): 54, 92; Flora Krauch, "The Fourth Stepping Stone," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 22, no. 11 (November 1937): 31; Flora Krauch, "Inter-store Selling," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 23, no. 10 (October 1938): 71.

²¹⁷ Flora Krauch, "Lack of Understanding Causes Poor Departments," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 19, no. 11 (November 1935): 32.

²¹⁸ Historical Files, 1915, L.S. Ayres and Company, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. A photocopy of the *Indianapolis News* article is in the folder.

²¹⁹ Flora Krauch, "The Question Box," *The Infants' Department* 1, no. 1 (September 1917): 7; Flora Krauch, "Development of Gift Section," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 22, no. 6

orders lie for days on the desk of a merchandise man.”²²⁰ These merchandise men embodied Mazur’s type of retail manager and created other profit hampering pitfalls such as replacing experienced salespeople and buyers with inexperienced individuals in an effort to cut costs.²²¹ In 1917 Krauch would probably agree with Mazur that these men were inefficient and that the store needed improvement. But her point in 1930 becomes that even after the “new” and “more efficient” RRA sanctioned merchandise men enter to reform the store these men remain as ineffective as ever. Thus, Krauch’s point is that the only person who is constantly reliable in the department store is the female buyer.

In another example, Krauch again demonstrated the lingering ineffectiveness of these merchandise men a decade after their implementation. In 1919 she wrote,

The fault with many stores which do not know what is holding back their Infants’ Departments is that they expect the Infants’ Wear Buyer to buy as they do in the waist or suit departments. The suit man knows approximately how many suits he will need at his best selling prices and the colors are governed by the current styles. An Infants’ Buyer cannot use this same plan, or a Department built on this basis; for she must have the staples that the mother buys every day as well as the clothes suitable for all seasons and conditions.²²²

A full decade later the problem was not remedied. She complained that these merchandise men prevented their buyers from “keep[ing] in touch with the manufacturer” through pre-season buying trips.²²³ She added,

Regardless, of modern merchandising methods, not only planning but buying must be done in advance ... After all, it is the constructive and not

(June 1937): 62; Flora Krauch, “Lack of Understanding Causes Poor Departments,” *Earnshaw’s Infants’, Children’s & Girls’ Wear* 19, no. 11 (November 1935): 32.

²²⁰ Flora Krauch, “Knee-Deep in June,” *The Infants’ and Children’s Department* 14, no. 6 (June 1930): 854.

²²¹ Flora Krauch, “Happy Birthday to You,” *The Infants’ & Children’s Department* 15, no. 9 (September 1931): 1090.

²²² Flora Krauch, “Stocking an Infants’ Department,” *The Infants’ Department* 3, no. 3 (November 1919): 58.

²²³ Flora Krauch, “Let’s Buy Early,” *The Infants’ & Children’s Department* 13, no. 12 (December 1929): 1799-1800.

the sensational that builds and develops the right kind of Infants' Department.²²⁴

Indeed problematic, modern merchandising methods exposed the fact that Mazur's ideal management team failed to recognize the nuances of infants' departments.

Second, Krauch broke down the statistics behind resource shortages and unexpected high prices on seemingly inexpensive items. For example, when wool was scarce at the end of World War I she illustrated the number of available sheep in the United States so buyers knew why prices were rising. She explained that cotton diaper prices escalated because, "there are many other things beside quantity and quality and labor which determine the price of an article."²²⁵ Krauch attributed the revival of anemic underwear sales to an evolution in textiles that resulted in the price of expensive silk dropping low enough for manufacturers to specialize in this material for children's underwear.²²⁶ By identifying and breaking down these issues, Krauch enabled buyers to explain these details to the mothers shopping in their infants' departments.

Third, when retailers were reeling from the Great Depression, Krauch suggested achievable methods for weathering the turbulent economic condition. According to Krauch, too many merchandise men insisted that buyers fill their departments with lower priced, cheaper quality goods to generate business. These men failed to understand that even during the prevailing "hard times" mothers "want good quality, well made merchandise for that money."²²⁷ Though executives accused buyers of "coddling

²²⁴ Flora Krauch, "Summer Days are Gift Days," *Earnshaw's Infants' & Children's Department* 13, no. 5 (May 1929): 727.

²²⁵ Flora Krauch, "Why Are Prices So High?," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 22, no. 3 (March 1938): 71.

²²⁶ Flora Krauch, "The Neighborhood Store," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 17, no. 2 (February 1933): 110.

²²⁷ Flora Krauch, "Win Back Better Times with Better Merchandise," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 15, no. 7 (July 1931): 839-840.

mothers,” Krauch viewed trade-marked merchandise as the best way to ensure quality.²²⁸ Krauch cautioned against extremely expensive goods and suggested items in the in-between price lines due to affordability. Finding ways to appeal to mothers during the economic crisis as humanely as possible and continuing the education of mothers remained the best method of business.

Ending

Krauch started the new phase of her career at *The Infants’ Department* at a moment of great change at L.S. Ayres. Her work was grounded in the events occurring in Indianapolis, which shaped her efforts as part of a larger, national agenda of promoting infants’ departments that focused on staple merchandise and the education of mothers—“some of the features that make this department one of the most notable of its kind in the United States.”²²⁹ But at the same time a new alliance between government, business, and university men also shared information in ways that weakened the efforts of women like Krauch.

In fact, L.S. Ayres hired one such business man, Ed Severns. He represented the type of “Merchandise, Advertising and Display Managers” who imposed generic ready-to-wear merchandising methods on the infants’ wear department, and whose lack of confidence in Krauch’s methods of merchandising posed problems for the women engaged in the “noble work of saving the babies of the nation” through mother education.²³⁰

²²⁸ Flora Krauch, “The Mill Behind the Trade Mark,” *The Infants’ & Children’s Department* 14, no.8 (August 1930): 1153-1154.

²²⁹ Flora Krauch, “Letters to a New Buyer: First Letter,” *The Infants’ Department* 2, no. 3 (November 1918): 52.

²³⁰ Flora Krauch, “Bigger Business Suggestions,” *The Infants’ Department* 1, no. 3 (November 1917): 45; Flora Krauch, “‘Children’s Year’ Begins April 6,” *The Infants’ Department* 1, no. 6 & 7

Krauch spent the remainder of her career arguing for the unique nature of infants' and children's departments. She refined and defended her merchandising method against Severns' criticisms, and addressed other factors affecting infants' departments. Most importantly, Krauch reiterated her belief that "in no department in the store is there such abundant material for educational work, as there is in the infants' department."²³¹

Leading into the 1930s, Earnshaw voiced his support for Krauch's work with an opinion-editorial published in *The Infants' & Children's Department*,

Miss Flora Krauch, who may rightly claim title of founder of Infants' Departments in retail stores ... more significant, by far is the fact that as a pioneer in the field ... [she] evolved the plans according to which present-day Infants' Departments are buil[t] ... [on] the principle of service through Child Welfare, the aiding of mothers and mothers-to-be, in the care of themselves and of their babies—this was the guiding principle then—and should be now.²³²

(Februaury – March 1918): 104; Flora Krauch, "Letters to a New Buyer: First Letter," *The Infants' Department* 2, no. 3 (November 1918): 52.

