
NOTES

The Sex Ratio of University Students in Germany and the United States: 1930-1980, A Comparison

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This paper attempts to compare and explain changes in the sex ratio of university students (M/F)_s in Germany and United States¹ between circa 1930 and the present.² We shall also explore the difference between the two countries in the proportion of university students in the age group 18-24 (from which most university students are drawn). The main purpose of our exercise is to show the effect of the traumatic demographic experience of World War II on (M/F)_s in Germany and to compare it with the more tranquil experience of the United States and also to contrast for both countries the war time (M/F)_s with "normal" peace-time trends.

It is clear that for the entire period (M/F)_s is higher for Germany than the United States. As table 1 shows initially (1928) the ratio was approximately 7.5 in Germany while it was 1.3 for the United States. This means that the German preponderance of male students was five times that which prevailed in the United States. By contrast, by the end of the period (M/F)_{s,G} had dropped to 1.8 and in the United States to below one. Thus, in 1980 the German ratio was almost double the ratio prevailing in the United States. While

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¹ Hereafter denoted (M/F)_{s,G} and (M/F)_{s,US} for Germany and the United States respectively.

² For the post WWII period our analysis is confined to West Germany. As we are using sex ratios rather than absolute numbers, this territorial change of our framework will not affect our analysis.

$(M/F)_s$ was persistently higher in Germany than in the United States, both in peace and war time, the long-run changes for the former were more pronounced.

It is also true that $(M/F)_{s,G}$ was more volatile in the short run compared to $(M/F)_{s,US}$. While $(M/F)_{s,G}$ remained at a very high level from the winter semester 1928/29, until the winter semester 1938/39, a sharp decline started with the outbreak of the war (1939) and continued to the end of the war in 1944. As a result of the war we observe a decline from 7.98 to 1.36, this is to say to approximately 1/5 of the pre-war level.³

Unfortunately, no official data, published or unpublished, exist for $(M/F)_{s,G}$ for the immediate five post-war years 1944-49. However, by 1949 we have once more a ratio of somewhat over 5, the ratio that had prevailed in 1939. The 1949 ratio was almost four times the ratio of 1.36 (1943/44) for the last war period reported. This very rapid upturn may be explained by a return or first entry into the universities by a large backlog of veterans. Some proportion of veterans would become university students only after some delay because they were temporarily disabled, were prisoners of war or were initially excluded by the occupation authorities. All these factors would contribute to a more substantial delayed upturn. German statistics do not give figures on the number of students who were veterans; for that reason it is not possible to go beyond a qualitative interpretation as rendered above.

The general trend of $(M/F)_{s,US}$ is similar to $(M/F)_{s,G}$ although much less pronounced (see Table 1). Clearly, for the United States the impact of the war was both shorter and less dramatic than in Germany. As a result of the G.I. bill, the influx of veteran students in the immediate post war period, was greater than it would have been otherwise. But in spite of the G.I. bill in the United States, which had no counterpart in West Germany, the immediate post World War II upturn of $(M/F)_{s,US}$ was much milder than of $(M/F)_{s,G}$.

For the period 1949-80 $(M/F)_s$ has dropped persistently for both countries, but again more sharply for Germany. The only qualification to this is an upturn of $(M/F)_{s,US}$ after the Korean war (1950-53). No such upturn is observable in the U.S. for the period following the Vietnam War (1965-75), which had generous provision for students' draft exemptions.

As table 2 shows, throughout the period covered by this study $(M/F)_s$ was not only consistently higher for Germany than in the U.S., but German university students constituted — especially during the earlier years reported — a drastically smaller percentage of the population 18-24 compared to the United States. In terms of these two characteristics the structure of German universities may be viewed as conservative.⁴

³ According to the German Population Census of 1946 females constituted 60% of the population 18-24.

⁴ This is in contrast with conditions prevailing in many LDC's. While LDC's are characterized by a narrow educational pyramid, similar to the early German one, the

While this comparison may be slightly inaccurate because of the somewhat different age concentration of university students in the two countries, the difference in the percentage is so great that it would not be modified substantially by any attempted refinement.

