

## Can We All Get Along? The Arc of Paula D. McClain's Career Shows That We Can

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### INTRODUCTION

The life, career, and scholarship of political scientist Paula Denise McClain has tracked some of the most important highs—and lows—in America's racial history. She was born at a time when African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities regularly experienced formal, and often violent, discrimination and marginalization. As a child of the Civil Rights Movement, she spent her formative years pursuing graduate education during an era when racial and ethnic minorities had begun to make modest but appreciable gains in the public and private sectors. McClain was part of this pivotal trend, having earned her PhD from Howard University, then climbing the faculty ranks at several prestigious political science departments, including those at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Arizona State University, the University of Virginia, and Duke University.

Her tenure at each of those institutions has been nothing short of breathtakingly productive, thoroughly imaginative, and fiercely trailblazing. From her early work on crime, homicide, and politics in the Black community, to her pioneering scholarship

on inter-group conflict and cooperation in politics, to her most recent work on tripartite inter-group relations in the American South, McClain continues to be a sentinel political scientist, always alert to emerging trends that demand rigorous theoretical explanation and substantial empirical backing—an intellectual disposition and commitment to academic excellence that was recognized by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which inducted her as one of its Fellows in 2014.

At each stage in her distinguished research career, McClain has earned accolades, promotions, and greater influence over our discipline. As two examples of this, consider her service as president of the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) and the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS), which underlie another exceptional trait that she has demonstrated over the years—leadership. She has used this trait to ensure the advancement of a more racially and ethnically inclusive discipline of political science. Indeed, it is her gift for leading in this capacity that positioned her for the highly visible role as dean of the Graduate School and vice provost for Graduate Education at Duke University—a role requiring vision, fearlessness, and steadfast commitment. For those that know her well, each of those strengths is vintage Paula McClain.



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As part of the more inclusive political science that McClain has helped to create, she has also presided over—and helped to lead—a steady increase in the racial and ethnic diversity of our discipline. Undoubtedly, she has played an instrumental role in promoting and advancing this diversity, as evidenced by the careers of the authors of this article, each of whom is proud to be counted as part of her intellectual progeny. (We are not the only ones, by the way; there exist innumerable others.) This hands-on mentoring style comes from her own experience. As McClain will readily attest, she is the product of active and effective mentoring.

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Her influences include the late Harold M. Rose, a renowned urban geographer at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, who crossed disciplinary boundaries to mentor the young McClain. She has also benefited from the wisdom of important luminaries within political science, including Jewel Prestage, Lucius Barker, Matthew Holden, Michael Preston, Hanes Walton, Jr., and Ted Lowi. In equal measure, her career has been shaped by her contemporaries, such as James L. Gibson, John Garcia, Dianne M. Pinderhughes, Jennifer Hochschild, Robert C. Smith, and many others, who have been a source of encouragement and support.

We see McClain's professional trajectory as emblematic of many things that are wonderful and promising about our discipline. This is, certainly, most clearly reflected in McClain's stewardship of the Ralph Bunche Summer Institute (RBSI), which she has directed since 1995, when she was still on the faculty of the University of Virginia. For those political scientists with any link or exposure to RBSI—either as a participant, instructor, or graduate student recruiter—it is hard to miss the ripple effects that McClain's leadership in this capacity has produced. Like McClain, RBSI plays several key roles in our discipline: it trains and positions undergraduate students of color for entry into competitive doctoral programs and careers in political science; it professionalizes and connects all minority graduate students to leading faculty engaged in the study of race, ethnicity, and politics; and, it forges deeper and broader professional networks between each of these stakeholders. In this way, RBSI acknowledges the many barriers that continue to hinder many aspiring and practicing political scientists of color from building long and active research careers—and it actively serves to address those challenges.

In the pages that follow, we present a compendium of the extraordinary life and career of Paula D. McClain. When thinking about McClain's scholarship and eminent career, we invite you to consider and reflect on the following: Black Girl Magic (#Black-GirlMagic), a movement that was created to center and celebrate Black women's power, resilience, accomplishments, and success; and Lifting As We Climb, the motto of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, the oldest national African American organization in the United States, which emphasizes the paramount importance of elevating entire communities as

one elevates her own status. McClain epitomizes what these movements represent. She is a force in the subfield of race and ethnic politics (REP), specifically, and political science more broadly, a beloved mentor and teacher, and a remarkable leader and administrator. That the American Political Science Association (APSA) selected her to serve as president of the premier professional association of political scientists is not only well-deserved, but also timely and befitting.