²³¹ Flora Krauch, "Ideas for National Baby Week," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 24, no. 3 (March, 1940): 47.

²³² George F. Earnshaw, "An Important Announcement," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 10, no. 11 (November 1926): 5129.

Chapter Three: Education versus Commercialization

Although Krauch directed her writings against the changes taking place at L.S. Ayres in Indianapolis under the management of the RRA, her conflict with Ed Severns was part of a wider national debate. This debate involved changes in how the United States' government promoted childhood welfare. When we look at Krauch's writings from this perspective, we see how her defense of female buyers in infants' and children's departments fit into a larger defense of single women (such as herself) as experts in children's welfare and development.

Ed Severns' attack on female buyers at L.S. Ayres came at a time when more general attacks against single, professional women like Krauch were taking place. Specifically, Senator James Reed (D-MO) portrayed single, childless women as radicals who defied gender norms, skirted marriage, avoided bearing children of their own, and undermined the natural childrearing abilities of mothers. The women of the U.S. Children's Bureau and their affiliated agencies were the targets of Reed's caustic remarks.

As editor of *The Infants' Department*, Krauch supported the work of the U.S. Children's Bureau. Krauch's promotion of U.S. Children's Bureau policies was consistent with their request that department stores disseminate information about childhood welfare. In other words, there was an affinity between infants' departments and the U.S. Children's Bureau during Krauch's early years at L.S. Ayres. Both organizations promoted children's welfare, and both were managed by professional single women.

Krauch used her column in *The Infants' Department* to defend her merchandising method. But when we read her texts in light of these broader debates about single, professional women, we see that she was defending more than her merchandising method. A close reading of her essays suggests that she was also discouraging commercialization of the infants' department and defending the authority of single women such as herself to work as professional experts in the field of childhood development, safety, and welfare.

The U.S. Children's Bureau and its link to Department Stores

In the late nineteenth century, agencies working toward the correction of social ills affecting women and children hired a lot of single, middle-class women who were well-educated. These women had few outlets for their talents outside the home due to the prevailing social acceptance of separate spheres of activity for men and women. However, men did not take issue with female engagement in work dealing with women and children.²³³

At the turn of the twentieth century, many Americans expected the government to protect women and children from exploitation in private industry. Corporations, particularly department stores, were known to exploit the cheap labor of women and children. The National Consumers' League, under Florence Kelley's leadership, insisted that people be protected from exploitative business practices.²³⁴ Historian David Thelen

²³³ Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*, xi-xvii.

²³⁴ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 180.

has shown that reformers were disturbed that consumers did not know how goods were made nor the amount of human suffering involved in the goods' manufacture.²³⁵

The U.S. Children's Bureau, under Julia Lathrop's leadership, worked with mass retailers to eradicate child labor and raise awareness of child welfare issues. The U.S. Children's Bureau worked closely with Kelley's National Consumers' League which "had ferreted out the exploitation of children in department stores."²³⁶ The goal was to make Americans aware of the cost involved in separating production and consumption. The government served as the agent that would end the suffering of those children involved in producing consumer goods and working in retail enterprises.²³⁷

The U.S. Children's Bureau supported and advanced the League's mission, but the Bureau also had goals of its own. Specifically, the U.S. Children's Bureau "created Baby Day in 1915, followed by Baby Week a year later, and Children's Year in 1918, all designed to publicize the need for better infant and maternal care."²³⁸ Historian William Leach notes that the events succeeded in large part due to the Bureau's cooperation with American merchants "to make certain a new and better child world emerged."²³⁹

However, it was Kelley's work with department stores to abolish child labor that aided the Bureau's child welfare agenda. By 1911, most of the major department stores in urban areas ended what Kelley called "'holiday cruelties'—the nighttime employment of children during the Christmas holiday season."²⁴⁰ After this date, Kelley and

²³⁵ David Thelen, "Patterns of Consumer Consciousness in the Progressive Movement: Robert M. LaFollette, the Antitrust Persuasion, and Labor Legislation," in *Quest for Social Justice*, ed. Ralph Alderman (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 19-43.

²³⁶ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 180.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 181.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

department store owners began to understand the Bureau's goals in terms of child welfare.

The U.S. Children's Bureau began to see the benefit of collaborating with department stores. In fact, the Bureau established relationships with hundreds of department stores to "publicize Baby Day, Baby Week, Children's Year, and the Back-to-School Movement, all of which the Bureau had inaugurated."²⁴¹ Merchants around the country assisted the Bureau's baby campaigners. Addressing retailers in 1919, a staff writer for the *Dry Goods Economist* reported the importance of creating for baby "an entire world of its own, not only special clothes and special food, but special furniture, special bathing arrangements, special articles of all kinds."²⁴² Some dry goods stores even erected auditoriums for the sole purpose of hosting baby-week lectures. Behind retailers' altruism, however, lay the Bureau's concern that "the campaign was in danger of being considered a commercial advertising one."²⁴³

Indeed, many merchants and public officials latched onto the U.S. Children's Bureau's campaigns. Newspaper articles and the government's sanction helped bring crowds into department stores. Some merchants began their child welfare promotions before the legitimization provided by government support. As was noted in chapter one, Marshall Field was one of these stores to successfully bring in crowds for their annual Children's Day event. Other stores began distributing baby welfare literature, displaying Baby Week goods in storefront windows, and conducting classes on nutrition and baby

²⁴¹ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 181.

²⁴² *Dry Goods Economist* 73, no. 3910 (June 14, 1919): 167.

²⁴³ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 181.

care. The classes were an important public service since the baby's weight and nutrition were linked to its survival.²⁴⁴

Historian Leach notes two results of the collaboration between the U.S. Children's Bureau and department stores. First, the joint-venture provided mothers with services they otherwise might not have obtained. They learned "useful ideas and methods of child care." Second, the partnership served merchants' interests. In 1912 when the Bureau created special days and weeks dedicated to infant welfare, they essentially "owned" those days and weeks. However, in a few short years control and exploitation of these days and weeks passed to merchants.

The U.S. Children's Bureau never intended for department stores to use Baby Week and its associated events for commercial profit. Yet the impact of the Bureau's partnership with department stores indirectly contributed to the expansion of the consumer economy. The Bureau relied on stores to spread their welfare message and in turn endorsed them as centers for service and education. Thus, the introduction and sale of more and more children's goods occurred through the creation of children's departments.²⁴⁵

As we have seen, Krauch embraced this relationship between retailers and reformers and the methods she developed as a buyer reflected her commitment to this partnership. As editor of *The Infants' Department* Krauch endorsed the U.S. Children's Bureau's official advice on topics such as the summer care of babies, educational work in the children's department, and baby week campaigns.²⁴⁶ Krauch and others wrote articles

²⁴⁴ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 182.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ "Let Summer Clothing be Very Light," *The Infants' Department* 1, nos. 6 & 7 (February-March 1918): 100; "Children's Year' Begins April 6," *The Infant's Department* 1, nos. 6 & 7 (February-

which reflected that endorsement and demonstrated a commitment to the U.S. Children's Bureau's recommendations.

