THE "BABY BLUES" — A CULTURAL PHENOMENON?
A Preliminary Report
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This interesting study suggests that "baby blues" (i.e., "postpartum blues") is a phenomenon unique to western culture, and that it may be related to cultural factors peculiar to the "civilized" world. The study reports that postpartum depression seems to occur much less frequently in "traditional" societies.

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One difficulty encountered by many mothers after childbirth is the occurrence of postpartum depression. However, the nature of this problem — as a disease and as an illness — remains unclear. Even the term "postpartum depression" has been applied rather imprecisely to include both mild, transient forms of depression which are quite common in the first postpartum days, as well as the more severe psychotic reactions which are quite rare.

By reading women’s magazines and listening to "folk talk" of new mothers concerning childbirth, it is clear that there is great interest in the "baby blues," or "postpartum blues." Still, the medical and psychiatric literature reflects a preoccupation with more severe postpartum psychosis. Psychological research has looked at psychosocial factors such as the number and spacing of children, age, marital relationship, and psychiatric history for causes. These studies have tended to focus on personality problems as measured through tests identifying "depression," "anxiety," "tender-mindedness," etc. Few studies have actually observed behavior, or interpreted the results of psychological tests, in the context of the wider social system of the family or community. Much of the data has been gathered in the hospital prior to release, and as a result we know very little about postpartum reactions outside institutions.