

THE GREAT MALE MYSTERY

Figures Show More Boy Babies Born In War Time

ONE thing is certain and accepted by all authorities—namely, that more males are born to the human race than females (including stillborn). This fact has never been explained biologically. Since there is always a preponderance of male births, statisticians express the sex ratio at birth on the basis of 1,000 females. When not presented in this manner, in other words when sources give only the gross figures of male and female births—the ratio is arrived at by means of the following equation — $M : F$ as $X : 1,000$ (Male is to female as X is to 1,000).

But over and beyond the normal ratio, there seem to be other factors which increase or decrease the normal male edge. For instance an old edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* makes the following statement, “It appears abundantly proved that, for some unknown reason, a war on such a scale (i.e., World War I) does increase masculinity at birth.”



WAR BABIES, AND THOSE BORN SOON AFTER END OF HOSTILITIES, WILL BE PREPONDERANTLY MALE, ACCORDING TO STATISTICS OF PAST WARS.

The equally conservative magazine *Hygea* (published by the American Medical Association), says, “Following a long war a definite increase in the proportion of male births has been observed . . . it is pointed out by the *Statistical Bulletin* of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. . . .” *Hygea* then goes on to venture an explanation . . . “The ratio of males to females at birth is known to diminish as the age of the mother increases. During a war proper, many of the younger men are away from home; and relatively more of the older women (the mates of the remaining, generally older men), become mothers, causing a decrease in male births. Then when the war is over and the younger men return, there is a marked upswing in male births.” Figures of the year following the end of World War I certainly tend to support that theory. For example, all time highs were recorded in 1919 for the following countries; England and Wales—1060; Scotland—1064; Germany—1085.

However, this theory does not explain the rising curve of masculinity at birth, observed during the course of the war—during a time when a majority of younger men were away from home (not to mention casualties). Let’s look at the figures:

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	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919
England and Wales	1038	1035	1040	1049	1044	1048	1060
Scotland	1041	?	?	?	1054	1045	1064
Germany	1060	1061	1061	1070	1075	1078	1085
United States				1056	1058	1060	1060

The peaks established in 1919 seem to be satisfactorily explained, but the question arises:—does not this very explanation seem to be contradicted by the rising curve observed during the war proper, Or in other words; how can mobilization and demobilization exert the same influence on vital statistics? The answer is that they do no such thing. Mobilization naturally brings on a sharp decline in *total* births. But it also brings a rise in the relative preponderance of male births, despite the absence from home, and the death of so many of the younger men. This can be explained, in part at least, by the great number of hasty, reckless war marriages, and the increase in illegitimate births, *in conjunction with the generally accepted fact that more than 50% of first-born are males.* Needless to say, the majority of these war brides and of women seduced by a uniform, are young. Furthermore, the younger women are more likely to be raped, by friend or foe in the stress and excitement of war.

Another partial explanation of the phenomenon may be found in the realm of psychology. An important school of thought now holds that the sex of the child is determined at the moment of conception, the determining factor being the relatively higher libido of the father or mother—that the dominant libido will, more often than not, engender a child of the opposite sex. This does not imply that the male is less libidinous in war time, but rather that the female is less reserved than usual—sort of a “This may be our last time” feeling. Moreover the female may look upon her mate with more respect and admiration when he is uniform. In the excitement of the moment she may be carried away—and a male child result.

Anyway, when the war is well over—when general conditions, attitudes, et cetera, return to normal, the excess of masculinity at birth recedes to a normal level, as shown by a comparison of figures for 1919 and 1920:

	1919	1920
England and Wales	1060	1052
Scotland	1064	1043
Germany	1085	1079
United States	1060	1057

World War I offers the best material for investigation. It was a long war, involving citizens rather than professionals, with so many men involved that all other wars were dwarfed. The larger the material, the more significant the statistics. However, the Napoleonic Era, that sanguinary period starting 1789, furnishes some interesting figures worth examining. They start with 1801, with the war well under way:

1801.....1060	1807.....1060	1813.....1070
1802.....1063	1808.....1060	1814.....1067
1803.....1074	1809.....1070	1815.....1060
1804.....1075	1810.....1070	1816.....1065
1805.....1070	1811.....1075	1817.....1070
1806.....1063	1812.....1070	1818.....1065

The figures are high, and remained high throughout the 1820s, despite the fact that France had been bled white. The sex ratio persisted. In fact, it always will, and after this present war is concluded, with its tremendous

dislocations, the figures will be in the same ratio.

