

Congratulations to the 2019 SWS Feminist Mentoring Award Winners, Manisha Desai and Paula England!



Photo of Manisha Desai

Photo of Paula England

The SWS Feminist Mentoring Award was established in 1990 to honor an SWS Member who is an outstanding feminist mentor. While the word “mentoring” is commonly used to describe a faculty-student relationship, this award has shown the breadth of ways that feminists do mentoring. In establishing the award, SWS recognized that feminist mentoring is an important and concrete way to encourage feminist scholarship.

This year’s Feminist Mentoring Award Subcommittee included Shelley Correll (Subcommittee Co-Chair), Patti Giuffre (Subcommittee Co-Chair), Laura E. Simon, and Courtney Caviness. The Subcommittee decided that both Manisha Desai and Paula England will be the SWS 2019 Feminist Mentoring Award Winners. Koyel Khan was the Central Nominator for Manisha Desai and Krystale E. Littlejohn was the Central Nominator for Paula England.

Manisha Desai is the Head of Sociology and Professor of Sociology and Asian and Asian American Studies at the University of Connecticut. Her research and teaching interests include Gender and Globalization, Transnational Feminisms, Human Rights movements, and Contemporary Indian Society. She has just returned from 8 months of ethnographic field work in India, funded by the American Institute of India Studies, studying the changing dynamics of four decades of feminist activism against gender based violence. Her most recent book was *Subaltern Movements in India: The Gendered Geography of Struggles Against Neoliberal Development* (Routledge 2016). She has served in many leadership positions in the profession, including President of SWS.

As a scholar activist, she has been involved in advocacy and activism around social and gender justice issues at the United Nations, as SWS’s Representative to its Economic and Social Council, at the World Social Forum, and US Social Forum, among other sites. She serves on the Expert Committee of Everywoman Everywhere, International Commission of Violence Against Women and Girls, that has recently launched a Global Treaty to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

Many of Manisha Desai's mentees expressed how inspiring Manisha has been, and letters came from Shweta Majumdar Adur, Christobel Asiedu, Barret Katuna, Daniela Jauk, Takiyah D. Harper-Shipman, Cynthia Melendez Montoya, Alexander Holmgren, Caner Hazar, Chriss Sneed, and Ruth Marleen Hernández. Here are some examples that Koyel Khan collected of what Manisha's mentees had to say:

Ruth Marleen Hernández comments, *"With these experiences in mind, I vow to approach my work with the same dignity and awareness Dr. Desai demonstrates. As a WOC in academia, I know my successes are possible due to the extraordinarily efforts of women before me, and for me, Dr. Desai is a reminder of these efforts."*

Daniela Jauk states, *"I have found that kind of "lived solidarity" in senior colleagues only on very rare occasions. Manisha has walked the walk, not only talked the talk, in feminist mentoring, and she profoundly inspires me to pay it forward in similar ways."*

In the words of Chriss Sneed, *"Often, her mentorship reaches beyond office hours and yet, Dr. Desai graciously makes room for more inquisitive minds. This is evident in the fact that almost all graduate students in our department frequently admit that they have visited her office and received words of wisdom and guidance, even though they aren't her 'official' advisees. I can only hope that I will be able to provide one fourth of the passionate mentorship that Dr. Desai offers her students."*

Paula England is the Silver Professor of Sociology at New York University. She is the author of two books, *Households, Employment, and Gender* and *Comparable Worth*, and over 100 articles. For decades, her research focused on occupational sex segregation, the sex gap in pay, and the effects of motherhood on women's pay. Recently, she has turned to research on contraception, nonmarital births, and sexualities. She is the winner of the American Sociological Association's 1999 Jessie Bernard award for career contributions to scholarship on gender, the 2010 Distinguished Career award from the Family Section of ASA, and the Population Association of America's Harriet B. Presser Award for research on gender and demography. In 2015, she was President of the American Sociological Association. In 2018, she was elected to the National Academy of Sciences.

Here are some highlights from Paula England's nomination material that Krystale E. Littlejohn collected from Michelle Budig, Christine Williams, Jessie Ford, Eman Abdelhadi, along with additional letters from Jonathan Bearak, Mónica L. Caudillo, Emily Fitzgibbons Shafer, Elizabeth McClintock, Emma Mishel, Joanna Reed, Shelly Ronen, and Liana Sayer:

Mónica L. Caudillo shared: *"During my time as a graduate student, Paula always made me feel that I had "what it takes" to be a successful scholar. Her emotional support and patience were fundamental to help me get through the hardest months in the doctoral program, during which I sometimes doubted my own vocation and qualifications. She always knew how to listen to my concerns and offered wise and insightful advice, while at the same time making me feel that I had agency to shape my career and professional opportunities in any way I decided."*

Krystale E. Littlejohn shares a comment from one of Paula England's mentee's which demonstrates how having Paula in your corner literally results in lifelong support. She said, *"Paula had an enormous impact on my career. She has been my stalwart supporter since I met her in 1986, my first year as an assistant professor." Indeed, she says, "From our first meeting, I knew I had an ally and an advocate as well as an interlocutor. She invited me to write a chapter in a book, join the editorial board of the ASR, and participate in seminars and panels she organized. Pretty much any time something good happened early in my career, Paula was somehow involved. It was like having a guardian angel looking over me. She is the model of a feminist mentor, one I have tried to copy and pass forward to the young feminist scholars I meet. I can think of no one who is more deserving of this award."*

Elizabeth McClintock wrote, *"Another of Paula's ex-students and I often invoke Paula's wisdom even in her absence, conjuring up her calm pragmatism and incremental, logical approach to problem solving through our shared expression, "What would Paula do?" This thought experiment usually helps us resolve our dilemma—by asking how Paula would tackle a given challenge, we are better able to think through the situation ourselves."*

We hope you will join us in congratulating both Manisha Desai and Paula England and that you will make plans to join us for the 2019 SWS Awards Reception to be held on Sunday, August 11, 2019 starting at 6:30 pm at the Hilton Midtown, New York, NY. More details will come soon regarding Summer 2019 Meeting Registration.