The Gender Dynamic in Senatorial Campaigns in Maine

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Introduction

In spite of significant progress in gender equality in the U.S., women remain starkly underrepresented in Congress. For example, in 2009 women comprised 51 percent of the U.S. population but just 17 percent of Congress. Numerous studies have cataloged the significant hurdles faced by female candidates, however more recent studies suggest that female candidates are now as successful as men, *ceteris paribus* (see, for example, Burrell 1994, Dolan 2004, Duerst-Lahti 1998, Jamieson 1995, Lawless and Fox 2005, Sanbonmatsu 2006). In other words, the success of female candidates in winning political office is largely dependent upon political context. This raises an intriguing question: are there some contextual features that female candidates can actually use to their advantage in winning elections?

The experience of Maine provides us with some interesting answers to this question. In Maine, female candidates have achieved an atypical level of success in running for Congress, especially in high-profile Senate races. In fact, Maine is one of only two states to have elected three women to the Senate. In this study, we argue that

women candidates in Maine have been able to use gender in advantageous ways that have tapped into unique aspects of Maine's independent political culture. Also, an examination of the political careers of two of the state's female Senators--Margaret Chase Smith (1949-1973) and Susan Collins (1997-present)--provides us with a ideal opportunity to assess larger changes over time in the political opportunity structure faced by female candidates in the U.S.

Women as Candidates

Women represent over half the population of the U.S. and also make up a larger proportion of the country's voters than men. For example, in the 2004 presidential election, 67.3 million women reported voting compared to 58.5 million men (CAWP 2009). Still, even though women have made important strides towards obtaining office, they remain the exception, not the rule. As Dolan observed, "The modifier *woman* before the word *politician* indicates that women remain an atypical group of politicians (2004, 7)." The existing literature shows that electing more women to high office rests on three constellations of factors: a) increasing the number of women with desirable political qualifications, b) the ability of women candidates to navigate difficult cultural expectations in campaigning, and c) the willingness of voters to vote for female candidates.

Qualifications

There have been three distinct waves of women as candidates in U.S. political history. The first wave, until about 1970, consisted of women who were widows or daughters of well-known male politicians (Dolan 2004). Appointing a widow to finish her husband's term was considered an acceptable practice because the woman was not seeking political power in her own right. This practice was almost always predicated on the understanding that the widow would finish her husband's term but would not seek reelection. From 1916 to 1940, 54 percent of the women who served in the House were succeeding their deceased husbands (Burrell 1994). Although fewer women now enter office in this way, by 2002 this still accounted for 21 percent of the women in the House.

The second wave, during the last decades of the 20th century, consisted of women who used their experience in volunteer work as a foundation on which to run for public office. Finally, since 2000, the third wave has been characterized by an increasing number of women following the typical male career path to higher office by first serving in lower political offices. Whereas prior to World War II a majority of congresswomen were widows of former legislators, from 1968 to 1975 only one in four women were widows. By 1994 only two out of forty-seven were widows (Burrell 1994).

Women have been at a collective disadvantage in seeking office because of their relative absence from male-dominated careers, such as law and business, that voters have typically perceived as prerequisites for political office (Carroll 1994). Duerst-Lahti (1998) found that women have had a more difficult time than men in navigating the political "pipeline" because prior elective experience is often perceived as a necessary qualification for higher offices such as Congress. Thus, the number of women serving in local office is a critical leading indicator of the number of women who will be seen as credible candidates for future runs for higher office. In fact, because politics has traditionally been a male preserve, prior elective experience is even more critical for women candidates.

Along with prior political experience, advanced education and high status occupations have been considered necessary qualifications for office. For example, between 1968 and 1990 women congressional candidates most frequently worked in elementary or secondary education, while another 12 percent ran as homemakers; only 9 percent were lawyers. During the same period a sizable majority of male candidates were lawyers or businessmen. However, over time there has been an increase in the number of female candidates employed in business and law so that by 1992 thirty-six of the eighty non-incumbent female nominees for the House were in those professions (Burrell 1994, 68).

Studies of political ambition have typically conceptualized candidate-entry decisions as strategic responses to the political opportunity structure without much consideration of gender. However, the decision to seek elective office is motivated by

attitudinal dispositions and personal experiences which differ greatly between men and women (Lawless and Fox 2005). As Lawless and Fox observe, "In order to consider themselves qualified to run for office, women must overcome a series of complex perceptual differences and doubts that result from longstanding patterns of traditional gender socialization (2005, 117)." The first is the expectation that women should make housework and child care their top priorities. Second, U.S. political institutions are characterized by a masculinized ethos that often hinders women from perceiving politics as a possible career. More subtly, it can cause women who do step out of their traditional gender roles to appear less comfortable by requiring them to act unnaturally confident, assertive, and self-promoting.

Lawless and Fox's (2005) nationwide survey of nearly four thousand potential candidates found that parental attitudes are particularly important for women considering a run for high-level elective office. Notably, women were 15 percent less likely than men to have their parents encourage them to run for office and 20 percent less likely to have their fathers speak to them about politics. However, women who did run for office were twice as likely as the men who ran to have had mothers that also ran for office, which suggests they had a critical role in encouraging their daughters.

Women are more likely than men to underestimate their qualifications, thus keeping them from considering a candidacy. Social psychologists find that, in general, men are more likely to express confidence in skills they do not possess. They tend to be more self-congratulatory and more likely to overestimate their intelligence, whereas women tend to underestimate their own qualities in these areas (Lawless and Fox 2005). Women are more than twice as likely as men to assert they are not qualified to run for office and 63 percent more likely than males to view their chances of winning as very unlikely. Recruitment patterns make this even worse due to a lack of positive reinforcement from others. Lawless and Fox conclude that "Deeply embedded patterns of traditional gender socialization pervade U.S. society and continue to make politics a much less likely path for women than men (2005, 139)."