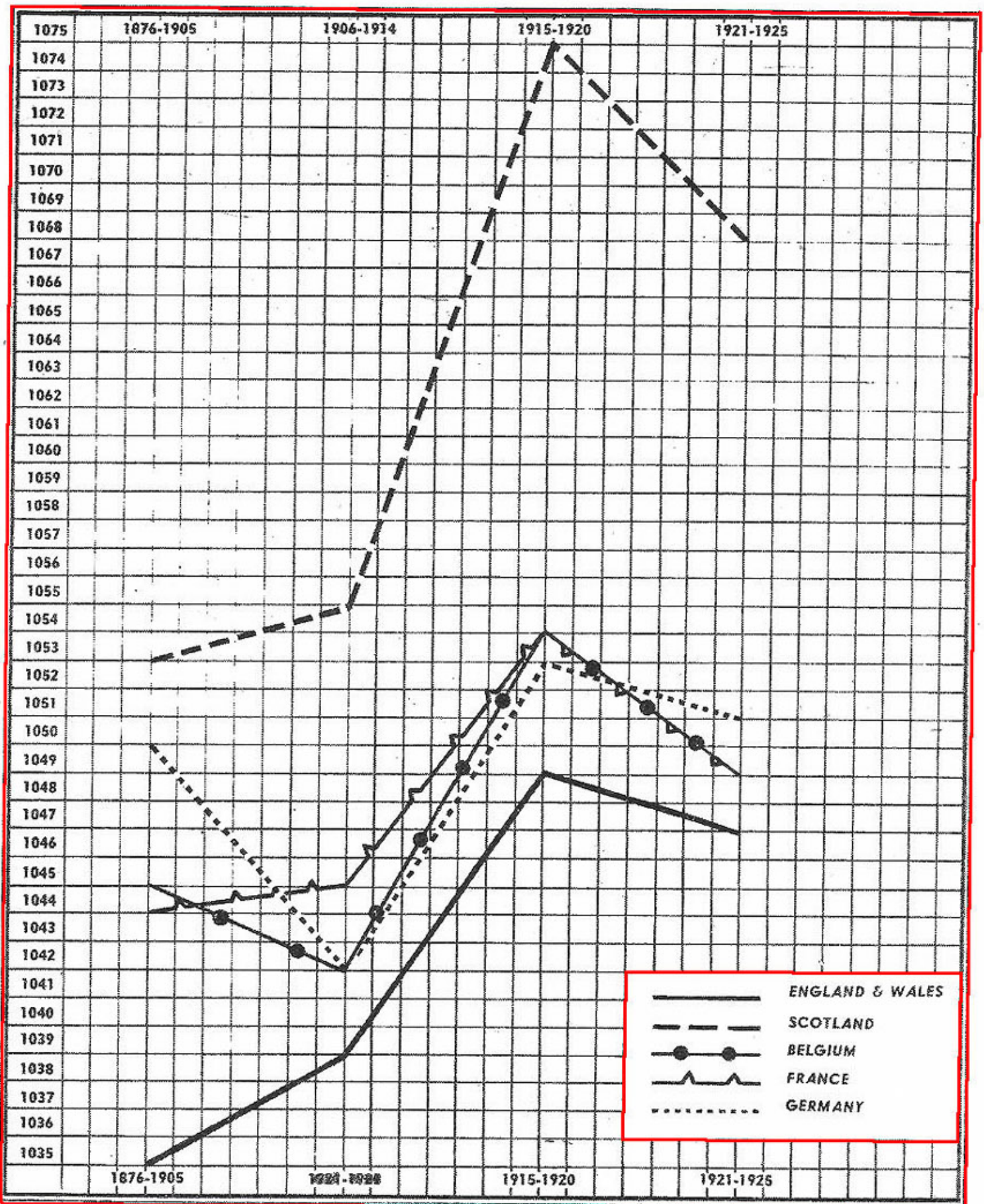


CHART ABOVE SHOWS VARIATIONS IN SEX RATIO FOR DIFFERENT NATIONS.

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Boy-and-Girl Supply

Biologists have sometimes speculated on why it is that, as everybody "knows," during and after wars more boy babies than girl babies are born.

The best answer they have been able to give is that nature had some obscure impulse to restore the ratio between males and females, upset by the slaughter of young men in battle. How this "impulse" transformed itself into bumper crops of boys, they could not say.

Statisticians are an even more coldly scientific lot than biologists, and last week the hard-working ones employed by Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. came out with a report which relegated the biological "impulse" to the scrap-heap of scientific mythology.

The main fact about the big increase in the birth of boys, according to the Metropolitan's investigators, is that it just doesn't happen. There is, indeed, a slight increase; but its cause is obvious, and it isn't enough to upset the normal ratio of boy births to girl births.

Age Factor. In the U.S., this ratio runs about 105-106 boys to 100 girls. (More boys die in childhood and adolescence than girls, so by maturity the ratio is close to 100-100.) In the eight-year period 1940-47, the ratio was 105.6 boys to 100 girls. This was slightly higher than in previous comparable periods, but not significantly so, and its cause was simply a wartime tendency to marry young. Younger women tend to have more boy babies.

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