#### EARLY CAREER AND TRAJECTORY

In 1977, McClain began her professional career as an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, in the Departments of Political Science and Afro-American Studies. For three years, she taught American government, public administration, research methods, and Black politics courses at the undergraduate level, and conducted research on Afro-Canadians, race and crime, and immigration. McClain published her first book, *Alienation and Resistance: The Political Behavior of Afro-Canadians* (1979), as well as several reports and articles on a range of topics including better governmental support for urban Wisconsinites, the political culture of Afro-Canadians, and immigration. She also began what would become a long-term collaboration with her mentor, Harold M. Rose, on Black homicide. Together, the two scholars won a major research grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, and with the data collected, published several reports, articles, and books that greatly contributed to scholarship in a number of disciplines.

From 1981 to 1982, McClain was a postdoctoral fellow in the Analysis Center at The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Her desire to work with graduate students led her to Arizona State University in 1982. There, as a tenured associate professor then full professor, she mentored both undergraduate and graduate students in the Department of Political Science and the School of Public Affairs, and taught classes on public administration, public policy, research methods and analysis, and race and ethnic politics. Her research on public opinion about gun control emerged out of her work on the Black homicide project with Rose.

McClain joined the Woodrow Wilson Department of Government and Foreign Affairs at the University of Virginia (UVA) in 1991 as a full professor. Claudrena Harold, Professor of African American and African Studies and History at UVA,

explains that the 1990s is often regarded as “a golden era in the history of ‘Black UVA,’” where Black Americans who attended the university “thrived intellectually, socially, and politically.” In her course “Black Fire” that centers the African American experience at UVA in the post-Civil Rights era, Harold notes that McClain is an important part of their scholarly explorations of the 1990s and that “it is impossible to tell the story of Black intellectual life at UVA without [referencing] Professor McClain.”

In 2000, McClain joined the faculty at Duke University as a professor of political science and public policy, where she continued to distinguish herself as an educator, scholar, and university administrator. At Duke, she has demonstrated a deep and abiding commitment to creating more inclusive spaces in higher education. She has played an instrumental role in developing and expanding the Race, Ethnicity, and Politics (REP) program in the Department of Political Science, making it one of the most renowned academic programs for the study of minority group politics in the country. When making the move to Duke from the University of Virginia, McClain took RBSI with her, and she has continued to serve as director of this program, which is organized in conjunction with, and supported by, APSA and funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). McClain has noted that her years of directing RBSI gave her “tremendous appreciation for the intricacies of graduate education and the need for the development of pipelines in many disciplines.” From 2004 to 2012, she was co-director—alongside Kerry L. Haynie—of Duke's Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Social Sciences (REGSS).

In terms of service to the institution, McClain has been an active member of numerous high-level committees at Duke. She served at the helm of the Appointments, Promotions and Tenure committee, and in 2007 was elected chair of the Academic Council at Duke University, a position she held until 2009. She was only the third woman, and first African American, to be elected to this position. In true form, as has been demonstrated by her passion for hard work and excellence over the years, McClain continued to make noteworthy strides in diversifying Duke's leadership. In 2012, she was appointed dean of The Graduate School and vice provost for Graduate Education. This was a significant appointment because she was the



first African American to serve as a dean of one of Duke's schools. Then-president Richard H. Brodhead described McClain as "a distinguished scholar and outstanding university citizen" who believes in the importance of graduate education and has shown great concern for the well-being of individual students. That same year, she received the Duke University Blue Ribbon Diversity Award. McClain had previously been acknowledged for being an exceptional mentor to students at Duke University. She was nominated for, and received, the Dean's Award for Excellence in Mentoring in 2010.

What is clear from McClain's professional trajectory is that, because of her remarkable scholarly and administrative accomplishments, she has been recruited to increasingly higher-ranked departments over the years. This meant that she had significant opportunities to participate in efforts to promote institutional reform, as well as mentor and teach students in both undergraduate and graduate programs.