Traditionally, women candidates were particularly disadvantaged in primary elections because (mostly male) party leaders were unsupportive of their candidacies. In the post-reform era, this has been less of an obstacle due to the decline in the ability of party leaders to control nominations. Nevertheless, women continue to face challenges due to party recruitment and gate keeping practices. For example, Sanbonmatsu (2006) found that the decision to run for office, though a personal one, still is largely influenced by party recruitment. In particular, the candidate entry decisions of women are more strongly influenced by party recruitment than those of male candidates.

For much of the 1980s and before, women faced significantly greater fundraising challenges than men. However, recent evidence suggests that things have been considerably equalized. Starting in the late 1980s the male incumbency financial advantage disappeared in congressional elections with female candidates now raising as much, if not more, than males (Burrell 1998). This has been largely due to the emergence of women's political action committees (CAWP 2009).

Campaign Strategy

As Williams (1998) observes, the word campaign itself is a military metaphor that hints at masculinity. Modern campaigns have typically relied on a combination of positive and negative tactics. Employing negative campaign tactics--often an effective means of campaigning--can be more difficult for women candidates because they have to strike a delicate balance between stereotypically masculine and feminine behaviors. In attacking their opponents, women risk being called shrill, strident, vicious, or unfeminine, whereas men are simply seen as tough. Herrnson and Lucas (2006) found that female candidates are more likely to disapprove of negative campaigning but other studies have shown that women use negative ads as much as men, and that gender differences are secondary to other concerns when going negative (Williams 1998).

It is common for male candidates to show their family in campaign ads, but, here, women face a double bind. For example, an ad showing a female candidate with her family may remind voters of the gendered stereotype that women should be in the home and not in politics. Male candidates tend to emphasize male gender stereotypes

such as toughness in their communications strategy. Women are also likely to emphasize their masculine traits in order to downplay the traditional feminine stereotypes and they are also more likely to use issues ads to reinforce their image as capable and informed candidates (Jamieson 1995).

Voter Biases

Persistent voter bias has been a significant barrier for women candidates. For example, using experimental and survey research, Cook (1998) found persistent patterns of bias against women candidates due to factors such as views about the proper role of women in society and fears that women lack the toughness required to deal with issues such as crime and war. Although only a small minority of Americans were still willing to admit a prejudice against women candidates, Cook's experiments found that many voters continue to evaluate male and female candidates differently. In general, women are thought to be better at dealing with issues of education, poverty and the elderly, while men are seen to be better at dealing with crime and international conflict. In particular, male respondents tended to devalue traditionally feminine traits. Even though women candidates have often sought to emphasize traditionally masculine traits, men continued to perceive women as having feminine traits regardless of the candidate's emphasis.

Similarly, Dolan (1994) found that voters often stereotype women candidates as having a liberal ideology. Dolan's study also found evidence that media coverage of women candidates was more likely to focus on personal issues such as appearance, personality, family status and marriage which may reinforce stereotyped impressions that women are less serious candidates.

Differences in men and women's voting behavior, known as the gender gap, emerged as a significant political phenomenon in the aftermath of the 1980 election and have continued to grow since that time (Burrell 1994). Specifically, women voters are much more likely than men to vote Democratic even when controlling for other factors. Interestingly, the gender gap varies considerably across states (Norrander and Wilcox 1998). As Dolan observed, "Perhaps some electoral environments are more conducive to

allowing people to identify that their personal or issues interests may be best represented by a woman candidate. Perhaps the ability of women candidates to mobilize voters who might naturally support them is shaped by the electoral environment (2004, 133)." Along these lines, the following section explores the unique political culture of Maine as it relates to the success of women candidates.

Maine's Political Culture

Women Office Holders in Comparative Perspective

As noted above, prior research suggests gender dynamics vary by the political environment of a state. Maine has typically ranked in the top tier of states in electing women to political office. In 2008-09, women comprised 31 percent of the members of the Maine House and 23 percent of the Senate (Maine Legislature 2009). Moreover, during the same session, both chambers of the Maine Legislature were led by women--Elizabeth Mitchell in the Senate and Hannah Pingree in the House--the first time this has happened in any state (Maine Senate 2009). Although Maine has not had a female governor, Janet Mills currently serves as the state's attorney general (CAWP 2009).

The number of women elected to state legislatures varies greatly across states (see Table 1). As of 2008, women constituted 24.3 percent of all state legislators in the U.S., but this ranged in individual states from a high of 39 percent in Colorado to a low of just 10 percent in South Carolina. Maine ranked 14th among all states, with 29 percent of its state legislature consisting of women, placing it well above the national average (CAWP 2009).

According to Sanbonmatsu (2006), variation in the number of women serving in state legislatures can be largely explained by a state's dominant political ideology and the overall professionalism of a state's legislature. Women tend to fare better in states, like Maine, with less political conservatism and less-professionalized legislatures. Additionally, states providing more women with the informal requirements of holding office, such as a law degree or local political experience, are likely to have more women serving in the state legislature.