Congressional Backlash against Female Reformers

At the same time that the federal government served as a monitor of private businesses, it also sought to build positive relationships with corporate business and mass retailers. The Department of Commerce, under the leadership of Herbert Hoover and his successors, and the Federal Trade Commission, championed advertising practices, cost accounting methods, and the exchange of trade and tariff data that lifted American mass retailers to new heights.

These government officials and businessmen ostensibly shared the goals of female reformers.²⁴⁷ However, by 1921 the already tenuous relationship between the government, business interests, and female reformers turned sour and the women of the U.S. Children's Bureau, as well as affiliated female-led agencies, faced criticism from men in government. Senator James Reed (D-MO) was particularly critical. Historian Robyn Muncy emphasizes that along with other male politicians, Reed went on public

March 1918): 103; "A Baby Week Calendar," *The Infants' Department* 1, no. 8 (April 1918): 114; "A Great Opportunity for Department Stores," *The Infants' Department* 1, no. 8 (April 1918): 124; "Plan International Baby Week," *The Infants' Department* 2, no. 7 (March 1919): 126; "What to do in the Summer Months," *The Infants' Department* 2, no. 12 (August 1919): 193-194; "Giving the Baby a Weigh!," *The Infants' Department* 3, no. 7 (March 1920): 133.

²⁴⁷ Kriste Lindenmeyer, "*A Right to Childhood*": *The U.S. U.S. Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-46* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 15-25. Lindenmeyer notes Theodore Roosevelt's "rhetoric on December 6, 1904 "supporting child labor laws, playgrounds ... in his annual message sent to Congress." According to Lindenmeyer, settlement workers and child welfare reformers "felt that Roosevelt generally, supported their efforts. Even though the president sometimes seemed uncomfortable with 'radical' reformers." Roosevelt's reputation as a reformer outpaced his performance, though he "firmly supported the idea of a federal U.S. Children's Bureau." Female reformers gained the support of many Congressmen willing to introduce bills in support of a national U.S. Children's Bureau, but disputes emerged in terms of the location of the Bureau. Some advocated its placement in the Department of Interior, others in the Department of Commerce and Labor, and in 1910 President William Howard Taft suggested the creation of a Department of Health in lieu of a federal U.S. Children's Bureau. Such equivocation gave the impression that any support the reformers received was indeed ostensible and not genuine.

record “to deride professional women, to demean them as policymakers, and certainly to vote down their prized projects.”²⁴⁸ Beginning in 1921, Reed railed against childless women who instructed mothers on the details of childrearing. He thought it more appropriate for the Senate to “provide for a committee of mothers to take charge of the old maids and teach them how to acquire a husband and have babies of their own.”²⁴⁹ He wondered “whether one out of ten of these delightful reformers could make a bowl of buttermilk gruel that would not give a baby the colic.”²⁵⁰ Reed continued with,

When we employ female celibates to instruct mothers how to raise babies they have brought into the earth, do we not indulge in a rare bit of irony? ... I care not how inestimable the office-holding spinster may be, nor how her heart may throb for the dream children she may not possess, her yearnings cannot be substituted for a mother’s experience.²⁵¹

Reed had bipartisan support from former Bureau supporter Senator William Kenyon (R-IA) who referred to the women of the Bureau as “the old maid brigade.”²⁵²

Though aimed at the women of the U.S. Children’s Bureau, Reed’s applied to wide swaths of “childless women ... old maids” who offered child welfare advice.²⁵³ In fact, in 1924, the Federal War Department designed so-called Spider Web Charts, which cast suspicion on these women. Connections between reformers and voluntary organizations allegedly linked their service to international socialist organizations.²⁵⁴ Members of the child welfare movement, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, the Girls Friendly Society, and the American Home Economics

²⁴⁸ Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*, 132.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ Lindenmeyer, “*A Right to Childhood*,” 85.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*, 132.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 129.

Association appeared on the chart.²⁵⁵ Notably, Florence Kelley, Jane Addams, and Lillian Wald, along with many women working alongside them were all censured for suspected radicalism. Though the sexist remarks flowed freely out of the mouths of men like Reed and Kenyon, accusations of radicalism, on the other hand, were not solely male generated—“super-patriotic” “right-wing women” attacked the women of the U.S. Children’s Bureau as a “radical federal Bureau of social workers . . . taking orders from Russia’s Bolsheviks.”²⁵⁶

Krauch Defends Single Childless Women

A striking feature of Krauch’s essays in this period is that she linked her childrearing expertise specifically to being a single woman without children. Though she never stated that her articles in *The Infants’ Department* responded directly to Reed, they can be read as a response to his arguments.

Indeed, Krauch remained steadfast in her belief that childless professional infants’ wear buyers knew how to advise new mothers about colic, husbands, and improper clothing. For example, Krauch wrote about advancements in abdominal bands which improved upon “that old flannel strip with heavy hems, then called a band, [it] was barbaric.”²⁵⁷ According to Krauch, many mothers placed the bands too tightly around the infants’ waist which prohibited belly expansion upon nursing—thus causing abdominal

²⁵⁵ Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*, 129.

²⁵⁶ J. Stanley Lemons, *The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1973), 209-227; Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*, 128. Lemons notes that not all women embraced the charge to secure the vote. Anti-feminists, along with numerous other groups which included the National Association of Manufacturers and the American Medical Association, opposed social feminists who rallied for peace during wartime. These social feminists also sought infancy and maternity protection, child labor prohibition, and industrial reform. Super-patriotic women suspected social feminists to be part of an international conspiracy to promote Bolshevism and subvert American institutions.

²⁵⁷ Flora Krauch, “Happy Birthday to You,” *The Infants’ & Children’s Department* 15, no. 9 (September 1931): 1090.

pain which was assumed to be a case of colic. Contemporary bands were made of elastic woven fabrics that allowed for expansion of the belly and no hems to dig into the child's tender flesh. Krauch's message was clear: in addition to a loving mother, and a highly educated and experienced physician, children needed female buyers with expertise in fabric composition, product workmanship, and product use in order to remain safe and comfortable in the modern world.

As for Reed's comments about "old maids," Krauch held an opposing view of marriage and motherhood for the professional buyer. The evidence does not permit us to explain why Krauch herself never married. But we do know from historian Alice Kessler-Harris that "department store buying ... [was] not seen as compatible with marriage, and women ... generally resigned on marriage or chose not to marry at all."²⁵⁸ In fact, in 1918 Krauch recounted unsuccessfully trying to train a woman for a managerial position and suggested that "even pioneer Infants' Wear women" fell prey to "the matrimonial germ."²⁵⁹ She elaborated that instead of providing comfort to infants and children and education to mothers, some career women opted for marriage and chose to "give up her work to look after his comfort and welfare" and "liv[e] happy ever after."²⁶⁰

In her defense of female buyers in infants' departments, Krauch suggested that motherhood actually posed a handicap. In her view, a woman tended to develop narrow viewpoints about childrearing rooted in her personal experiences with her own children, regardless of whether she had one child or six children. Krauch asserted that "a good

²⁵⁸ Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 128, 135.

