

analytical arguments unless she can organically tease them from her novelistic narrative. She consistently provides a wealth of detail, at times bordering on extraneous but always helping to paint vivid scenes—"I lean back in my chair, tipping it up on two legs. Uncomfortable in this new balance, I ease the front legs back down" (p. 192)—that demonstrate how McClusky exceeds the models she cites, practicing narrativity in a uniquely stringent sense.

One of the most difficult challenges authors of issue-specific ethnographies face is to provide adequate background, contextualization, and complexity; in this regard, McClusky's approach contends admirably. Indeed, readers learn as much about Mayan Belizean ethnic identity and language use, child rearing, hand washing of clothes, and tortilla making—not to mention uncomfortable moments participant-observers face—as we do about violent encounters between men and women. Because of this richness, the monograph would be most valuable for introducing beginning anthropology students or lay readers to how intimate and vivid ethnography can be. The book's final ethnographic chapter, "Traveling Spirits," chronicles the author's participation in a funeral for a woman who, we learn, had a contentious relationship with her daughter-in-law. For the first 24 pages of the chapter, critical readers might appreciate all we learn about Mopan funeral practices but wonder what, if anything, the events so carefully narrated have to do with the work's focus on domestic violence. It comes as a pleasurable discovery, then, when in the analysis section we realize that the reason the dead woman's son once struck his wife cannot be grasped without understanding child-fostering practices and related conflicts between the two women. When the dead woman's grandchildren experience health threats after her death, we realize that she is "calling" the children to be with her in death, again for reasons tied to the unresolved issues between the deceased mother-in-law and living daughter-in-law and the son's violent behavior in the face of these conflicts. This is a level of complexity and nuance that only

ethnography can bring to an exploration of interpersonal violence.

One hesitates to criticize ethnography as well crafted and rich as this, and yet there are ways in which McClusky's modest, stalwart particularism leads her to overlook the ethnological significance of her case. Just three examples may illustrate the point. First, anthropological literature on domestic violence cited in McClusky's bibliography discusses a significant cross-cultural phenomenon some call the "token-torturer," the mother-in-law who incites or is complicit in a son's beating of his wife. The mother-in-law is a "token" because she represents and reproduces patriarchal oppression of women as she achieves greater status and power through age. McClusky's treatment eloquently grounds patterns of violence linked to mothers-in-law in Mopan Mayan concepts of *tsik* (respect) and *naab'l* (the soul), but she never acknowledges how the Mopan case might fit into broader, cross-cultural patterns. Second, McClusky underlines how violent behavior might be exacerbated by young women's "rebellion" around issues such as arranged patrilocal marriage, double standards for marital fidelity, expectations around work, and freedom to travel. Although she again draws from broader Mayan literature in analyzing such rebellions, at no time does she seek to relate them to rapid shifts in gender roles sweeping nearly all of the world's societies and the increasing tensions, insecurities, and violence that some authors are beginning to associate with diverse women's movements and concomitant gender transformations. Finally, and perhaps most significant, McClusky finds that as women age and gain status, "abusive husbands in the village apparently 'stop feeling jealous' as they get older and subsequently stop hitting their wives" (p. 169). Such a finding flies directly in the face of the received wisdom in most Western industrial societies that domestic violence inherently worsens with time and that violent men's recidivism is inevitable. Because developing countries tend all too easily to incorporate such "facts" from more developed nations into their own institutional response strategies, the significance of McClusky's

counterexample, along with others from the cross-cultural record, deserves to be underlined more forcefully.

In her introduction, McClusky recounts being told that she would never get funding to study domestic violence, because it is a "closed topic" (p. 7). She objects, systematically dismissing reasons she believes such violence might be so viewed: It is not exotic enough, it is "too ugly" (p. 8), it is too close to home. I am struck, however, that in a work otherwise so epistemologically honest the author overlooks a central reason partner violence might be viewed as a closed topic: Acts that occur behind closed doors, that are linked to anger, pain, and shame, are often simply not accessible to participant-observers for firsthand study. In fact, as the book's subtitle suggests, this work analyzes *stories* about domestic violence—and only women's stories—for McClusky never witnessed the behavior that forms her topic. Critical exploration of the elusiveness of interpersonal violence as a subject of study would have enhanced this already worthy contribution.

Stress and Resilience: The Social Context of Reproduction in Central Harlem. *Leith Mullings and Alaka Wali.* New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2001. 210 pp., tables, appendix, references, index.