Table 1

Women in the Maine State Legislature, 1991-2009*

Year	State Rank	Senate D	Senate R	Senate I	Total Women	Total Senate	House D	House R	House I	Total Women	Total House	Total Women	Total Leg.	Total Women %
2009	14	6	2	-	8/	35	36	10	-	46/	151	54/	186	29.0
2008	10	7	5	-	12/	35	35	11	-	46/	151	58/	186	31.2
2007	9	7	5	-	12/	35	35	11	-	46/	151	58/	186	31.2
2006	23	6	5	-	11/	35	24	8	-	32/	151	43/	186	23.1
2005	23	6	5	-	11/	35	24	8	-	32/	151	43/	186	23.1
2004	18	9	4	-	13/	35	26	11	-	37/	151	50/	186	26.9
2003	17	9	4	-	13/	35	26	11	-	37/	151	50/	186	26.9
2002	8	11	3	1	15/	35	28	13	-	41/	151	56/	186	30.1
2001	8	11	3	1	15/	35	28	13	1	41/	151	56/	186	30.1
2000	12	12	3	1	16/	35	22	13	1	36/	151	52/	186	28.0
1999	12	12	3	1	16/	35	22	13	1	36/	151	52/	186	28.0
1998	14	9	3	1	13/	35	23	11	1	35/	151	48/	186	25.8
1997	15	9	3	1	13/	35	23	11	1	35/	151	48/	186	25.8
1996	12	7	3	1	11/	35	23	15	-	38/	151	49/	186	26.3
1995	12	7	3	1	11/	35	22	15	-	37/	151	48/	186	25.8
1994	6	7	4	-	11/	35	37	11	-	48/	151	59/	186	31.7
1993	6	7	4	-	11/	35	36	12	-	48/	151	59/	186	31.7
1992	3	6	6	-	12/	35	33	15	-	48/	151	60/	186	32.3
1991	2	6	6	-	12/	35	34	15	-	49/	151	61/	186	32.8

"State Legislature" From the Center for American Women and Politics. Retrieved April 11th, 2009, from, http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/resources/state_fact_sheets/ME.php.

Similarly, Norrander and Wilcox (1998) found that Maine was an early leader in electing women state legislators. However, they observe that the early leaders have been caught by a group of states that has seen rapid progress in recent decades. Although other states are catching up, Mainers remain relatively supportive of women candidates. The number of women serving as state legislators is also important because these positions serve as stepping stones to higher offices such as Congress (Sanbonmatsu 2006).

Not surprisingly, then, Maine ranks highly among states in electing women to Congress. As of 2008-09, 17 percent of the House and 16 percent of the Senate were women (US Census 2009). To date, thirty-eight women have served in the Senate, with seventeen currently serving, but only Maine and Louisiana have had three female senators. Women currently comprise 50 percent of Maine's delegation in the House and 100 percent in the Senate. The success of female candidates in Maine is rooted in Maine's unique political culture.

Maine's Political Independence

Maine is well-known for its rugged, rural environment and long, harsh winters. It is a relatively small state with an estimated population of 1,317,207 in 2007 and a population density of approximately 41.6 people per square mile compared to the national average of 79.6 (US Census 2009). Maine's small population and rural nature contribute to the character of its politics. As Potholm observed, "Maine politics are the way political life should be: fair, open to talent, progressive and honest, it's hard to argue with the slogan for Maine's political arena (2006, 129)."

Maine's politics has historically demonstrated a strong independent streak. In the 19th century it was strongly abolitionist and had a deep Union commitment in the Civil War. The national temperance movement began in Maine and the state enacted a total ban on the manufacture and sale of alcohol as early as 1852 (Maine Senate 2009). Prohibition combined with abolition made the Republicans the dominant party in Maine. Hannibal Hamlin, a Democratic U.S. Senator, broke with his party on the issue of slavery to form the GOP in the state. He was elected the first Republican governor of

Maine and the first ever GOP Vice President in 1860. Republican domination of Maine politics continued until Edmund Muskie was elected governor in 1954 (Maine Senate 2009), harkening a period of two-party competition that has persisted to current times.

In recent decades, independent voters have emerged as a dominant force in Maine, outnumbering both Democrats and Republicans. Illustratively, in 1974 Mainers elected the nation's only independent governor, James B. Longley. In 1994 and 1998, Maine elected another independent governor, Angus S. King, Jr. Extensive appeals to independent voters are a cornerstone of almost all successful contemporary political races in the state.

Although there has been much attention devoted to the idea of "two Maines"--political divisions between the progressive southern part of the state and the more conservative northern regions--the state is still characterized by a relatively homogenous political culture with a deep commitment to its own perceived distinctiveness (Weiner 2005). With the exception of a few relatively urban areas such as Portland and Bangor, Maine is overwhelmingly rural. The traditional New England town meeting, where nearly all critical local decisions are made through direct participatory democracy, is still a staple of many Maine communities.

In his seminal work on state political cultures, Elazar (1984) identified Maine as a "moralistic" state. Moralistic political culture, which is found in most New England and northwestern states, is characterized by commitment to using politics as a way to improve society. With a focus on openness and mass participation, moralistic states have often had a favorable attitude toward women and other political newcomers (Alderman 2001). This is in contrast to states with "individualistic" political cultures, which tend to have well-established political ladders, and "traditionalistic" states, controlled by established elites and dominated by men.

According to Agger (1962), both men and women in Maine have historically been socialized into deeply-held convictions of fairness and a distinctive form of Yankee self-sufficiency. This history and culture has shaped the different characteristics associated

with Maine people, including being self-sufficient and independent, hardworking and hard-driving, taciturn and dry-humored, competent and thrifty (Weiner 2005).

Although many of the traditional stereotypes of Mainers are masculine--fishermen, loggers, hunters and outdoorsmen-- women have had to share in many of the traditionally masculine activities associated with Maine life. According to Weiner, "As a place, then, Maine shaped women's experiences by emphasizing their differences from women elsewhere, even from those of many other rural women. Maine's environment was too harsh, the demands of its occupations too rigorous and too uncertain, to allow but a small percentage of women to enjoy the full control over the domestic realm that ideologues promised women in exchange for their absence from the public world (2005, 4)."

