

**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS  
AFFECTING MORTALITY**

**Volume V: Surveys of Research in the Social Sciences**

**BERNARD BEN JAMIN**

The Hague, Mouton and Co., 1965, x + 88 pp., 1965

The series to which this volume belongs is intended to publish surveys of current research on specific topics and is addressed to a multidisciplinary audience.

The author of the present volume has set himself (or possibly has had forced upon him) the difficult task of covering a wide range of research method and content in a book of less than 100 pages. Superficiality, sometimes sufficient to be misleading, is an almost inevitable consequence of such an endeavor. The author regrets that disease falls most unevenly on mankind and is deeply committed to all reasonable attempts to correct this. In combining this most understandable concern with briefly presented factual evidence for the problems and their solution, however, he occasionally resorts to the mistreatment of cause and effect relationships which he so clearly condemns in his introductory section.

To this reviewer the most useful parts of the book are the first six and last two sections, which deal with the measurement of social and economic factors. These sections give an excellent account of some highly sophisticated attempts (including one by Benjamin) to refine the lump of social ore into its closely bound components. The book is worth reading for these sections alone.

The section on nutrition is poor, both in the choice of statistical evidence and in the discussion of nutritional diseases. The section

on perinatal mortality might better have included infant mortality in its title since the discussion is by no means restricted to perinatal mortality. The results of excessive brevity are clearly evident in this section from which, for example, the relevant work of Baird and his colleagues in Aberdeen is entirely omitted. Similarly, in the section on the availability of medical services, the cursory discussion leaves the reader with the impression that the removal of economic barriers is all that is needed to achieve ideal provision and use of health services.

As a source of examples of research into the socioeconomic determinants of mortality, this book serves a useful purpose. That it is not a comprehensive and critical review of research may be as much the fault of the editorial committee as of the author.

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