²⁵⁹ Flora Krauch, "Letters to a New Buyer: First Letter," *The Infants' Department* 2, no. 3 (November 1918): 52.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

infants' wear buyer, altho she may not have reared a 'Junior' or a 'Sister,' has absorbed the experiences of hundreds and hundreds of mothers."²⁶¹ Again, Krauch vouched that the buyer encountered mothers from all walks of life, "poor and rich, ignorant and educated, so her opinions and theories are the consensus of the opinions and theories of a multitude of mothers not just the one mother."²⁶² Therefore, Krauch credited the single, childless professional women of the infants' departments and other reform agencies with the broad, specialized, and evolving knowledge about progressive trends in child welfare that a mother simply did not possess.

Although Krauch claimed that she was more objective than mothers, she never discounted the value of maternal experience. After all, she relied on experienced mothers to provide her with the information and feedback she needed to educate new mothers. The distinction between new mothers and experienced ones was one that appeared often in her writings. Her narrative in *The Infants' Department* contained remarks from an area physician who treated fifty children with similar symptoms resulting from wearing summer attire during a cold snap. Krauch mused that experienced mothers may dress their children appropriately, but the new or inexperienced mother is the one who needs the education provided in the infants' department to fully comprehend the ramifications of improper clothing.²⁶³

²⁶¹ Flora Krauch, "Do Infants' Wear Departments Pay?," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 17, no. 11 (November 1933): 753.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 752-753.

²⁶³ Flora Krauch, "Children's Undies Stage a 'Coming Out,'" *The Infants' & Children's Department* 15, no. 8 (August 1931): 950.

If men like Reed saw a “rare bit of irony” in having single women advising mothers about childhood welfare, Krauch had a response for them. As she pointed out in one of her articles, the work of female buyers in the infants’ wear industry demanded a wide range of skills, some of which had nothing to do with childrearing. For example, during the Depression, Krauch observed that the women who were able to weather “the hardest part” had done so as a result of knowledge “about banking, bookkeeping, mark-ups, mark-downs, and various other things.”²⁶⁴ Krauch illustrated that women’s intuition in terms of motherhood, a lingering societal ideal, was not enough to build a successful infants’ and children’s department; rather, an acute business sense was needed beyond mere maternal sensitivity. She thus highlighted an important difference between the work of mothers and the work of childhood welfare experts in businesses and agencies.

Krauch Discourages Commercialization of the Infants’ Department

In 1927, a group of leading Chicago manufacturers, wholesalers, and East Coast merchants met in Chicago to discuss forming an organization that would broadcast the advantages of Chicago as an infants’ and children’s wear market to the entire mercantile world. The meeting spawned the Chicago Infants’ and Children’s Wear Association.²⁶⁵

Krauch was among the many buyers invited to the “coming out” party in March 1929.²⁶⁶ She attended to see how Chicago would fare against its more “sophisticated sister, New York City, where style shows are a favorite indoor sport.”²⁶⁷ Krauch admitted her skepticism towards style shows after having attended many in New York

²⁶⁴ Flora Krauch, “Do Infants’ Wear Departments Pay?,” *Earnshaw’s Infants’ & Children’s Department* 17, no. 11 (November 1933): 733.

²⁶⁵ Flora Krauch, “Chicago’s Show Debut,” *The Infants’ & Children’s Department* 13, no. 3 (March 1929): 435

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

City. Department stores' advertising departments used the fashion show to dictate consumer enticements through the "instability in style."²⁶⁸ However, to Krauch's pleasure, Chicago's trade association used their style show to stress infants' and children's "clothing in relation to health."²⁶⁹ The promotion of health through clothing suggests the compatible goals of the trade association and Krauch.

Two years later, in 1931, a department store executive broached the subject of declining sales in infants' departments to Krauch. He attributed the decrease to declining birth rates, yet Krauch dismissed his theory. She observed that lower commodity prices had decreased sales volumes, without a correspondence to fewer purchasers. Statistics showed that more transactions occurred due to greater numbers of infants' wear purchasers—mothers, fathers, aunts, and uncles among them. Krauch traced the continued decline in sales volume to the advent of too many inexperienced merchandising men and executives during the "boom days" of easy business. To curb costs, these men, "thinking only in commercial terms ... have let slip their biggest asset. Competent, experienced buyers and saleswomen."²⁷⁰ Equally damaging, the "educational measures by which the mothers were kept informed and interested were cut out of the picture." Lastly, advertising men failed to note the human interest aspect to sales ads.²⁷¹ As a pioneer infants' department buyer, Krauch believed that women like her had spent more than a decade improving and developing the business with more than profits in mind. However, the changes these men implemented ushered in the push to market

²⁶⁸ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 297-313.

²⁶⁹ Flora Krauch, "Chicago's Show Debut," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 13, no. 3 (March 1929): 435.

²⁷⁰ Flora Krauch, "Happy Birthday to You," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 15, no. 9 (September 1931): 1090.

²⁷¹ Flora Krauch, "The Neighborhood Store," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 17, no. 4 (April 1933): 274.

infants' departments in the commercialized manner of ready-to-wear or house furnishings departments.

From 1931 onward, Krauch's essays serve as evidence that she stood out as a key figure at *The Infants' Department* who worked to retain the journal's original focus. Krauch co-developed the journal to share her merchandising method with other infants' wear buyers which emphasized mother education and children's welfare. In essay after essay, Krauch's words demonstrate how she dissuaded retailers from commercializing children's departments.

Krauch's method was notable for its versatility. She spent the 1930s demonstrating the applicability of her method in numerous commercial sites. From 1931-1932, she developed a children's department for the wholesale dealer Hibben, Hollweg & Company of Indianapolis.²⁷² She then turned to her training ground at Chicago's Carson, Pirie, Scott from May 1933 to November 1938.²⁷³ There she revitalized the store's children's department in the wholesale and retail divisions. She also visited countless neighborhood infants' and children's shops to assist in the implementation of her child welfare method of merchandising children's wear.²⁷⁴

In fact, the small neighborhood shops suffered the most during the Depression years. Earnshaw collaborated with a group of experts in the children's wear industry to write codes of fair practice as part of the National Recovery Act. These codes limited

²⁷² George F. Earnshaw, "The Neighborhood Store," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 16, no. 9 (September 1932): 753.

²⁷³ Flora Krauch, "The Thrill of Chicago," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 17, no. 5 (May 1933): 336; Flora Krauch, "Building Infants' Departments: Old Problems of Sizes," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 22, no. 11 (November 1938): 73. At this time, the Hibben, Hollweg & Company advertised itself as supplying "jobbers to department stores." Jobbers served as middlemen between the wholesaler and the retailer.

²⁷⁴ Flora Krauch, "The Thrill of Chicago," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 17, no. 5 (May 1933): 336.

price lines, raised wages, and cut back working hours.²⁷⁵ Large department stores may not have been harmed by the codes, but the smaller shops certainly were. Consequently, Earnshaw placed Krauch as the head of “The Neighborhood Store” articles and asked her to address problems that neighborhood stores encountered.²⁷⁶

Whether Krauch wrote about merchandising in large department stores or small neighborhood shops, the consistency of her message defined her defiance of commercialization. In all cases she emphasized that children’s departments be built upon the foundation of mother education and child welfare. Krauch forged ahead adamantly defending the principles upon which children’s departments were originally founded which did not include exploitation through commercialization.