The atypical role of Maine's women in its political culture shapes current gender politics in the state in two important ways. First, a tradition of occupational pluralism likely explains why voters in Maine are more comfortable with women serving in traditionally masculine realms like politics. Second, the fact that Maine women have been socialized into this sense of place and tradition, suggests they may be less willing to accept traditional gender roles.

As shown in the following sections, Margaret Chase Smith and Susan Collins capitalized on this distinct Maine identity and skillfully used it to their advantage in their political careers. In Margaret Chase Smith's case it was essential to her groundbreaking success for women in politics. Smith understood that, "Beyond her record and her friends, she had her own considerable energy and instincts about the sense of fair play in Maine voters. They might be conservative or liberal or contrary for no particular reason, but she knew that they would make up their own minds. Her job was simply to talk to as many as possible (Agger 1962, 212)." Because of this understanding, Smith emphasized grassroots campaigning in every campaign she ran, traveling from small town to small town for face-to-face discussions with voters.

Maine has elected four women to Congress--Margaret Chase Smith, Olympia Snowe, Susan Collins, and Chellie Pingree--all of whom have exhibited a strong tie to

Maine's identity. Agger writes, "The political career of Margaret Chase Smith is an almost perfect symbol of the Maine ethic, for all wrapped up in the five-foot, two-inch lady from Skowhegan is the independent spirit, Yankee frugality, understated wit, and responsible-if sometimes lonely- acts of courage that are so great a marvel and secret puzzle to 'out-of-staters' (1962, 206)."

A Widow Turned Independent Senator: Margaret Chase Smith

The 1940 House Campaigns

Margaret Chase Smith's entry into elective office, succeeding her husband in office upon his death, was typical of women politicians prior to the 1970s. However, unlike most widow politicians, Smith built a long-term political career of her own that was independent of her husband's. In doing so, Smith took advantage of her gender, typically a political liability, by skillfully tapping into unique features of Maine's political culture. According to Potholm, "Her political campaigns deserve to be studied, not just as models for grassroots organizing techniques and skillful use of campaign dynamics, but for the establishment of campaign dimensions that still dominate the course of Maine politics (2003, 19)."

Margaret Chase Smith, born in Skowhegan, Maine in 1897, was the daughter of Carrie Murray and George Emery Chase. In 1930, she married Clyde H. Smith, a respected Republican leader in central Maine. He was elected to the U.S. House in 1936. Reelected in 1938, he died during his second term in office. The day before his death on April 8, 1940, Clyde Smith issued a deathbed statement for the papers, "All that I can ask of my friends and supporters is that in the coming primary and general election, if unable to enter the campaign, they support the candidacy of my wife and partner in public life (as cited in Schmidt 1996, 80)." Margaret announced her candidacy for his seat the day after his death.

In Maine, congressional vacancies are filled by popular election and the primary for the special election was scheduled for May 13. Edward J. Beauchamp, the unopposed Democratic candidate for the upcoming "full term" election, suggested that Smith be unopposed and elected to the remainder of Clyde's term without opposition.

Beauchamp's goal was to conserve resources for the regular election in September while appearing to be a gallant gentleman. He believed he would easily defeat Smith in the fall since she would be an incumbent whose "hold on the office was short lived and tenuous (as cited in Schmidt 1996, 83)."

State Representative Frederick P. Bonney promptly ignored Beauchamp's suggestion in order to run against Smith in the special election. The *Lewiston Sun Journal* reported, "Unless the boys gang up on the Congressman's widow, she will probably have little trouble in defeating her only opponent. He is Republican Fred B. Bonney, perennial candidate, who usually trails the ticket. In fact any opposition in the special primary popped up as a last minute surprise. The stronger contenders announced 'hands off' for the unexpired term after the publication of Smith's deathbed appeal…(Stephenson 1940, Apr 27)." In the primary against Bonney, Smith received over 90 percent of the vote. Unopposed in the general election to complete her late husband's remaining eight months in office, Smith's reaction was typical of widow politicians, saying, "The vote indicated that I had maintained the friendships of my husband (as cited in Schmidt 1996, 84)."

Coincidentally, the regular primary was just a month away. At this point, Smith turned out to be more than a mere place-holder and decided to seek the seat in her own right, a sharp departure from the norm that a widow would serve out the remainder of her husband's term and then step aside. She managed to defeat three other Republicans in the primary to face Beauchamp in the September general election, a race she won by a margin of almost two to one. Smith later said, "I attribute my first election to sympathy. But in 1940, when President Roosevelt carried my district by 10,000 votes, I was reelected by 27,000 (as cited in Sherman 2000, 50)."

In winning four campaigns in a matter of months, she capped what Potholm described as "…one of the most incredible six-month periods in Maine political history (2003, 26)." According to Smith, "I was taught by my husband to do it right. None of the elections were even close (as cited in Graham 1964, 33)." Those campaigns marked

the beginning of a long political career in which she astutely used her status as a woman to appeal to Maine's voters.

Although Smith initially followed the widow's path to office, she possessed additional qualifications that were non-traditional for women in the 1940s that may help explain why she decided to run on her own. After teaching school for year, she went on to work for the New England Telephone company and then to *The Independent Reporter*. She was also heavily involved with a variety of social and political groups, such as *Sorosis*, a literary and social group with restrictive membership. She served a three-year term on the executive board of the Federation of Business and Professional Women and had also been president of the Maine Federation of Business and Professional Women (Schmidt 1996).