REBECCA L. UPTON

University of Michigan and DePauw University

At first glance *Stress and Resilience* by Leith Mullings and Alaka Wali could be understood as a contemporary reproductive health-related revision of Carol Stack's work on networks and family among African American women. But the ethnographic and statistical data that Mullings and Wali present offer a much more complex and holistic view into the connections between health and social and reproductive life. Theirs is an attempt to seek further understanding of the strategies and structural components of health care in the United States and to examine the constructed concept of health itself in the context of Harlem. Far more than an investigation into how strategies operate

and women negotiate their health and reproductive status, Mullings and Wali's book provides an analysis of the various implications of those strategies and suggests a means of understanding the multiplicative aspects of race, gender, and health.

Research was supported by the Centers for Disease Control through an initiative focused on the prevention of chronic illness and reduction of high infant mortality among African Americans. Using ethnographic methods to complement the vast statistical data that they compile on African American women's health, Mullings and Wali examine the social conditions that influence and are influenced by women's health status. Most importantly, they attempt to address the question of why infant mortality statistics remain consistently higher in the African American community than in other ethnic and racial groups in the United States, even among college-educated women.

The authors gathered their ethnographic data through intensive participant-observation and longitudinal case studies, and they weave those data throughout the text in vignettes that complement the more quantitative elements. One remains acutely aware, however, that the book was prepared as part of a final report to the CDC funding agency. A key component to their research was an emphasis on the workplace and the attention given by employers to women's health issues.

Reproductive health is a central concern not just for women who bear children. It is an issue that affects the children they bear and the communities in which reproductive health care is situated. In much the same manner that educational levels and access to education and resources affect community well being, access to reproductive health care also can be seen as tied to a wide range of social concerns. A higher level of educational attainment is often associated with higher use of contraception, and demographers and health care researchers in particular often use education as a proxy measure for "health." What Mullings and Wali so aptly point out is that researchers should consider more fully the real structural elements that both facilitate

and impede access to education and health care. By highlighting these mechanisms and recognizing that "health" itself is a social construction, researchers are better equipped to address a variety of social problems among African American communities.

Although seemingly intended primarily for research and public health communities, *Stress and Resilience* offers a unique example of in-depth ethnographic research and demonstrates how involved researchers can be in the daily lives of study participants. Mullings and Wali offer a direct challenge to quantitative models in health care, their narratives and descriptions of study participants pointing out that it is only through listening and observing at a local, everyday level that those interested in workplace policies will best understand the implications of health care plans and strategies. Reproductive health is not just about women; it is about networks, communities, and the structures (such as occupational settings) in which these are negotiated. Although Mullings and Wali's attention to the topic of male health issues remains somewhat limited in this particular account, the stage is set for future research projects.

Mullings and Wali finish with a brief discussion of what they have termed the "Sojourner Syndrome." They emphasize that African American women have long dealt with a triple burden of gender, race, and health problems and suggest that Sojourner Truth's own, larger-than-life presence through the decades has fostered kinds of coping strategies—ones emphasizing agency—to ensure the successful, literal reproduction of the black community. The Sojourner Syndrome, then, is a means of describing the survival strategies that the authors have documented among black women in multiple contexts. Yet, ironically, what is clear from their research is that the syndrome and the survival strategies it generates are the source of continued health strains embodied by black women—women are literally laboring under the Sojourner Syndrome.

It is a bit frustrating, after having read such detailed ethnographic data and pouring over numerous statistical tables, to be left with a summary of less

than one page. Readers are offered little, for example, in the way of explanation of how recognition of the Sojourner Syndrome might help further the future research that the authors call for throughout the text. Nor is there any discussion of how its use might help to disentangle various perceptions of race, health, and gender in the United States. The authors are forthcoming, however, in their admission that their own future work will emerge from their current research, and one can hope that more theoretically complex analysis ensues.

The monograph is a bridge between the public health reports documenting the ethnographers' findings and future research into consistent disproportionately high rates of infant mortality in African American communities. It provides a carefully documented look at the interstitial spaces between women's active negotiation of their own and their children's health and welfare and the resultant consequences of those strategies.

Seldom Ask, Never Tell: Labor and Discourse in Appalachia. Anita Puckett. Oxford. Oxford University Press, 2000. xv + 309 pp., figures, tables, appendices, notes, references, index.

ALLEN W. BATTEAU
Wayne State University

The Appalachian Mountain People have in recent years been a rich source of stimulus for theoretical development in anthropology, political science, sociology, and linguistics. For more than a hundred years the Mountain People have been an internalized Other, unquestionably apart ("*In*, but not *of* America," in William G. Frost's phrasing ["Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains," *Atlantic Monthly* 83:311–319, 1899]), yet lacking most of the more familiar markers of Otherness, such as distinctive complexion, religion, or nationality. The Mountain People reveal their Otherness most noticeably in their speech. In *Seldom Ask, Never Tell*, Anita Puckett examines the linguistic constructions through which the Mountain People construct a local social and economic system that is set apart yet in ongoing