#### RESEARCH AGENDAS: FROM URBAN POLITICS TO RACE, ETHNICITY, AND POLITICS

Over the course of her career, the emphasis and direction of McClain's research agenda has shifted. Some of the shifts are attributable to the changing norms of the discipline. For example, while there is a general expectation in the discipline that scholars will revisit, and undertake further research on their dissertation projects, McClain was strongly encouraged to shift away from the topic that informed her field-based dissertation and first book on the politics of Afro-Canadians. At other points, McClain reoriented her research with the purposeful intent of joining scholars who sought to move the discipline in a direction that would allow it to consider more carefully the politicized identity, political attitudes, behaviors, and policy preferences of people of color. Still, at times, McClain's research questions approached her serendipitously. Overall, a mainstay of McClain's research agenda has been her desire to be one of, if not, the first to test a particular hypothesis; this motivation to innovate in the discipline is rooted in advice she received from her mentor, Harold M. Rose, who counseled: "Do not be the forty-seventh person testing the same hypothesis, be the first." Indeed, contemporary scholars of political science are now returning to some of the topics McClain began testing decades

ago—Blacks in the diaspora, the public's preferences and perceptions of gun regulation, and inter-group relations in the face of dynamic demographic shifts.

#### Urban Politics

McClain has always produced work that touches on issues that speak to the lives of marginalized communities, particularly Black Americans and Latinx communities. While political scientists are now coming to (re)focus their research on the role of policing, surveillance, and violence in Black communities, these themes were prevalent in McClain's earliest works. Her published record in the area of urban politics homed in on the causes and effects of homicide, as she attempted to ascertain who was most likely to be an offender or a victim of homicide. Embracing an intersectional approach to studying this research question, McClain focused on Black women in some instances, and at other times on young Black men—as she was cognizant of the fact that interlocking systems of disadvantage influence groups of Black people differently.

McClain's second monograph about the effects of homicide on Black Americans in urban areas—*Race, Place, and Risk: Black Homicide in Urban America*, coauthored with Harold M. Rose and published in 1990—is a prominent publication on this topic. This book not only highlights the structural nature of inequality that may provoke or produce violence in Black communities, but also examines environmentally-relevant dynamics affecting Black communities, the geography of opportunity (for example, location or dislocation of gainful employment), political institutions, and social safety net policies. While some scholars have focused prominently on the behavior and attitudes of Blacks as predominant explanations for homicide rates in Black communities, McClain and Rose also described the ways in which local, state, and federal policies served to produce and amplify, but almost never mitigate, the challenges that may have produced conditions for tragic losses of Black lives. *Race, Place, and Risk* won the National Conference of Black Political Scientists' 1995 Best Book Award for previously published work that made "a substantial and continuing contribution" to the discipline.

McClain's research was nuanced in several respects. First, it was multi-methodological. In addition to relying on official statistics (including data from the FBI and US Census), as well as original survey

data, McClain became more proximate to the issues at the center of research by doing field work in her early career, incorporating ethnographic data from a sabbatical spent working with the Phoenix Police Department's Homicide Division. Second, at that time, it was common for scholars of urban politics to develop theories, test hypotheses, and put forward conclusions based on data from one city. In contrast, McClain chose to cast a wider net, collecting time series data from multiple cities around the United States. Rather than making conclusions based on a cross-section of time, this work picked up on the influence of exogenous shocks—for example, the crack epidemic, the elimination of manufacturing jobs in urban areas, and the full onslaught of neoliberal policies of the Reagan-Bush era—on Black communities.

McClain is a scholar who understands that major changes in a society's political-economy, social norms, and demography often render past research conclusions moot. Consequently, her work has always been in the vanguard of evaluating new queries across US cities. For instance, rather than simply focusing on Black-Latinx relations in localities where these populations have interacted for decades—namely New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago—she was at the forefront of examining these relationships in "new destinations" like North Carolina; and still, in this area of her research agenda, it was multi-city analysis that produced works which evidence the influence of place and context on inter-group relations.