Most importantly, she had managed her husband's political campaigns and, in the words of the *Boston Post*, was "well acquainted with a Congressman's duties," and that, "she learned about such things through being her husband's chief 'assistant' (Allen 1940, May 14)." At one point she delivered a Navy Day speech in place of her husband, that according to Schmidt, ". . . revealed a woman prepared to ignore gender-related boundaries and to challenge conventional ideas of a woman's place (1996, 108)."

In the 1940 campaigns she had to carefully navigate issues related to her gender. Magazines and newspapers of the time often depicted her as a common housewife, but she didn't believe she could win by running simply as a widow, saying later, "Had I been just a woman candidate it is doubtful except on a sympathetic vote that I would have won (as cited in Wallace 1995, 49)." Once she won the special election, she stressed that she would have more seniority in the House than any of her opponents, thus garnering better committee assignments (Wallace 1995). Her victory in the special election, combined with her husband's political legacy, gave Smith a distinct advantage over her opponents in name recognition. She also benefited from the network of supporters that she and Clyde had maintained over his campaigns.

Even so, Republicans in Maine provided women with more opportunities to gain political experience than many other states at the time. In 1940, nearly 2,400 women

held public office in Maine (Schmidt 1996, 118). In fact, the opportunity structure provided by Republicans was leading to the advancement of women in politics across the state. In order to assuage voter fears that she would be weak in the face of the impending war, Smith campaigned heavily in favor of increased military spending and preparedness. In this way Smith strategically shifted her focus to the prevailing "masculine" issues. This had the additional benefit of appealing to the numerous workers in Maine who depended on naval shipbuilding contracts for work.

In 1940 there were no television/radio ads or special advertising sections of the newspapers. Instead, Smith relied only free media. Newspaper coverage was therefore crucial to her campaign, so she worked hard to portray her image in the way she wanted. For example, Guy Gannett who was in charge of all of the major papers including *The Waterville Sentinel* and *Kennebec Journal*, asked for her stance on national defense. She told him to look at her "Navy Day Speech" which he had printed in his papers years before. After this Gannett gave her his "enthusiastic support (Schmidt 1996, 109)." May Craig, Gannett's Washington correspondent, grew fond of Smith and acted as her press agent, providing her with favorable coverage.

She was especially conscious of her image as a woman, always dressing simply but classically, and wearing a fresh rose pinned to her dress every day. She chose to refrain from using negative campaign tactics, saying, "A constructive platform with no campaign against personalities will be the policy of Maine's first woman candidate for a major political office…I shall not campaign against anyone. I want to offer constructive things. I believe campaigning against personalities has been one of the major faults of the Republican Party (as cited in Westall 1940, May 19)." Smith's choice to run an issue-based campaign and not use personal attacks was a shrewd political move, due to the danger of women candidates appearing shrill and rude.

Some felt the issue of gender became a primary issue in the campaign. Dorris Westall of *The Portland Telegram* reported, "Is Maine ready for a woman in Congress? That, ladies and gentlemen I find is the dominant issue of Maine's second Congressional district primary campaign, as Europe totters and domestic affairs are in

turmoil. Amazing as it may seem in these stirring times, it is a question of sex, not of ability, that the voters will decide on June 17 (Westall 1940, May 19)." *The Lewiston Evening Journal* reported, "Definite opposition to Mrs. Smith among women voters …based not on a personal matter but… from a very pronounced sentiment that the congressional place is a man's job, not a woman's (as cited in Schmidt 1996, 109)." John Marshall, one of her opponents in the primary, said that he supported women in politics but just not at a time when the nation was facing a crisis. He said that under such conditions "it's a man's job" and that voters "want a militant representative in Congress. A flick of the wrist and a smile won't do it (as cited in Westall 1940, May 19)." Herbert Carlyle Libby, a Colby College professor, countered that "women do possess certain attributes of character, mental and moral, that many men do not possess. They have an amazing sense of intuition that seems entirely foreign to men. They have indomitable courage and fortitude, suffering when most men would surrender. They view things very largely from the humanitarian angle while men, as the so-called-bread-winner, and bread eater, see things too largely from the commercial approach (Libby 1940)."

Smith worked hard to overcome the stereotype of women as weak. She did not want to be considered as a housewife but as a hard-working candidate. She vehemently avoided the feminist label and endured long hours on the campaign trail. Her gender placed her outside politics as usual and her constituents in Maine at the time also placed a high value on individualism and self-reliance. It was clear to some that "Mainers tended to choose their representatives for their independence from party allegiance (Sherman 2000, 51)."

In Congress, Smith would eventually work on some important women's legislation but her focus would remain primarily on the military and defense. *The Lewiston Evening Journal* reported that Smith was stressing the importance of military issues even more because she knew there were something voters might expect a woman to overlook (Wallace 1995). Smith later explained, "My whole history of public service was determination to show that I was a woman who could do what a man could do

without apologizing (as cited in Sherman 2000, 50)." Her first important vote in the House happened during the general election campaign. The "Selective Training and Service Act" was a draft to mobilize 900,000 men. Republicans opposed the bill, as did most women, because of the effect it would have on their families. Smith defied all expectations and voted in favor of the draft because of her belief in preparedness.

The impending war gave Smith the opportunity to campaign on issues considered "masculine" and may have helped to solidify her image as a female candidate that could handle the seriousness of Washington. Since Mainers placed a high value on independence, this also allowed Smith to show her independence without having to play the part of a feminist.

