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cealed reserve propensity was even larger; for, as will be seen, females had not yet gone into the labor force as extensively as demographic factors would have suggested; i.e., a reserve existed that might be released by some powerful factor such as large scale induction.

6 COMPARISONS WITH GERMAN AND BRITISH PROPENSITIES BEFORE WORLD WAR II

Mere numbers of our allies' and enemies' labor forces are scarcely useful as inventories of war resources. Differences between countries in labor efficiency, equipment, techniques, the impressment of foreign workers, and so on, forbid the translation of numbers into war potential. But numerical comparisons do help us to judge what could be done, by compulsion or persuasion, to make full use of our own labor power.

When the United States entered this struggle the age-sex structure of its population was not as well adapted for war purposes as that of either Greater Germany or Great Britain, although both had 'hollow' age classes in the population about 20-24 due to the decline in the birth rate during World War I. In all three countries, to be sure, males in the working-fighting ages, 14-64, constituted the same percentage of the total population, 35. In the United States a relatively high proportion outside this age-sex group were children under 14 and a relatively low proportion females 14-64. Had the percentage distribution of our population by age and sex been the same as the British we would have had about four million fewer dependent children to occupy the energies of women in the working ages, and two and one-half million more women in the working ages.

Satisfactory comparisons of labor force propensities between the United States and Great Britain are not possible for a date more recent than the latest (1931) British Census (Table 8). Propensities in the two countries for males 25-64 and females 45 and older were similar; for males in the school and retirement ages and for females younger than 45, they differed rather widely. The differences are, however, readily explained. For males over 64, the United States propensity in 1930 was higher than the British in 1931 for the same reason perhaps that it was higher than the United States propensity in 1940: namely, that old age security in this country was almost non-existent in 1930. (Sec. 5).

TABLE 8
Labor Force Propensities, by Age Groups and Sex
Great Britain and United States

AGE GROUP	GREAT BRITAIN, APRIL 1931 ¹		U.S., APRIL 1930 ⁴
	Population ² (000)	Labor force ³ (000)	% of pop. in labor force
M A L E			
10-13	1,486	not counted ⁵	3.3
14-24	4,182	3,734	89.3
10-24	5,668	3,734 ⁵	65.9 ⁵
25-44	6,202	6,098	98.3
45-64	4,532	4,275	94.3
25-64	10,734	10,373	96.6
65 & older	1,425	683	47.9
14 & older	16,341	14,790	90.5
10 & older	17,827	14,790 ⁵	83.0 ⁵
F E M A L E			
10-13	1,456	not counted ⁵	1.5
14-24	4,298	2,942	68.5
10-24	5,754	2,942 ⁵	51.1 ⁵
25-44	7,024	2,167	30.9
45-64	5,106	1,000	19.6
25-64	12,130	3,167	26.1
65 & older	1,892	156	8.2
14 & older	18,320	6,265	34.2
10 & older	19,776	6,265 ⁵	31.7 ⁵

¹ Included were those members of the armed forces who were in the British Isles at the census date.

² *Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom, 1924 to 1938* (83rd number), pp. 14 and 15.

³ *Census of England and Wales, 1931, Industry Tables*, p. 538, *Census of Scotland, 1931, III (Occupations and Industries)*, pp. 2 and 3.

The concept of labor force used by the British census in 1931 was the 'usual worker' concept of the United States census of 1930. Housewives performing chiefly unpaid domestic duties were excluded as usual workers by both censuses; also, permanently incapacitated persons; persons living on charity or private incomes; school students (students performing part-time work were included by the United States census); retired persons. Both censuses included unpaid workers in family businesses and unemployed persons, except when the latter had never had any gainful occupation. Both the British and American censuses thus included persons in the labor force who were usually there, but were not (as specified in the U.S. 1940 census) necessarily employed or seeking employment at the time of the census. There is, however, a difference between British and American census practice, the significance of which is difficult to appraise; namely, that in Great Britain the respondent fills out the form himself, whereas in the United States it is filled out by the enumerator from oral answers to his questions. (Census schedules and instructions: *Census of England and Wales, 1931, Occupation Tables*, pp. vi-vii; *Census of Scotland, 1931, II (Populations)*, pp. LIV-LVI; *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population, II, 1394-5, 1400-2.*)

⁴ SOURCE: Table 2.

⁵ The number of children 10-13 in the labor force was doubtless very small. Percentages for the groups 10-13, 10-24, and 10 and older were computed on the assumption that it was zero.