The elimination of education work from infants’ departments was not indicative of its overall superfluous nature. Krauch argued that infants’ and children’s departments

²⁷⁵ Code of fair competition for the infants’ and children’s wear industry as approved on March 27, 1934 by President Roosevelt, United States Government Printing Office, 1934, 607-627.

²⁷⁶ George F. Earnshaw, “The Neighborhood Store,” *The Infants’ & Children’s Department* 16, no. 9 (September 1932): 753. Krauch is the Associate Editor of the trade journal at this time. Based on Earnshaw’s editor’s note it is clear that he and others asked Krauch to abandon the focus of her previous articles to address a new issue. Earnshaw wrote, “We are, therefore, asking Miss Krauch to discontinue her articles aimed more to assist the buyers in big departments, and confine herself more to the problems of the young neighborhood store.” My research has not uncovered what spurred Earnshaw’s interest in addressing the problems neighborhood stores encountered at this particular time in the journal’s history. I confined my research to Krauch’s articles which renders me unable to confirm whether or not another writer for the trade journal addressed the problems of neighborhood stores. Krauch, however, did write about neighborhood stores in several earlier articles noting, for example in April 1930 in her article titled “Looking Southward,” that she had an affinity for these types of shops after “having been reared in a specialty shop.” It was within a small infants’ wear shop in Chicago where she gained experience in buying, selling, and visiting manufacturers at the merchandise markets. Furthermore, when one looks at past issues of the trade journal there is evidence that Earnshaw accepted advertising dollars from small specialty shops. These specialty shops would have included neighborhood stores. Since advertising dollars were accepted from these smaller stores it seems reasonable that their concerns were previously addressed and that during The Depression, when their problems intensified, Earnshaw chose to ask Krauch, his associate editor, to suggest methods the neighborhood stores might find useful when dealing with merchandising problems.

had an obligation to participate in child health work through healthful clothing and products, not necessarily with pills and medications.²⁷⁷ However, Krauch noted that

Doctors, manufacturers, hospitals, and welfare organizations have fallen in line with this educational work ... many big organizations, such as Public Health Service, Child Welfare, insurance companies, and numerous others who have given more to babies and children in the past few years than have the infants' departments of many stores.²⁷⁸

Historian Viviana Zelizer argues that insurance companies played a large role in educating parents about the value of their children. Reasons for insuring children's lives shifted from losing a child to work-related death or illness, to "subsidiz[ing] the living unproductive child." Insurance companies became experts at moving "from burial coverage to an educational fund, children's insurance gradually became also a middle-class investment."²⁷⁹

The trend to separate retail interests from childhood welfare in infants' departments coincided with arguments from critics who questioned the need for infants' departments altogether. For example, Krauch recounts an instance where a noted newspaper published an article disparaging the quality of and need for infants' departments. The author had visited one such department and criticized the staff of inexperienced saleswomen and questioned the need for staffing a nurse. Krauch defended her "many years studying this particular topic" and questioned the author's integrity. She noted the incredibility of his claims in an up-to-date department where "extensive educational work" and welfare service was offered for the "many, many

²⁷⁷ Flora Krauch, "Children's Undies Stage a 'Coming Out,'" *The Infants' & Children's Department* 15, no. 8 (August 1931): 949.

²⁷⁸ Flora Krauch, "Happy Birthday to You," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 15, no. 9 (September 1931): 1090; Flora Krauch, "The Neighborhood Store," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 17, no. 3 (March 1933): 399.

²⁷⁹ Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child*, 136.

mothers who do not have the means to run to a doctor every few days.”²⁸⁰ This particular jab came at a time when adherence to education and welfare lost ground among the women with whom Krauch formerly identified. Historian Muncy describes these women’s loss of authority:

As business values such as economy, efficiency, competition, and the profit motive increased their authority in the mid-1920s, they empowered a professional culture that shared those values. The female professionalism of women in the child welfare corps with its emphasis on service, selflessness, and cooperation lost authority.²⁸¹

That loss of authority had implications for Krauch, which was evident in the succession of public criticisms of infants’ departments.

Indeed, Krauch felt that outside forces worked together to malign the women working in the infants’ and children’s merchandise industry. Krauch’s self-administered surveys concluded that part of the problem originated internally. From merchandise men to store owners, these men, many of whom operated their stores remotely, failed to comprehend the value and necessity of educational work in the department.²⁸²

Department store executives found ways to exploit the possibilities in the infant’s and children’s department as other agencies took over the department’s educational work. Krauch’s writings reveal how department stores exploited holidays, particularly Christmas. Historian Leach suggests that after the mid-1890s, large department stores began to appropriate and lay claim to the imagery surrounding Christmas.

²⁸⁰ Flora Krauch, “Know before You Knock,” *The Infants’ & Children’s Department* 15, no. 12 (December 1931): 1393-1394.

²⁸¹ Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*, 149-150.

²⁸² Flora Krauch, “Lack of Understanding Causes Poor Departments,” *The Infants’ & Children’s Department* 19, no. 11 (November 1935): 32, 62.

By the late 1920s the promotion of Christmas through parades and Santa Claus reached levels that some observers found to be absurd. Some adults opposed the commercialization of Santa Claus, whose image was on every street corner and in every store. When a Philadelphia minister confronted John Wanamaker about the costly holiday parades he staged inside Wanamaker's department store, the merchant reassured the clergyman that "Young people very early grow to understand that [Santa Claus] is a mere pleasantry and tradition. I do not believe that it detracts from the story of the coming of Christ."²⁸³ A Texas woman directed her concern to the U.S. Children's Bureau asking, "Can you tell me what is being done about the widespread use of Santa Claus as advertising medium at stores and on street corners?" Unfortunately, by this point the only honest response the Bureau's chief offered was, "I do not know of any groups interested in doing away with the commercialism of Santa Claus. I am afraid I have no suggestions to make."²⁸⁴

Krauch, too, urged stores to do away with the over-commercialization of Christmas. Several of her essays reveal her use of Christian imagery to remind merchants and consumers of the day's significance. For example, she twice used a Christmas story found in the December 1930 issue of *The Ladies Home Journal* titled "Service of Love," to demonstrate how a baby stork and the infants' department symbolized babyhood with "a service of love ... to the babies and mothers of today."²⁸⁵ According to the story, a stork tore handfuls of its own feathers from its breast to cover

²⁸³ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 88-89.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 337.

²⁸⁵ Flora Krauch, "January Figures—Can You Make Them?," *Earnshaw's Infants' and Children's Department* 17, no. 12 (December 1933): 811, 820; Flora Krauch, "Christmas Gift Checks—Will You Get Your Share of Them?," *Earnshaw's Infants' and Children's Department* 19, no. 12 (December 1935): 30.

the Christ Child in its manger. Krauch inferred that the buyers and saleswomen in the infants' department were showed similar compassion through their self-sacrifice in the special care of all children. In this example, Krauch not only criticizes the commercialization of childhood, she also affirms her position that infants' departments are unique within department stores. They must always put childhood welfare above the pursuit of profits.