The 1948 Senate Campaign

Following her victory in 1940, Margaret Chase Smith was re-elected with no primary opposition in 1942, 1944, and 1946. In January 1943 she became the second woman ever appointed to the House Naval Affairs Committee (Schmidt 1996). In September 1946 Smith once again defeated Edward Beauchamp to win her fifth term in Congress. Soon after, people began asking her what would come next. Senator Wallace White would be retiring and there were rumors she would run for the seat in 1948. Until these rumors began circulating, the race for the open seat had been regarded as between former Governor Sumner Sewall and the current Governor Horace Hildreth. The *Portland Sunday Telegram* and *Lewiston Evening Journal* both reported on the suspicion that Smith may run (Schmidt 1996). On June 1, 1947 she officially announced her candidacy for the Senate, telling newspapers that her decision was "strictly contingent" on White's decision to retire (as cited in Schmidt 1996, 173). She wrote, "Senator White's retirement will be a distinct loss to Maine. Replacement of his experience and statesmanship will be most difficult and of primary concern in the selection of his successor in the Senate. My friends throughout the entire state urge that I am his logical successor because I have more Congressional experience than any other possible candidate and because of my performance record. With complete sincerity and appreciation of its great responsibilities, I am humbly seeking the high office of United

States Senator from Maine (Smith 1941, January 15)." In doing so, she used the opportunity to remind voters that she was a fully qualified candidate for the Senate.

Her opponents in the Republican primary were both well known and wealthy. Smith's candidacy was certainly a longshot. Smith was not the party's choice. According to a political analyst for *The Lewiston Evening Journal*, "Nobody in Maine gets into the Senate without a political machine, fat campaign funds, the right business connections and the help of powers that be (as cited in Sherman 2000, 74)." Also, although six women had served in the Senate, five of them had been appointed to fill the remaining terms of senators who had died in office and the other one had won a two-month interim term. Moreover, a run for the Senate was risky. Smith's status in the House seemed secure; losing her seat in the House would likely end her political career. One advantage working in her favor was Maine's relatively small population. With a greater overlap between the electorate of her district and the state, Smith's incumbency advantage was larger than it would have been in a more populous state (Palmer and Simon 2003).

In the House, Smith had made constituent work one of her biggest priorities and this would work to her advantage in the 1948 election. In a column she wrote in January 1948, Smith observed, "Maine is full of small concerns which can do their bit for defense, I believe. It must be done without thought of unreasonable profit. Week before last I wrote to the Associated Industries of Maine asking them for a list of the small ship-building plants in the second district, a similar list of small plants of all kinds. …My purpose is to bring about contracts between the government and the businessmen of my district (Smith 1941, January 15)." Appeals for national defense industries, especially those with contracts in Maine, had become one of her signature issues.

By 1948 Smith had been dealing with issues of war for eight years. Maine's political environment was one of strong conviction about national and domestic issues. According to Potholm, "Maine people like the best of both worlds when Maine senators can be national figures for a strong defense while at the same time ensuring such facilities as the Portsmouth/Kittery Naval Shipyard or the Bath Iron Works get lots of

national contracts (2003, 24)." Smith capitalized on the attention to national issues that would permeate the campaign, by announcing in early July that she would be making a European inspection trip with the House Armed Services Committee. Her trip to Europe was symbolically important to her image as a supporter of the military. When she got back she was in high demand as a speaker in order to describe the conditions overseas (Schmidt 1996). Maine's "deeply imbedded patriotism" made Smith popular for voting with the administration on issues of defense and the war even if the administration was led by Democrats. This was reflective of "Maine's wide vein of contrarianism and respect for political independence (Schmidt 1996, 124)." Maine voters evaluated Smith on her votes, not her partisanship. According to Schmidt, it was "as though they saw the best part of themselves in representatives who maintained independence (Schmidt 1996, 124)." This same independent political climate contributed greatly to Smith's success as a female candidate.

Smith sought to burnish her image as an independent thinker. She became a frequent target of conservative Republicans who did not appreciate her deviations from party doctrine. For example, mid-campaign she was the only Republican in the House to vote against a Truman budget cut because she feared the money would be cut from the military budgets. An independent survey conducted in Washington, and widely reported in Maine newspapers during the summer of 1947, found that Maine's incumbent senators, White and Brewster, had voted with their party 95 percent of the time, but that Smith had done so only 77 percent of the time. Consequently, "Her continued habit of independence increasingly frustrated the party, even as it endeared her to the large segment of Maine voters who were themselves iconoclastic (Schmidt 1996, 175)." She also continued to demonstrate her physical stamina by campaigning tirelessly across the entire state, sometimes for eighteen hours at a time (Graham 1964).

Her opponents in the 1948 campaign raised the gender issue to a much greater extent than had been done in her earlier races. The worst was a three-page analysis of her voting record that portrayed her as a communist, a traitor to the GOP, and someone working with the Labor Party. Opposition also used a letter writing campaign which

questioned her support among women, claiming that women were supporting her only on the basis of her sex. Smith suspected the Republican National Committee of being behind the attacks.

The most negative attacks focused on her morals. It was suggested that she was "carrying on" with men in Washington. Others spread the rumor that she had French ancestry, which, if true, would upset many Mainers with anti-French prejudices. She was also accused of breaking up her deceased husband's first marriage and of financially supporting one of his alleged illegitimate children (Schmidt 1996). Someone found a picture of her during a 1947 trip to visit sailors in Europe with beer cans in the background and accused her of drinking and carrying on with the soldiers. This particular attack backfired because it was contrary to Smith's reputation as someone who never smoke or drank alcohol.