The higher labor force propensities of British women and children appear in Table 9 to be rather neatly associated with the much smaller

TABLE 9
Americans and Britons who were in the Labor Force, in School, or were Married Women, Percentages of Population 14 and Older, by Age Groups

AGE GROUP	UNITED STATES, APRIL 1930				GREAT BRITAIN, APRIL 1931			
	School ¹	Married women	Labor force ²	Duplicated total ³	School ⁴	Married women ⁵	Labor force ⁶	Duplicated total ³
14-24	31.3	14.5	48.0	93.8	6.3	6.4	78.4	91.1
25-44	..	39.3	61.8	101.1	..	36.9	62.5	99.4
45-64	..	33.5	57.6	91.1	..	35.6	54.7	90.3
25-64	..	37.2	60.2	97.4	..	36.3	59.2	95.5
65 & older	..	17.3	31.5	48.8	..	19.2	25.3	44.5
14 & older	8.7	29.4	54.7	92.8	1.6	27.4	60.7	89.7

¹ *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population, II, 1180-1; 843.* School data cover children not in the labor force.

² Computed from Table 1.

³ The totals contain duplications because females who are both married and in the labor force are counted twice. The degree of duplication will be somewhat greater in the British totals than in the United States totals because of the higher labor force propensities of British married women. Any error in the present comparison, however, is negligible; for age groups 25-64 the British and American totals would be very close if married women were left out of the comparison altogether (compare the 'Labor force' columns); for the age group 14-24 both the United States and British totals contain duplications. Probably relatively more British young married women were in the labor force than American, but the percentage of British married women in that age group was much lower and therefore carried little weight. On the other hand, United States school figures contained a good many girls who also were in the labor force, a duplication that hardly exists in the British figure. Any differential in these offsetting duplications must have been rather negligible.

⁴ *Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom, 1924 to 1938, pp. 54-5; pp. 68-9, Tables 40, 55.* Number of children 14 and under 17, and persons 17 and older in full-time attendance at grant-aided schools and colleges.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-9.

⁶ The labor force percentages were computed from statistics (1) of gainfully occupied, *Census of England and Wales, 1931, Industry Tables, p. 538, Census of Scotland, 1931, III (Occupations and Industries), pp. 2-3;* and (2) of population, *Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom, 1924 to 1938, pp. 14-5.* These statistics include those members of the armed forces who were in the British Isles at the date of enumeration.

proportions of British women who were married and of British children who attended school. The school attendance figures in Great Britain that help to show this are not classified by sex. In Table 8, therefore, the number of males and females in school in the two countries is given as a percentage of the combined number of males and females in each age group. Similarly, married females are given as percentages of the same aggregates. These two sets of

percentages are then added to the labor force propensities of the identical groups. The totals doubtless duplicate women who worked or were in school in addition to being married, but the differential duplication is too small to invalidate the comparison. In any event, the totals are strikingly similar. For persons of primary working ages (25-64), the British and American labor force propensities are the same; for secondary working-age persons, the differences are almost entirely traceable to deep-rooted differences in ways of life.

Between the United States and Germany, labor force propensities could be compared shortly before the start of this war in Europe (Table 10). At the census of May 1939 the labor force percentages

TABLE 10
Labor Force Propensities of Males, by Age Groups
Greater Germany and United States

AGE GROUP	GREATER GERMANY, MAY 1939 ¹			U.S., APRIL 1940 ²
	Population (000)	Labor force (000)	% of pop. in labor force	% of pop. in labor force
10-13	2,478	96	3.9	not counted ³
14-17	2,710	2,161	79.7	19.2
18-24	3,702	3,516 ⁴	95.0	82.5
25-44	13,063	12,821 ⁴	98.1	95.6
45-64	7,743	6,691	86.4	88.9
65 & older	2,876	856	29.8	42.1
10-24	8,890	5,773	64.9	43.2
25-64	20,806	19,512	93.8	92.9
14 & older	30,094	26,045	86.5	79.6
10 & older	32,572	26,141	80.3	72.8

¹ *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, Feb. 1941, p. 47. The German definition of labor force in 1939 was not given. Comparison of the classification titles suggests that the 1939 definition was about the same as that of the *Altreich* census of 1933, which was pretty much the gainfully-occupied concept of the United States census of 1930. Persons were counted as being gainfully occupied (*Erwerbspersonen*) if they had principal occupations (*Hauptberufe*); (*Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, Band 453, Heft 2, p. 5). In effect the German census counted a person as having a gainful occupation if he customarily got most of his income from, or spent most of his time at that occupation (Heft 1, p. 8, instructions to column 12 of questionnaire). The 1933 definition and, so far as it is similar, the 1939 definition thus barred students and persons retired or permanently disabled. It included a large number of farm wives who would have been left out by the United States definition; it probably included also persons temporarily ill, on strike or vacation, as well as, of course, unemployed or laid-off, except perhaps when they were without previous work experience or were employers or workers on own account. In thus leaving out inexperienced or non-employee unemployed, the German census again departed from the United States labor force concept of 1940.