In general, stores charged forward with the commercialization of Christmas. As a result, one way Krauch attempted to maintain infants' department's educational work during the Christmas season was to request additional appropriations. In this way, truly educational and intellectually stimulating toys and books could be purchased for the department and Krauch's mission to educate families could continue. However, her articles reveal that store executives did not view all infants' and children's merchandise as items given as Christmas gifts. Thus, additional appropriations, floor space, or window space was difficult for "non-Christmas departments" like the infants' department to acquire.²⁸⁶

Krauch Advocates for Continuing Education among Retail Buyers

In the 1920s, a new type of childrearing expert emerged. Child psychologists affirmed the educational value of toys and playrooms, while simultaneously supporting the culture of consumption. Merchants used the experts' affirmations to validate the hype toys generated at Christmastime.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ Flora Krauch, "Old Stuff that's New," *The Infants' and Children's Department* 13, no. 11 (November 1928): 1607. Krauch explains that special appropriations went to those departments capable of generating profitable Christmas sales. She writes that these special appropriations were "ours by every law of right because they aided in advertising and showing the public what we know to be a fact." However, we know that the retail buyers for infants' departments had difficulty acquiring advertising appropriations from the advertising department regardless of time of year.

²⁸⁷ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 329-330.

Krauch described the significance of “studying the ages” when educating mothers about their children’s needs. However, during the late 1920s Macy’s and other stores collaborated with child psychologists to illustrate the educational value of their toys. Notably, eminent psychologist at the New School for Social Research in New York, Joseph Jastrow, commended Macy’s for their system of “graded toys” and asserted that “play and its tutelary servant the toy nourished the imaginative life of the child, thus making a ‘crucial’ contribution to the child’s development.”²⁸⁸ Though many child psychologists were viewed as reformers, their view of educating the public was tinged with a commercial bias.²⁸⁹ In contrast, while Krauch wanted the sale of toys in infants’ departments to be profitable she also wanted the balance tipped in favor of the department’s educational mission.

Children’s clothing reform fortified Krauch’s dedication to education. Since the early 1900s Krauch had encouraged simplicity versus style for infants’ and children’s clothing. During the 1920s child psychologist John B. Watson influenced the behaviorist trend to childrearing. Nursery school teachers latched onto Watson’s current of thought and argued that a “child’s clothing should be so fashioned that he can dress himself.”²⁹⁰ Manufacturers, notably George F. Earnshaw, “embarked on a crusade for a reform of what children wore, denoted by the slogan Self-Help.”²⁹¹ He trademarked the “Self-Help” label in 1928 and focused on the fasteners on children’s clothes.²⁹² Self-Help

²⁸⁸ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 329.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 330.

²⁹⁰ Robert Friedel, *Zipper: An Exploration in Novelty* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1994), 177.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 180-183.

clothing included items with simplified fasteners, zippers, elastic, or any item that simplified the child's ability to dress himself and led to greater overall self-reliance.

Krauch wrote a series of articles in the 1930s dedicated to Earnshaw's clothing reform movement. Krauch's tour of Columbia University's Teacher's College revealed the opinions of imminent female nursery school teachers. Concerning "the importance of proper clothing for children ... they have stressed the need for more garments that carry some Self-Help feature."²⁹³ The lead nursery school teacher at the Merrill Palmer Nursery School in Detroit concurred: "The independence and mental growth of the child should be stimulated by providing him with clothing so designed that he can dress and undress himself."²⁹⁴

Krauch used these teachers' pleas as further evidence that infants' departments were educative at their core. If teachers and mothers demanded the clothing, buyers and saleswomen were bound to educate them about the potentiality of raising children's self-reliance through their proper use. Krauch visited nursery schools in Chicago to find more proof. Teachers and mothers agreed that clothing and shoes provided lessons in independence and asked Krauch to inform manufacturers that they wanted more Self-Help merchandise.²⁹⁵

However, Krauch still faced challenges gaining acceptance of the Self-Help clothing trend. Though she and other women based their ideas "from the consensus of

²⁹³ Flora Krauch, "Self-Dress—A Modern Problem," *Earnshaw's Infants' & Children's Department* 18, no. 3 (March 1934):28. See also, Flora Krauch, "Developing New Customers," *The Infants' & Children's Department* 18, no. 6 (June 1934): 41; Flora Krauch, "Ideas for Fall," *Earnshaw's Infants' & Children's Department* 19, no. 6 (June 1935): 43, 58; Flora Krauch, "A 'Preachment on Salesmanship,'" *Earnshaw's Infants' & Children's Department* 19, no. 10 (October 1935): 70.

²⁹⁴ Friedel, *Zipper*, 179.

²⁹⁵ Flora Krauch, "Self HELP! Self help!," *Earnshaw's Infants' & Children's Department* 19, no. 5 (May 1935): 42-43.

opinion, and years of practical and actual experience,” some store executives believed the Self-Help clothing movement was a passing fad. To defend the movement, Earnshaw advertised in *Parents Magazine*, “The Self-Help idea is not a style ... not a fad ... it’s a basic improvement in children’s clothing ... Talon fastened clothing teach self-reliance and sturdy independence to the youngsters in a practical way they’ll like.”²⁹⁶ The U.S. Children’s Bureau supported slide fasteners “for the right kind of clothing” and Krauch concurred that one of the goals of Self-Help garments was to “train [children] in mental efficiency.”²⁹⁷

By 1935 it became clear that the children’s clothing industry abandoned the educative element of the Self-Help movement. The children’s clothing market had represented 17.5 percent of the zipper market, but by the end of 1934 that number fell to 3 percent.²⁹⁸ Historian Friedel notes,

Between 1931 and 1934 the proportion of zipper production that went into clothing increased from 34 to more than 59 percent, even as such early promising outlets as children’s clothing and corsets faded. Of the 1934 clothing sales, 82 percent went for sports clothing ... another fashion that caught on and helped sustain the zipper for several years.²⁹⁹

An additional roadblock to the movement came from manufacturers. Many routinely disregarded Earnshaw’s established guidelines for marketing under the Self-Help label. After he threatened to sue manufacturers for trademark infringement, some established their own labels under which to market. In all, between the children’s clothing market’s demand for zippers receding to insignificance and manufacturers abandoning the Self-

²⁹⁶ Friedel, *Zipper*, 178.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 182; Flora Krauch, “Use and Abuse of Self Help,” *Earnshaw’s Infants’ & Children’s Department* 18, no. 4 (April 1934): 39.

²⁹⁸ Friedel, *Zipper*, 182.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

Help label, Earnshaw halted the Self-Help campaign.³⁰⁰ For Krauch, as Earnshaw's employee at *The Infants' Department*, no longer could she use Self-Help clothing to buttress the educational element to the children's department.