#### Public Policy

McClain's first book, *Alienation and Resistance: The Political Behavior of Afro-Canadians* (1979), stemmed from her dissertation research on Afro-Canadians and their influence on the Canadian political system. However, per the suggestion of Harold M. Rose, she directed her scholarly pursuits beyond the scope of Afro-Canadian politics, and her research would shift and assume a lens focused more on race, context (both geographic and environmental), and public policy in American politics. Rose's background in geography is quite evident in its imprint on McClain's research. Her early studies focused on urban violence, gun regulation, and homicide (1982–1992). McClain (1982; 1982–1983a; 1982–1983b) analyzed the circumstances of violence among Black Americans, including examining the effects of gun violence in urban

areas by considering the characteristics of violent perpetrators, neighborhood environment, and perceptions of risk in Black Americans' victimization, and by assessing their views about gun regulation policies.

As a consequence of early-twentieth century migratory patterns, during the 1980s and 1990s, many urban contexts across the United States had become predominately-racial and ethnic minority (Black) communities. Tracing the effects of race on politics in these areas, McClain's research inquiries also focused more on the influence that these groups (as elites and masses) could bear on setting political agendas and public policy outcomes that reflected their respective communal concerns (McClain 1990 and 1993). During this period, many American cities were plagued by poverty and violence, at a time when politicians were debating whether public policies at the federal and/or local level could curb urban decay, or whether change rested in the (mis)behavior of urban, mostly racial and ethnic minority, residents.

In a 30-year review of urban policies in an *Urban Affairs Review* (1995) article, McClain established what she referred to as the "politics of homicide," or the image and bifurcation of urban residents into Black perpetrators/criminals and White victims. In other words, based upon historic tropes of Black-White relations in the United States, White victimization (purportedly at the hands of Black criminals) influenced public policies in urban contexts, to the extent of mischaracterizing urban violence and homicide that was, in fact, a public health crisis disproportionately affecting Blacks. These politics also characterized urban areas as dangerous spaces, for which political actors (de)legitimated the allocation of resources to address social woes, with White group interests often prevailing to the detriment of Black urbania.

McClain's research directed attention to the history-driven, political effects of racial dynamics and their role in creating urban-concentrated and systemic outcomes of poverty, segregation, and unemployment, which all contributed to other phenomena, like urban violence. Using these characterizations to their political advantage, (White) political actors further politicized and exploited race to produce electoral wins and sustain political power, often leaving the political concerns of racial and ethnic minorities unanswered. Assessing longitudinal, contextual, and demographic

shifts across the country, McClain's work encompassed a geographic and comparative analysis of the effects of propinquity, human capital, and economic resources on intergroup and, principally, interracial relations (whether coalitional or competitive) and majority versus minority or minority versus minority (racial) group power. (see also McClain and Karnig 1990; McClain 1996; McClain 2006.)

McClain's broader research questions about the influence of racial and ethnic minority groups on local politics and political agendas also lent themselves to her interest in understanding the extent to which systemic structures can be changed by racial and ethnic minority groups' political mobilization, and the extent to which systems can be developed to curb racial and ethnic minority groups' electoral influence. Herewith, systemic changes to geographic boundaries also can exert diluting effects on their political power (see McClain and Stewart 1995). This earlier research on the expedient uses of race in politics, public opinion, and policy development foreshadows McClain's later, groundbreaking studies that explored the demographic upticks and shifts, and migration of a new, and larger, racialized ethnic group in Southern (American) politics—the Latinx community. This research spawned a nuanced strain of political analysis of intergroup relations in a region of the country that, theretofore (1990s), mostly functioned based on Black-White racial dynamics (McClain et al. 2006).

Overall, from the study of homicide in urban areas, to questions of agenda-setting, to questions of political influence, McClain's broad research inquiries center on the accessibility of popular sovereignty to historically-excluded and underrepresented groups. Her work also interrogates whether geographic concentration is as much an influence on political outcomes as it is in (dis)uniting political interests, due to historic and systemic factors and the context of group-related political experiences. (See also McClain and Stewart 1995 on the complexities of geography in understanding *Shaw v. Reno* 1993). Ultimately, her research illustrates how racial dynamics and geographies affect public opinion, intergroup relations, and public policies.