² SOURCE: Table 2.

³ See note 1 to Table 1.

⁴ 1,270,000 men in the compulsory military and labor services (*Wirtschaft und Statistik, ibid.*) were added in: 1,170,000 into the age group 18-24, and 100,000 into the age group 25-44 (my estimate).

in Greater Germany were, with certain qualifications, similar to those of the United States in April 1940. As in the case of the comparisons for 1930-31 between Great Britain and the United States, the propensities for the male age groups 25-64 were close. In the margin-of-retirement group 65 and older the 1939 German propensities were lower than the British or United States—even dictators may have difficulties with vested rights! In the school-age groups the much higher labor force propensities in Germany were nearly matched by the lower full-time school enrollment. (Table 11).

TABLE 11
School and Labor Force Status of Males
Percentages of Population 14-24, by Age Groups
United States and Greater Germany

AGE GROUP	UNITED STATES, APRIL 1940			GREATER GERMANY, MAY 1939		
	School	Labor force	Unduplicated total ¹	School ²	Labor force	Unduplicated total ¹
14-17	78.9	19.2	90.2	11.4	79.7	91.1
18-24	15.1	82.5	95.3	1.7	95.0	96.7
14-24	39.0	58.8	93.4	5.2	88.5	93.7

SOURCES: United States: School attendance, *U.S. Census*; Labor force, Table 2. Germany: School attendance, *Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer das Deutsche Reich*; Labor force, Table 10.

¹ The United States total has been adjusted for any duplication arising because some American school children also follow a gainful occupation. No such duplication existed in the German school statistics.

² Data on school attendance in Germany were not available for 1939. The above percentages are based on the 1937 school attendance and population figures.

Comparing female propensities between Germany and the United States is scarcely easier than translating German poetry. One reason is that in Germany farm wives who customarily help in the fields are counted as gainful workers, though the great majority of German peasant wives probably do not normally put in anything like full time in the fields.²⁹ As a result, the female labor force propensities computed from the German census are inflated relative to those of the United States.

German propensities so figured are not very useful even as criteria for the labor force reserve in the United States. Many American farm women probably regard work in the fields as degrading, have never done any, and know little about it. Furthermore, the obstacles

²⁹ Strictly speaking, these unpaid family workers ought not to be included in the labor force. Including them, however, does not harm a comparison, so long as they are not numerous or do not vary greatly in number over time or between countries.

that individual women would meet in learning to work the large, isolated, machine-equipped farms of the United States are not comparable to those overcome by German women on the small, hand-operated village farms. Eventually, American women could doubtless be induced to do farm field work—perhaps the more easily with the help of machines. During the next year or two, however, to coax farm women to work in the fields after they have finished their indoor chores would surely be difficult. Urban and village women would seem to have much more leisure than farm women; and the

TABLE 12
Labor Force Propensities of Females, by Age Groups
United States and Greater Germany

AGE GROUP	UNITED STATES, APRIL 1940				GREATER GERMANY, MAY 1939			
	Labor force (incl. unpaid female family labor) (000)	Unpaid farm family labor over 24 (000)	Labor force excl. unpaid farm family labor over 24 ¹ (000)	% of pop.	Labor force (incl. unpaid female family labor) (000)	Unpaid farm family labor over 24 ² (000)	Labor force excl. unpaid farm family labor over 24 ¹ (000)	% of pop.
10-13	3	..	84	..	84	3.5
14-17	386	..	386	8.0	1,942	..	1,942	73.8
18-24	3,757	..	3,757	44.6	2,690 ³	..	2,690 ³	75.2
10-24	4,143	..	4,143 ³	23.2 ³	4,716 ⁴	..	4,716 ⁴	54.7
25-64	8,573	109	8,464	25.9	9,738	3,480	6,258	27.6
65 & older	267	3	264	5.7	500	242	258	7.6
14 & older	12,983	112 ⁵	12,871	25.5	14,870 ⁴	3,722 ⁵	11,148 ⁴	34.6
10 & older	12,983	112 ⁵	12,871 ³	23.3 ³	14,954 ⁴	3,722 ⁵	11,232 ⁴	32.4

SOURCE: For the U.S. data, the U.S. Census; for the German data, see Table 10, footnote 1.

¹ To deduct unpaid female farm family workers from the labor force and not deduct rural farm population from total population is valid only if the rural farm populations in the two countries bear about the same proportion to the total populations. No such direct comparison of farm populations is possible, but males engaged in agriculture constituted almost exactly the same percentage, 20, of all gainfully occupied males in both countries.