The abandonment of the Self-Help clothing reform movement was succeeded by the corruption of special days and weeks dedicated to promote and emphasize child welfare. For example, in 1922, as president of the American Child Health Association, Department of Commerce secretary Herbert Hoover led a campaign to rename May Day as "Child Health Day." Congress established the day as an American holiday, replete with a "Child's Bill of Rights" that Hoover wrote. Later, in 1929 as President, Hoover opened the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection where he reinforced many reformist ideas about child welfare.³⁰¹ Reformist women such as Lathrop and Kelley shared Hoover's child welfare attitudes, but Hoover's consumerist bent overshadowed the reformers' good intentions. According to Hoover, child welfare reform and the consumption of goods worked hand in hand. He promulgated the idea that children's standard of living rose with the consumption of the many child-related products on the market.³⁰²

Earnshaw developed an extension of Child Health Day with National Baby Week. Although Krauch was his longtime partner, her writings betray unease about the way this week became commercialized. She wrote, "The original idea being that retail stores emphasize health service, with talks by doctors, advice by nurses, etc."³⁰³ Yet, Krauch

³⁰⁰ Friedel, *Zipper*, 182.

³⁰¹ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 370-371.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 372.

³⁰³ Flora Krauch, "Planning for National Baby Week," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girls' Wear* 20, no. 4 (April 1936): 42.

suggested that this had been hijacked by profit motives: “You all know my sentiments about [National] Baby Week, and how for years I have bemoaned the commercial interpretation given it.”³⁰⁴ Krauch’s desperation to salvage the educational element of National Baby Week was evident when she conveyed how a particular buyer’s enthusiasm for educational ads during National Baby Week was countered with the ad man remarking, “Yeh, how many hundred can you sell? H’m, what can you buy them for? –that’s no mark up.”³⁰⁵ Krauch pointed out that “many big organizations, such as Public Health Service, Child Welfare, insurance companies, and numerous others” were giving “more to babies and young children in the past few years than have the infants’ departments of many stores.”³⁰⁶ To Krauch, “infants’ departments have just as much that is important, that is valuable to give to the world, that will help in making babies better and happier, that will add to their welfare and to the mother’s comfort.”³⁰⁷

Krauch did not relent. During her last year at *The Infants’ Department*, 1940, she argued,

A great many stores have lost sight of the real reason for this Baby Week. They think it is but a vehicle for sales, advertising, and cut price merchandise ... commercialism should be shelved. In its place ... some educational work ... keeping with the original conception of a National Baby Week.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ Flora Krauch, “Planning for National Baby Week,” *Earnshaw’s Infants’, Children’s & Girls’ Wear* 20, no. 4 (April 1936): 42.

³⁰⁵ Flora Krauch, “The Neighborhood Store,” *Earnshaw’s Infants’ and Children’s Department* 17, no. 3 (March 1933): 399-400; Flora Krauch, “Planning for National Baby Week,” *Earnshaw’s Infants’, Children’s & Girls’ Wear* 20, no. 4 (April 1936): 42.

³⁰⁶ Flora Krauch, “Planning for National Baby Week,” *Earnshaw’s Infants’, Children’s & Girls’ Wear* 20, no. 4 (April 1936): 42.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ Flora Krauch, “Ideas for National Baby Week,” *Earnshaw’s Infants’, Children’s & Girls’ Wear* 24, no. 3 (March 1940): 47.

She argued that a well-trained buyer or assistant should promote Baby Week campaigns since physicians and public health nurses knew little about the limitless number of items “that will add to the comfort and well-being of a baby that contributes to the forming of good habits or the breaking of bad ones.”³⁰⁹ Yet, National Baby Week’s shift from educational work to sales promotion contributed to the abandonment of Krauch’s pioneering work.³¹⁰

1940: A Year of Changes

By 1940, Flora Krauch had put her experience and expertise up against that of men in business, government, and academia for four decades. The December 1940 issue of *Earnshaw’s Infants’, Children’s & Girls Wear* contained Krauch’s last article for the publication. Analysis of her articles for 1940 demonstrates that that she came full circle in terms of her message, addressing the same themes in a final effort to remind her readers about advertising problems, the educational work of National Baby Week, the community service that infants’ departments engage in, and the profitability of the downstairs infants’ department. She explained how buyers should implement “system” to ease the burdens of inventory control, price management, and merchandise returns.

Her last article, in December 1940, ostensibly acknowledged the biased, proprietary nature of buyers in terms of their department’s merchandise. For example, she acknowledged that buyers were prone to antagonize and aggravate customers who came into a store trying to return what was clearly another store’s merchandise. When saleswomen were uneducated in customer relations and overworked buyers were

³⁰⁹ Flora Krauch, “Ideas for National Baby Week,” *Earnshaw’s Infants’, Children’s & Girls’ Wear* 24, no. 3 (March 1940): 47, 100.

³¹⁰ Flora Krauch, “How to Secure Results from National Baby Week,” *The Infants’ & Children’s Department* 19, no. 4 (April 1935): 44, 74.

summoned to deal with problems, the antagonism resulted in the loss of customers. Because Krauch's articles offer a window into her mindset it seems likely that her December 1940 article was her way of informing the industry of the importance of locale-based buying, of knowing your customers, and of maintaining an educated salesforce who knew their merchandise.

Furthermore, by the time Krauch wrote her last article she had a shifting role at the trade journal she co-founded. In June 1932 Krauch's articles appeared with the monthly title, "I Look at it this Way."³¹¹ By September 1932 George F. Earnshaw asked Krauch to "discontinue her articles aimed more to assist buyers in big departments, and confine herself more to the problems of the young neighborhood store."³¹²

Neighborhood stores were essentially infants' wear specialty shops. Though the trend toward fewer specialty shops and more infants' and children's departments in department stores challenged the former's ability to comply with Depression era fair practice codes, Krauch's articles shine light on how she motivated neighborhood store owners to merchandise according to the fundamental child welfare and mother education principles which these departments were originally formed.³¹³ Whether by choice or delegation, in 1936 Krauch wrote about age groups not reflected in her previous writings. For example, toddlers and juniors (ages 7 to 16) became topics of discussion.³¹⁴ And then in

³¹¹ Flora Krauch, "I Look at it This Way," *The Infants' and Children's Department* 16, no. 6 (June 1932): 530; Flora Krauch, "I Look at it This Way," *The Infants' and Children's Department* 16, no. 7 (July 1932): 586; Flora Krauch, "I Look at it This Way," *The Infants' and Children's Department* 16, no. 8 (August 1932): 684.

³¹² George F. Earnshaw, "Editor's Note," *The Infants' and Children's Department* 16, no. 9 (September 1932): 753.

³¹³ Flora Krauch, "How to Start an Infants' Wear Shop," *The Infants' and Children's Department* 18, no. 8 (August 1934): 43.

³¹⁴ Flora Krauch, "Toddlers," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's, and Girls' Wear* 20, no. 2 (February 1936): 70; Flora Krauch, "The 7 to 16 Department," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's, and Girls' Wear* 20, no. 7 (July 1936): 74.

November 1938 Krauch's by-line followed a seven-month run of articles titled "Building Infants' Departments."³¹⁵

While we do not have evidence that Krauch's shifting duties at the trade journal affected her 1938 decision to "giv[e] up the active business life," we do know from Krauch, "for some time my personal affairs have been neglected ... after a great deal of deliberation, I decided to give up my position [at Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company's wholesale division in Chicago] and return to my home in Indianapolis."³¹⁶ Though she continued writing for *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girl's Wear* after her return to Indianapolis, her last article for the journal appeared either by coincidence or by design on the heels of the death of her two mentors, Frederic M. Ayres on May 15, 1940, and George F. Earnshaw on October 1, 1940.