### Racial and Ethnic Politics

As a graduate of Howard University's Political Science Department, McClain had a deep appreciation for the importance of

research on race and ethnicity in the trajectory of the discipline. Rather than seeing race and ethnicity as an addendum to larger American politics discourse, she argued that these factors were central to devising a clear narrative about where we have been and where we are going as a nation. To this end, McClain has been the driver of a number of important interventions in the literature on racial and ethnic politics in the United States. Her early work in racial and ethnic politics, actually prefigures this area's formalization. This sustained meditation on the role of race led her to look principally at the political meanings and uses of race, when the imagined community of interracial politics did not end in coalition. For McClain, what appeared to be the end of a conversation for racial and ethnic minorities, given the limits of zero-sum competition, became an opportunity to better understand how race operates for different groups.

Some of her earliest work on race and ethnic politics was with Albert K. Karnig (1990). McClain and Karnig observed changing demographic trends around the country and found that American cities were becoming less Black and White, but Black and Latino populations were growing. They wanted to understand the nature of socioeconomic and political competition between these groups, given these changing racial dynamics. McClain and Karnig did not find evidence of inter-minority group competition in this particular project. However, in subsequent work, with Steven C. Tauber (1998), McClain did find evidence of political competition between Latinos and Whites.

McClain observed that the American South was undergoing a tremendous shift in its racial demographics due to immigration. Curious about what this would mean for the balance of power in an area that, heretofore, had no extensive experience with immigration, and where African Americans retained a numerical and political majority, McClain assembled a research team of graduate students to examine immigration trends in Durham, North Carolina. The team's first article, "Racial Distancing in a Southern City: Latino Immigrants' Views of Black Americans," published in the *Journal of Politics* in 2006, provided a dynamic way to understand barriers to forming interracial coalitions, and further demonstrated that shared minority status would not be adequate for overcoming these challenges. It is



important to note, here, that the objective of this study was not to reproduce old tropes of racist straw men. Rather, McClain and her coauthors were concerned with making sure that the discipline of political science could produce scholarship that spoke to contemporary political issues, and was unflinching in its engagement of the difficulties of forming interracial coalitions.

As a result of McClain's early intellectual investments, the South—as a site of immigration—has moved from a burgeoning area of research to a booming field for important scholarship on race and ethnic politics. After the initial *Journal of Politics* piece, other articles were published in *The DuBois Review* and the *Annual Review of Political Science*. The subsequent articles focused on inter-minority group competition between Blacks and Latinos, refining questions set forth in McClain's earlier work with her research team. Specifically, they moved the narrative focus from mass politics to elite politics, and addressed tough questions about how minority groups conceived of their racial identities. The path set by McClain, and the students she mentored, has influenced a cadre of newer scholars who see race and ethnic politics as a national issue, not simply a regional one. Whether her research focus is on immigration, municipal employment, or political competition, McClain has effectively shown how these issues, regardless of where they originate, have implications far greater than their local contexts.

McClain's work in the area of race and ethnic politics melds her impressive record of scholarship with her broader commitment to teaching, mentorship and service to the discipline. She has stated, "My hope is that REP remains a vibrant subfield in the discipline and that the remaining pockets of resistance to the study of the attitudes and behaviors of racial minority groups finally goes away... Given the changing demographics of the country, research in this area is [now] more timely and critically important to understanding the politics of the United States..." The subfield of race and ethnic politics is where it is today, in no small part, due to the efforts of McClain.

#### TRANSFORMATIVE TEXTS: SHAPING THE DISCIPLINE

McClain's dedication to scholarship and teaching intersects seamlessly through

the work she has produced in two widely-used textbooks—*Can We All Get Along?* and *American Government in Black and White*. By developing and frequently updating these books, she has made her approach to scholarship and teaching more accessible. This is of particular import, given that much of the information presented within texts on American politics has omitted essential material about the influence of race and ethnicity in American politics. Further, many of the theoretical frameworks in traditional political science research were developed by deliberately excluding various racial and ethnic minority groups. Through her work, McClain has helped to pave the way for creating a more robust framework through which scholars can examine and evaluate racial and ethnic group politics specifically, while also assessing the foundations and current realities of American politics more generally.