For the most part, Smith chose not to react to the attacks. Then, in a speech at the Somerset County Women's Republican Club on May 21, she said, "I have avoided making an issue of being a woman in this campaign, for I truly believe that one's sex should not be a determinant in this election of public officials. But my opponents have raised the issue- and the challenge to the women of Maine-and I believe that they will accept the challenge on June 21 (as cited in Vallin 1998, 136)." In the end, the attacks probably worked against Smith's opponents because the negative tactics "offended voters' Yankee sense of fairness and decency and had resulted in awakening otherwise apathetic voters to the place where they are determined to see that Mrs. Smith stays in Washington (Sherman 2000, 74)." The prevailing sentiment among voters seemed to be that "Maine folks just don't do things that way (Schmidt 1996, 8)."

Smith shrewdly played the political culture in Maine to her advantage and cast herself in the role of the underdog by pitting herself against the rich and powerful. In fact, she used her lack of campaign funds to her advantage and "was counting on Maine voters to be offended by the large amounts spent by her challengers, sharpened by continual references to herself without funds in a fight against big money machines (Sherman 2000, 81)." Her campaign literature emphasized her "wealth of experience,

wealth of ability, wealth of congressional 'know how' and wealth of non paid friends supporting her (Sherman 2000, 81)." Small donors to her campaign were sent a personal thank-you on a penny postcard that said, "I do not have sufficient finances for paid professional workers. That is why you are so important to me…and why *we* will win (as cited in Sherman, 2000, 80)." An additional 10, 000 postcards were mailed to women, one of the first uses of direct mail in a political campaign, that read: "The Opposition Says that Margaret Smith Must be Defeated because she is a Woman. ANSWER THIS CHALLENGE (as cited in Sherman 2000, 80)."

As early as December 1947 a girl versus boys theme was being played out in the newspapers. *The Portland Press Herald* reported, "The advent of U.S. Representative Margaret Chase Smith …into the Republican senatorial contest against three male opponents doubtless is the underlying reason behind this feverish activity by the women because the appearance of a woman in the senatorial race for the first time in Maine history has drawn both the approval and disapproval of voters, be they men or women (as cited in Schmidt 1996, 178)."

One her opponents, Governor Hildreth, publicly stated the Senate was no place for a woman. Smith responded by saying, "The issue that the Senate is no place for a woman is a direct challenge to every woman. I am confident that the women will accept that challenge, for certainly if they are good enough to campaign as wives of the candidates of the United States Senate, then they are not without the necessary qualifications for the Senate (as cited in Schmidt 1996, 188)." As it turned out, Hildreth made a significant mistake in allowing Smith to use gender to her advantage without taking the stance of a feminist. Voters' bias against a woman became a bias for a woman. According to Potholm, "Margaret's approach to her gender is worth noting here for she used it to her advantage in both her congressional and Senate races in what we would today call a reverse spin. Although never a feminist, Smith was still smart enough to appeal to women who in 1948 made up the majority of voters. She made a point of saying she was not asking for special treatment (and seldom was), but in not asking for support on the basis of her sex, shrewdly underscored its very nature (2003,

22)." In other words, the more she said she didn't want the voters to support her simply because she was a woman, the more they did just that.

Furthermore, Smith was careful to maintain her image so that she was neither too feminine nor too masculine. Image was key; she had to maintain her image with both men and women without the help of polling, focus groups, or political consultants. In February 1948 she fell on some ice and fractured her right arm while campaigning. She was rushed to the hospital in Bangor, had a cast put on the arm, and was in Rockland by noon giving a speech to a collection of men's service clubs. According to Sherman, "Because she had defined herself in opposition to prescribed gender roles, Smith bent over backwards to accommodate herself to them. She understood that while power enhances a male image, it threatens a female one. For her, success required a special combination of hard work, masked ambition, and proper womanly behavior. Unlike her male counterparts, she needed excuses for her self-centered behavior. Her self-definition rested on her conviction that her life had been dedicated to serving others (2000, 4-5)."

Because women made up 64 percent of the registered voters in Maine, "the women's vote in Maine was both feared and courted (Schmidt 1996, 178)." Both opponents' wives began appearing publicly with their husbands, a practice never heard of before. Women's groups became important campaign stops and it was extremely beneficial when the Maine BPW and Women's Christian Temperance Union endorsed Smith (Sherman 2000). Smith appealed to women in her attempt to "domesticate politics" by equating it to managing a household. She explained, "Women administer the home. They set the rules, enforce them, and mete out justice for violations. Thus, like Congress, they legislate; like the Executive, they administer; like the Courts, they interpret the rules. It is an ideal experience for politics (as cited in Sherman 2000, 83)."

When the primary votes were tallied Smith won all but two counties and by an overall margin of better than two-to-one over her closest competitor. *The New York Times* attributed her victory to the support of women's groups and female voters.

Others credited her attention to her constituents during her time in the House (Schmidt 1996).

The general election was set for September 13, one of the earliest in the nation. Because Republicans dominated Maine politics, Smith's primary victory was tantamount to election. Her opponent, Dr. Adrian Scolten, had run unopposed in the Democratic primary and ran "a lackluster campaign that seemed at a loss for both issues and spark (Potholm 2003, 26)." In the end, Smith won by the largest majority ever given a Maine candidate, 71.3 percent. She became the first woman ever to win a seat in the Senate who was not succeeding her husband, the first to serve in both houses of Congress, and the first-ever Republican woman in the Senate (Graham 1964). Potholm lists her skilful treatment of "the women's issue" as the key to her victory, saying, "This was a most significant election. It was the first time in the twentieth-century that an insurgent, non-business female candidate prevailed over the party establishment. Margaret Chase Smith, of course, went on to be the first woman ever elected to both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate in her own right, not appointed to fill the position of her husband as others had been. In addition, the independent organization that Margaret Chase Smith used to propel her to victory was to have a huge impact on subsequent successful Republican candidates such as William S. Cohen and Olympia Snowe (2003, 4)."