The World War II experience of Germany has a grim message: a lost war with heavy casualties may give a dramatic lift to women's lib!

proportion of women at university level and in the professions is nevertheless high, e.g., RUDOLPH C. BLITZ, "The Role of High-Level Manpower in the Economic Development of Chile," in Harbison & Myers (ed.) *Manpower and Education*. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965), pp. 103-105; "An International Comparison of Women's Participation in the Professions," *The Journal of Developing Areas*, July 1975, pp. 499-510.

Table 1
RATIOS OF MALE TO FEMALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS 1928-1980

Year	Germany ¹ (M/F) ₁	United States (M/F) ₁
1928	7.45	
1929		1.28
1930		1.29
1931		1.33
1932	5.37(2)	1.87
1933	5.87	1.38
1934	6.40	1.40
1935	6.30	1.41
1936	6.57	1.42
1937	7.42	1.44
1938	7.98	1.47
1939	5.26	1.37
1940	3.57	1.28
1941	2.53	1.33
1942	2.52	1.39
1943	1.94	1.29
1944	1.36	1.19
1945		1.00
1946		2.15
1947		2.44
1948		2.46
1949	4.64	2.38
1950	4.82	2.16
1951	4.89	1.96
1952	4.90	1.83
1953	4.86	1.75
1954	4.66	1.77
1955	4.36	1.88
1956	4.22	1.90
1957	4.02	1.89
1958	3.60	1.85
1959	3.40	1.78
1960	3.25	1.70
1961	3.24	1.65
1962	3.20	1.63
1963	2.78	1.61
1964	3.16	1.58
1965	3.31	1.57
1966	3.04	1.52
1967	3.05	1.48
1968	2.95	1.47
1969	2.25	1.44
1970	2.20	1.41
1971	2.06	1.39
1972	2.27	1.32
1973	2.10	1.27
1974	1.97	1.23
1975	1.93	1.21
1976	1.96	1.11

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(Segue Table 1)

1977	1.87	1.05
1978	1.80	1.01
1979	1.74	0.97
1980	1.70	0.95

Source: For Germany: for years 1928-1943 *Statistisches Handbuch Deutschland's* (München: F. Ehrenwirth, 1949). For the years 1949-1980 various *Statistische Jahrbücher Deutschland's* (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt).

For the United States: *Biennial Survey of Education 1948-50*, Chapter 4, Sec. 1, *Statistics of Higher Education* Table XI, pp. 16-17; *Survey 56-58*, Chapter 4, Sec. 1, Table 25, pp. 52-53; *Digest of Educational Statistics*, 1982, Table 82, and information made available to us by Mr. W. Vance Grant, U.S. Department of Education, *Statistical Information Office*.

Notes: 1) We reported the ratio for the Fall semester for each year. From the fall of 1939 to the spring of 1941 the universities were on a trimester basis; for that period we reported the ratios for every second trimester.

2) No data given for the years 1929-31.

3) For years 1928-1945 based on Fall survey's resident college enrollment with every second year interpolated by us; from 1946-1980 based on academic year surveys for degree credit enrollment, a broader concept.

Table 2
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AS A PERCENTAGE
OF POPULATION 18-24 IN GERMANY
AND THE UNITED STATES, 1933-80

Year	Germany	United States
1933	1.26	7.4
1939	0.6	8.3
1946	— (1)	12.5
1950	2.43	14.2
1961	3.8	23.
1970	12.7(1973)	32.1
1980	15.9	35.1

Source: For Germany: for civilian population *Volkszählung* of 1933, 1939, 1946, 1950, 1961, 1973, for 1980 *Statistisches Jahrbuch* 1982, p. 59; for students, same sources as cited for Table 1.

For the United States: for percentage of students in population 18-24, for the years 1933-1970, *Historical Statistics, Colonial Times to 1970* (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975), Vol. 1, Series #700-715, p. 383. For 1980, *Current Population Report* (PLS, No. 97), p. 45.

For students, same sources as in Table 1.

Notes (1): 1946 cannot be reported because no figures for students are available.