#### *Can We All Get Along?: Racial and Ethnic Minorities in American Politics*

When McClain and Joseph E. Stewart, Jr. first began discussions for this work in 1992, they found that there was no single text that adequately supported the teaching of a course on racial and ethnic minority politics in the United States. Much of the foundational work in this area was dedicated specifically to one racial or ethnic group and did not allow for broader, in-text comparative analysis of different groups within the U.S. political context or an examination of minority intergroup relations and perceptions. *Can We All Get Along?*, thus, became a foundational text for minority group politics courses. The book's structure and content guides students by presenting relevant historical context and introducing theoretical frameworks and research findings from many scholars in the field of race and ethnic politics, all in the broader context of two main issues: 1) race-based inequality in the face of the United States' seeming dedication to equality and freedom, and 2) racial and ethnic minority groups' strategies of coalition-building or competition as a sociopolitical response to this continuing, systemic inequality. Further, McClain's work firmly undergirds important norms within the discipline, which are to evaluate both political behavior and political institutions, and to examine the ways in which these fields influence each other. *Can We All Get Along?* incorporates data concerning the development of the political viewpoints of the four

main racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States—African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, and the Latinx community—and demonstrates the ways in which these groups influence political institutions and are incorporated into them. This text is now in its seventh edition.

#### *American Government in Black and White*

In the same way that *Can We All Get Along?* meets the significant need for a minority group politics text to guide scholars and students toward greater understanding of the circumstances and agency of these groups within the American political context, McClain and Steven C. Tauber's *American Government in Black and White* was designed for introductory-level American Politics classes. This text uses an essential approach that corrects a significant omission from many texts for these introductory courses. In this work, McClain and Tauber clearly establish that American politics cannot be adequately examined and understood without recognizing the ways in which race has influenced the development of the political, social, and economic fabric of the nation. This textbook covers all of the traditional areas of study of American government—such as political institutions, federalism, public opinion, parties, interest groups, and elections—while also demonstrating the formative and continuing influence of the tradition of exclusion as a theoretical foundation for the nation's governing structures and public opinion development. By incorporating frequently omitted data on race and ethnicity, in concert with traditional topics in American politics, McClain's work provides a strong foundation upon which students can develop their own well-informed perspectives on the American political system and how past and current events fit into that context. The fourth edition of this text was published in 2019.

In addition to the significant contributions that both of these works have made to the direction of the discipline of political science, especially in the context of the teaching of American politics, McClain's work on, and dedication to, these important, longstanding projects reflects her approach to both collaboration and mentorship. Several of her coauthors were her mentees who worked directly with her on research projects as graduate students.

## LIFTING AS SHE CLIMBS: MENTORSHIP

As monumental as McClain's contributions to research in political science have been, her role in mentoring young scholars and adding much-needed racial and ethnic diversity to the discipline has been truly invaluable. McClain has served as the director of the Ralph Bunche Summer Institute for more than 20 years, since taking over leadership of the program at the University of Virginia in 1995. Jewel L. Prestage (Southern University), a treasured colleague and mentor to McClain, co-founded RBSI with Peter Zwick (Louisiana State University) in 1986, laying critical groundwork for the program from its inception. McClain was able to build upon the foundation set by Prestage, Zwick, and others, by securing funding for RBSI from the National Science Foundation, as well as funding and additional resources from RBSI's host institutions—the University of Virginia and Duke University. Under McClain's leadership, RBSI transitioned from being a program geared toward African American undergraduates to one open to undergraduate students from any underrepresented racial or ethnic group. Since becoming the program's director, McClain has played a direct role in mentoring more than 76 scholars who participated in RBSI and later earned PhDs.

As director of RBSI, McClain teaches a graduate-level course on Race and Ethnicity in American Politics and invites colleagues to teach a course on research methods and statistical analysis. With assistance from other members of the RBSI team, program participants are guided through the process of conducting original research. Students with exceptional projects have presented in poster sessions at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. McClain also provides summer funding and travel funding to APSA's Annual Meeting to graduate students who serve as teaching assistants and mentors in RBSI. In her capacity as director of this program, McClain has facilitated unparalleled opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate political science students—opportunities which have been highly effective in strengthening the racial and ethnic diversity of the discipline, with over 20% of RBSI program participants successfully earning doctoral degrees.

McClain's success as a mentor extends far beyond her role as director of RBSI. In 2010, she secured funding from the National

Science Foundation to organize "Enhancing Research: A Workshop for Political Scientists from Underrepresented Groups," a multi-day workshop that brought dozens of early-career political scientists from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups to the campus of Duke University to learn strategies from senior scholars in the discipline for ensuring a successful career trajectory. Many participants in this important workshop are currently among the most successful mid-career political scientists in the discipline.