Ending

When we look at Krauch's career from the perspective of the politics surrounding the rise and fall of the U.S. Children's Bureau, we see that her career and this agency shared a similar fate. Krauch developed her style as a buyer for the infants' department at L.S. Ayres in the spirit of this agency's mission. Then, at the same time that the women staffing this agency came under attack from congress, Krauch found her methods under attack by the RRA men at L.S. Ayres.

³¹⁵ Flora Krauch, "Building Infants' Departments," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's and Girls' Wear* 22, no. 11 (November 1938): 73; Flora Krauch, "Building Infants' Departments," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's and Girls' Wear* 22, no. 12 (December 1938): 40; Flora Krauch, "Building Infants' Departments," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's and Girls' Wear* 23, no. 1 (January 1939): 60; Flora Krauch, "Building Infants' Departments," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's and Girls' Wear* 23, no. 2 (February 1939): 101; Flora Krauch, "Building Infants' Departments," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's and Girls' Wear* 23, no. 3 (March 1939): 48; Flora Krauch, "Building Infants' Departments," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's and Girls' Wear* 23, no. 5 (May 1939): 58; Flora Krauch, "Building Infants' Departments," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's and Girls' Wear* 23, no. 7 (July 1939): 60.

³¹⁶ Flora Krauch, "Building Infants' Departments: Old Problem of Sizes," *Earnshaw's Infants', Children's & Girl's Wear* 22, no. 11 (November 1938): 73.

Governmental outcry against single, childless women who instructed mothers in the nuances of childrearing challenged Krauch's work and gave other agencies, male-led agencies, license to appropriate the educational work and to undermine the reform work Krauch and women like her offered. As other agencies filled the role of mother-educator, merchants commercialized key elements of the infants' department. The educational work behind toys, Christmas, and National Baby Week fell prey to profit-inducing advertisements and parades. And the Self-Help clothing trend proved to be a passing fad.

Nonetheless, Krauch never wavered from her key message. She continued to champion the model she developed at L.S. Ayres. She believed that the infants' and children's department was a place where the women of a community could come to be educated about childrearing and proper product usage. She saw this educational mission as key to a healthy bottom line. Even as she saw her diminishing role at the industry trade journal she helped develop, she did not conform to the commercializing thread that businessmen, advertising men, and academics believed to be the way to profits. She was not against making money, but she was against commercialization. She wanted infants' and children's departments to be successful, however, she did not mean successful solely in terms of money, but also successful in terms of service and helpfulness.³¹⁷

³¹⁷ Flora Krauch, "The Neighborhood Store," *Earnshaw's Infants' and Children's Department* 17, no. 3 (March 1933): 399-400.

Conclusion

A careful study of Flora Krauch's writings has revealed more about her life than what her obituary suggests. She was not just a "leader in present day methods of infants' wear merchandising" who "devise[d] a method of centralizing all infants wear selling in one department."³¹⁸ Nor was she simply "a consultant to many large department stores throughout the Midwest."³¹⁹ However, she did "contribute many articles to trade magazines concerning infants' wear and merchandising problems."³²⁰ In fact, a detailed reading of the more than 270 articles Krauch wrote for the *Indianapolis News* and *The Infants' Department*, the trade journal she co-developed, shows that Krauch did more than defend a retail merchandising method. Krauch attempted to place single childless women like herself as childrearing experts in a line of work where women like her faced pushback from men in academia, government, and business. She used her articles to defend single childless women's work in the male-dominated mercantile world, to steer the infants' and children's merchandise industry away from thrusting upon mothers a culture of consumption, and to stop merchants from exploiting this culture.

This thesis reveals Flora Krauch's agency, first as L.S. Ayres and Company's first female executive and, later, as a national advocate for her retail methods. Krauch's columns in the *Indianapolis News* from 1911 to 1913 prepared her for her career as editor of *The Infants' Department*, a national infants' wear industry trade journal, from 1917 to 1940. She built on her experiences in Indianapolis to engage in national conversations about child welfare, women's consumption habits, and women's roles at home and in the

³¹⁸ Historical Files, 1909, M616, Box 1, Folder 36, L. S. Ayres and Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. Obituary for Flora Krauch dated October 9, 1958.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

workplace. When her retailing methods at L.S. Ayres came under attack by Ed Severns, the Research Director at L.S. Ayres, she used her writings at *The Infants' Department* to fight back against industry trends.

Moreover, Krauch was not simply defending a merchandising method in her writings. Instead, she defended single, childless women and their ability to work in areas where men in academia, government, and business were pushing them out. Indianapolis has long been recognized as the city where L.S. Ayres developed its reputation as an innovative department store in the Progressive Era. Thanks to Krauch, we can now also see that Indianapolis and L.S. Ayres were cradles for a resistance to the marginalization of female buyers and the commercialization of childhood.

This thesis has several implications for future research. For example, while I have focused only on Krauch, it would be interesting to know how other female buyers in infants' and children's departments were affected by the merchandising trends that undermined Krauch's methods. We know that Krauch consulted with other department stores in the Midwest. Do these other department store records reveal conflicts such as that which Krauch experienced with Ed Severns? Another question has to do with Krauch's readership. Who read Krauch's articles? Did her writings inspire or influence other women to defend her vision of infants' departments within department stores?

Another angle to pursue is the connection between early twentieth century businesswomen who used business methods rooted in nineteenth century social reform movement methods. The contributions these women offered to twentieth century scientific management principles has yet to be explored. Kwolek-Folland notes that historians have yet to flesh out this facet of women's business experiences. Flora

Krauch's work with the development of children's departments provides us with a starting point from where future scholars may demonstrate how businesswomen use female mentorship, education, and welfare in the twenty-first century business world.

Finally, what connections can we make between Krauch's writings and current campaigns to combat the commercialization of childhood? Organizations such as The Alliance for Childhood (founded in 1999) and the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood (founded in 2000) have recently emerged in response to the "staggering increase in marketing to children" that took place between 1980 and 2000.³²¹ Concerns over the marketing of food towards children prompted the World Health Organization to establish guidelines for regulations on this practice in 2010.³²² The problems with commercialization that Krauch identified in the 1930s and 40s have reached a crisis today, according to these organizations. Even if there is not a direct link to be found between Krauch and these current movements, Krauch nonetheless stands out as an early voice for their campaigns. Krauch not only denounced this commercialization of childhood, her story also reveals how commercialization increased alongside other structural changes in retail organizations, ones that pushed female childhood welfare experts and advocates out of the business.

³²¹ Nancy Carlsson-Paige, "Media, Technology, and the Commercialism: Countering the Threats to Young Children," in *Defending Childhood: Keeping the Promise of Early Education*, ed., Beverly Falk (New York: Columbia Teachers College Press, 2012), 138.

³²² <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/marketing-food-to-children/en/>. Accessed February 27, 2017.

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