

IN THIS ISSUE

IN the ten years since an article on "Mental Hygiene and Socio-Environmental Factors" by R. H. Felix and R. V. Bowers was published in the *Quarterly*, the relation of social stress to the occurrence of mental disorders has been the subject of considerable research. Last summer Professor George Rosen, historian, sociologist, and public health physician, delivered an erudite paper tracing the development of the idea that social stress might favor the occurrence of mental disorders from the Age of Enlightenment until today. Such an analysis of the way in which a particular kind of hypothesis has developed can be of aid to the investigator. It also can be of help to those who follow the sequence of efforts to validate the hypothesis. Dr. Rosen's paper is printed in this issue.

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Sickness surveys in which people are asked to report any ill health experienced during some preceding period of time are the only sources of information on morbidity of all types and all degrees of severity. The numbers of such surveys have been increasing in recent years, and much attention has been given to the effect of different methods of questioning on the comparability of data from different inquiries and on completeness of reporting. Individuals differ in their attitudes toward what constitutes illness and disability, and their responses are influenced by the types of questions which are asked. In the article "Some Problems in the Collection and Analysis of Morbidity Data Obtained from Sample Surveys," Ann Cartwright gives a detailed description of the

method of questioning used in a survey of sickness in London and compares the results with those obtained in another English survey.

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An article "A Demographic Aspect of Interstate Variations in American Fertility, 1800-1860," by H. Yuan T'ien throws light on the correlation that once existed between sex ratios and fertility ratios in the thinly populated frontier states as compared with the larger settled states of the Atlantic Seaboard. The author's hypothesis was that "the higher the sex ratio (the lower the age at marriage for females and the higher the proportion of females married), the higher the fertility." The hypothesis is partially sustained for the period considered, using states as units. The sex composition of the nation as a whole did not change much during this period, however, so this factor could not explain the declines in national fertility ratios during this period.

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The changing levels and differential patterns of childlessness are matters of much concern to students of demographic and medical problems. This issue contains a paper on this subject entitled "Demographic and Social Aspects of Childlessness: Census Data," by Wilson H. Grabill and Paul C. Glick. It presents available census data on trends and differentials in proportions of women reporting that they had never borne a child. The data are analyzed by such factors as age, color, detailed marital status, duration of marriage, labor force status, educational attainment of the woman, and occupation and income of the husband. The writers state that to their knowledge, "this is the first time that census data on childlessness have been brought together in a report dealing with that topic alone."