Farm family workers 24 and younger were allowed to remain in the labor force figures of both countries (1) because being largely unmarried, they have, it is assumed, actual rather than nominal labor force status, and (2) because they were in more nearly equal proportions in the two countries than were women over 24, very few of whom were in the United States labor force.

² The age distribution was estimated by computing the 1933 (*Altreich*) percentages that female farm family workers constituted of each age group and multiplying these percentages by the corresponding age groups of the 1939 population; the difference in totals, less than 10% of total female farm family workers of all ages in 1939, was distributed proportionately among the various age groups.

³ See note 1 to Table 1.

⁴ Including 30,000 women in the labor service.

⁵ Includes only those 25 and older.

better organized and more easily diluted non-farm occupations would seem to offer more immediate outlets for that reserve time. Consequently, comparisons between Germany and the United States of propensities to be in the labor force are presented *excluding unpaid family workers over 24 in agriculture* (Table 12).

These comparisons, it so happens, yield remarkably similar labor force propensities for females 25 and older. Even the differences for the age groups 14-17 and 18-24 correspond notably to opposite differences in marriage and school status (Table 13). The closeness

TABLE 13
School, Marital, and Labor Force Status of Females
Percentages of Population 14-64, by Age Groups
United States and Greater Germany

AGE GROUP	UNITED STATES, APRIL 1940				GREATER GERMANY, MAY 1939			
	School ¹	Married	Labor force	Duplicated total	School	Married	Labor force	Duplicated total
14-17	73.8 ²	..	8.0	81.8 ²	4.8 ²	..	73.8	78.6 ²
18-24	10.0	41.6	44.6	96.2	.3	23.9	75.2	99.4
25-64	..	74.3	25.9 ³	100.2	..	72.0	27.6 ³	99.6

¹ Not in labor force.

² The school statistics exclude part-time workers (Bureau of the Census, Series P-14, No. 4). The totals are duplicated only so far as married women in either country were employed. Since the German census counted farm wives as gainfully occupied, the original percentages for Germany were differentially duplicated. The chief part of this differential has been eliminated here, however, by omitting unpaid female farm family workers over 24 from the gainfully occupied percentages. See Sec. 6 and Table 9, note 3.

³ Excluding unpaid farm family workers.

of the similarities are, in fact, a little surprising. It will be recalled that in 1939 Germany was undoubtedly under pressure to use all labor resources. Compared with the United States there were fewer dependent children per working-age woman and a smaller proportion of married women; the average income and living standard was probably lower, and the labor market and the labor supply were physically nearer each other because of a denser population. Since many of the underlying factors favored a higher propensity for German women above the school age to be in the labor force, one is naturally surprised to discover that it was much the same after both had been adjusted for unpaid farm women over 24. That the German propensity was not higher may be due to my, possibly excessive, deduction from the German statistics of unpaid farm family workers 25 and older, though there is no real suggestion of

such an excessive deduction. The explanation may well be that on the whole the underlying factors just mentioned are not *fundamentally* different for the urban societies of western countries. Indeed the lack of such fundamental differences may be more significant for numerical labor force propensities than any differences in political organization.³⁰

7 THE AMERICAN LABOR FORCE IN WORLD WAR I (With Some British and German Comparisons)

It has been rather generally accepted that during the first World War net additions to the total labor force in the United States had extensively replaced the military withdrawals from the civilian labor force. The National Industrial Conference Board puts the monthly average of negatively unemployed at two million for 1917, three million for 1918, and nearly one million for 1919, describing 'negatively unemployed' as wartime additions to the labor force in excess of the normal growth.³¹

My own estimates do not show any such additions, but my method of estimating the labor force does not guarantee to reflect the short-period dynamics of the female labor market (see the comparison in Chart 2 of my female labor force estimates with those of the 1940-43 monthly poll). Some such net additions may possibly have been made during the first World War, and I have reached no final conclusions on the question. Nevertheless, two tentative conclusions can be formed with some degree of confidence. First, negative unemployment, if it occurred, was probably not as large as the Conference Board estimates. Second, the Board's figures on employment and labor force cannot be used to support even the existence of negative unemployment in World War I, much less the amount it estimates. The Board was, to be sure, handicapped by lack of data. Some of the lacunae could have been filled only by most painstaking research; others could not have been filled at all. For some purposes, the measures the Board used to fill the lacunae may be moderately satisfactory. But for the purpose of isolating the net additions re-

³⁰ Labor force propensities in 1939 were not, as a matter of fact, appreciably higher for age groups 18 and older than were the propensities revealed by the German census of 1925. Propensities of girls 14-19, however, do rise greatly. Propensities of men and women 60 and older decline sharply.

³¹ *Economic Almanac for 1942-1943* (p. 154): "Negative unemployment arises during periods of high industrial activity when there are persons at work who are not ordinarily counted as members of the labor force."