

The committee reviewed twenty-one books nominated for the 2021 Sociology of Law Distinguished Book Award evaluating them for theoretical sophistication, empirical strength, methodological rigor, and overall readability. Not only was the committee struck by the impressive diversity of books nominated, but by the strength of the books' contribution to the sociology of law. To say that this was a difficult decision would be an understatement. Numerous books were truly exceptional--our field is thriving! The committee unanimously chose two superlative books as co-winners of the Distinguished Book Award: Swethaa Ballakrishnen's *Accidental Feminism: Gender Parity and Selective Mobility among India's Professional Elite* (Princeton University Press: 2021) and Jennifer Carlson's *Policing the Second Amendment: Guns, Law Enforcement, and the Politics of Race* (Princeton University Press: 2020).

Swethaa Ballakrishnen, *Accidental Feminism: Gender Parity and Selective Mobility among India's Professional Elite*

Swethaa Ballakrishnen's *Accidental Feminism* asks a central question in the study of law: what are the conditions under which the legal profession can become gender equitable? To answer the question, Ballakrishnen uses a targeted research design to answer the puzzle of why some elite Indian legal industries have achieved gender parity (commercial law firms) and why others have not (traditional litigation firms and management consultancies). Through a combination of ethnographic and interview data, the book reports the surprising finding that India's elite law firms' relative gender equity did not emerge from purposeful attempts to diversify, but rather from contingent structural circumstances around the development of a new industry--commercial law. Not beholden to path-dependent hierarchies that undermine gender parity in other elite professions, the lawyers who set up India's elite commercial law firms relied on a combination of gender-diverse law schools to recruit junior lawyers, a profession directed toward transactional work, and a belief that their global client base would demand gender diversity, even though they, themselves, had no special desire to do so. Ballakrishnen draws on fieldwork from the Global South and an intersectional feminist perspective to answer questions of abiding concern to organizational sociologists and sociologists of the legal profession. Through the "accidentally feminist" case of elite Indian law firms, she illuminates how contingent circumstances facilitate gender parity, underscoring the difficulty of achieving gender parity in established industries even through concerted mobilization to make firms more equitable. In all of these qualities, *Accidental Feminism* has important implications for understanding why gender inequality is so intractable, even in elite industries that espouse progressive values.

Jennifer Carlson, *Policing the Second Amendment: Guns, Law Enforcement, and the Politics of Race*

How do American police officers view civilian gun ownership and how do these views play into how gun owners are policed? In answering these questions, Jennifer Carlson's *Policing the Second Amendment: Guns, Law Enforcement, and the Politics of Race* provides a compelling account of the relationship between police officers and guns, shedding new light on a foundational sociological question: what are the conditions under which violence is legitimized? For a country like the United States that has long devolved legal capacity for violence to its population through the right of citizens to bear arms, Carlson shows that understanding how violence is legitimated often hinges on understanding *whose* violence is at issue. Specifically, the book shows how America's pernicious racial history is central to understanding when officers

see guns as either helpful or harmful, interpreting Black gun ownership as threatening, and white gun ownership as protective, compelling ever-greater investment in the police's capacity for violence. As a consequence, *Policing the Second Amendment* shows how even though citizens have equal rights under the Second Amendment, those rights in practice are highly contextualized by racial and political contexts, undermining equality. The book relies on multiple data sources, including interviews with difficult-to-access populations (police chiefs in three states), extensive historical work about a difficult-to-access organization (the National Rifle Association), and observation of state gun boards. Carlson's findings--at once highly readable and intellectually compelling--shed new light on core sociolegal questions about police-citizen relationships, rights in action, and racialized police violence. *Policing the Second Amendment* has clear and crucial implications for America's ongoing reckoning with police violence against Black Americans and the causes and consequences of differential policing.