McClain also forged myriad fruitful mentoring relationships through her extensive work with graduate student research and teaching assistants. For example, two of her recent books, mentioned above, were coauthored with former graduate student mentees—the seventh edition of *Can We All Get Along?* (2017) was coauthored with Duke University mentee Jessica Johnson Carew (Elon University), and *American Government in Black and White* was coauthored with University of Virginia mentee Steven Tauber (University of South Florida). In addition to her role as a valued collaborator, Tauber described McClain as instrumental in shaping his pedagogical skills and teaching him about university administration. According to Tauber, to this day, he still tries to "to emulate [her] teaching, research, administration, and overall professionalism."

At Duke University, McClain assembled a team of nine graduate students (later expanded to more than a dozen graduate students), many of whom were only in their first or second year of graduate study, to work on a project examining the social and political implications of demographic shift in the American South. With this project, McClain gave many of these students their first opportunity to do academic research that led to their first peer-reviewed publication. One of these former graduate student collaborators described the project, and working with McClain, as an experience that taught her more about the research process than any other experience in graduate school or since.

Award-winning children's book author, and former University of Virginia mentee, Stacy Nyikos echoes this sentiment, describing her work with McClain as "the best learning by watching and doing" that she has yet encountered. Nyikos shared that her relationship with McClain continues to enrich her life far beyond what she ever could have learned in a classroom. The

success of McClain's mentees, and her long-term collaborative relationships, notwithstanding, are such unique testaments to her outstanding mentorship that she was bestowed an honor (by Nyikos) that few other political scientists can claim: McClain has a character named for, and modeled after, her in a children's book.

## LEADERSHIP

McClain is a visionary leader. Anyone who has met her, even in passing, knows this. As the incoming president of the American Political Science Association it probably seems that we are stating the obvious. She is a force that has elegantly disrupted the field of political science and the concept of what "American" politics includes. But, what truly distinguishes McClain as a leader is how she has perfectly balanced leadership via her scholarship and mentorship. In political science parlance, her leadership is both substantive and descriptive, which has enabled it to be truly transformational.

Today, race and ethnic politics is widely recognized as a major subfield and is well-respected in the discipline. It took the persistence of a small group of REP scholars to change what was considered the core within the subfield of American politics. This process evolved over a number of years; however, if one is to identify a single date that marked shift, it was 1993, when McClain and John Garcia's piece, "Expanding Disciplinary Boundaries: Black, Latino and Minority Group Politics in Political Science" (in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline, Second Edition*) was published. In her scholarship McClain laid the foundation for better understanding our multi-racial/multi-ethnic political realities. She established a comprehensive framework for race and ethnic politics at a time when Latinx and Asian American populations were small and concentrated, and Native American populations were a regional academic consideration.

McClain's work exemplifies leadership from the top-down, as well as from the bottom-up. Her research has appeared in leading academic journals, and thus, has influenced the influencers in the discipline. And in developing encyclopedic, in-depth, and clear textbooks for use in undergraduate and graduate classrooms around the country, McClain effectively shifted the notion of what political science is for the legions of students taking political science courses.

Building upon this substantive base of leadership is McClain's leadership through mentorship. To put it simply, through RBSI, McClain built the pipeline of today's scholars of color. She built it, and they came. For those of us who have had the privilege of working with McClain, we also know that her mentorship is best described as protective, tough, and nurturing, depending on what one needs at a given moment. As young scholars, we have learned how to be leaders ourselves and are striving to pave the way for the next generation of scholars.

In any academic discipline or institution, veritable transformation requires a leader that can bring about sustainable change. In the field of political science, McClain has been that leader. Her scholarship has been foundational and provided a substantive base from which seminal research could take root. But, equally important is the cultivation of future generations to continue forging the path of solid scholarship on race and ethnic politics. Much like in politics, the best type of leadership is one that weds substantive and descriptive representation. In McClain, the American Political Science Association has this combination—the best of both worlds—as well as the magic of passionate and purposeful leadership and the genius of a renowned scholar. ■

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