Susan Collins: Navigating the Political Pipeline

The 1996 Senate Campaign

The path taken to the U.S. Senate by Susan Collins is indicative of the changed role of women in American politics between the 1940s, when Margaret Chase Smith first won elective office, and the 1990s. Whereas Smith moved into politics as the widow of a House member, Collins was able to build her political career by navigating the pipeline of experience more typical of male candidates. Collins was typical of the growing number of women who ran for elective office after earning the necessary qualifications within the political sphere (Burrell 1998).

Collins was born on December 7, 1952, in Caribou, Maine. Her father, Donald Collins, was president of S.W. Collins Co., a family-owned retail lumber business. He served in elective office as mayor of Caribou and as a state legislator. Patricia Collins, her mother, also served as mayor of Caribou and was chair of the University of Maine System Board of Trustees. Collins' political ambition was likely a result of her parents' involvement in politics, especially her mother's. As found by Lawless and Fox (2005) female candidates are twice as likely as male candidates to have had mothers that ran for political office.

In 1972, as a college student, Collins volunteered to work on William Cohen's congressional campaign and by 1975 she became an intern on his staff. After she graduated from college, Cohen hired her for his congressional staff, where she worked for twelve years, eventually becoming his staff director in Washington. In 1987, Collins returned to Maine to serve in Governor John McKernan's cabinet as Commissioner of Professional and Financial Regulations where she remained until 1992 when she was appointed the New England regional chief of the Small Business Administration by President Bush. At the SBA she was responsible for overseeing 200 employees in eight offices and a loan portfolio of $1 billion (Campbell 1996, May 20). Following the election of President Clinton in 1993 she left the federal government to work as Deputy Treasurer of Massachusetts. Her experience during these years shows a woman navigating the pipeline of political experience deemed essential by Duerst-Lahti (1998).

Governor McKernan, having served two terms in office, was unable to run for reelection in 1994. Collins jumped into the Republican primary race, her first run for elective office. She won the eight-way Republican primary with 21 percent of the vote, but, following her nomination, was abandoned by many Republicans in favor of Angus King, an independent candidate. Many Republicans felt she would be unable to beat the well-known Democratic nominee, former Governor Joseph Brennan. King ended up winning the race with 36 percent of the vote. Collins finished a distant third with 23 percent.

Although Collins' first foray into electoral politics proved unsuccessful, she learned a lot from the experience. Following the gubernatorial campaign she moved to Bangor to serve as Executive Director of the Family Business Center at Husson College. Her time spent at Husson allowed her to network and develop a base in her native 2nd District ("Collins County Native" 1996). In January 1996, Collins' mentor, Senator William Cohen, announced he would not seek a fourth term in the Senate. Immediately following his announcement speculation began as to who would run in both party's primaries to succeed him ("Cohen Stuns Maine" 1996). Collins announced her candidacy for the seat on February 7 (Weinstein 1996, Oct 30).

The failed run for governor surely played a part in shaping Collins political work ethic and increased her name recognition among voters. After learning some tough lessons in her run for governor, Collins became more comfortable, better prepared, more knowledgeable about the issues, and more noticeable as a candidate. "She's much more confident, much more sure of herself when she speaks," said Ted O'Meara, a former chairman of the Maine Republican Party and a Collins adviser (Campbell 1996, May 20). In an interview with *The Bangor Daily News*, Collins stated, "It's much easier now because people know me; I've gotten much more comfortable with campaigning (Hale 1996, Oct 29)." In 1994 she often felt awkward approaching voters, saying in retrospect, "It's very hard when you're first starting out in politics to go into a workplace to meet people and shake hands. You get blank faces. You feel like you're imposing. That campaign was an opportunity for me to introduce myself to the people at large, who I am and what I stood for (Weinstein 1996, Oct 30)."

In the Republican primary Collins faced two opponents, Robert A.G. Monks, a businessman, and W. John Hathaway, a state senator. Monks had run for Senate on two prior occasions losing the primary 1972 and general election in 1976 and was a well-know figure in Maine Republican politics. During the campaign, Monks and Hathaway caused serious damage to one another's candidacies in a nasty feud over allegations that Hathaway had sexual relations with an adolescent girl. When the story broke, Hathaway immediately denied the charges and accused Monks of spreading the awful

rumor. Monks then denied that he had been the one to tip off reporters. In the end both men lost support as a result of the story.

Learning from the 1994 campaign, when she was criticized by political opponents for lacking sufficient ties to Maine, Collins emphasized her roots: "I think I have a far deeper connection to the state. I went to public schools here. I didn't go to out-of-state prep schools, as both Bob and John did. I've worked for Maine all of my life virtually. All of the jobs I've had have involved trying to improve the climate for jobs in Maine (Campbell 1996, May 20)."

Monks and Hathaway both had significant funding advantages over Collins. Monks, for example, spent $1.8 million of his own money on the race, and Hathaway outspent Collins $657,748 to $363,316 (Campbell 1996, Jun 12). Collins nevertheless prevailed in the primary with 56 percent of the vote. Joseph Brennan won the Democratic primary, setting up a rematch between the two candidates.

Maine's political environment in 1996 was one of heightened interest and excitement. The Democrats and Republicans were fighting to gain control of the state legislature as well as Congress. Because the Democrats only needed to gain three seats to take control of the Senate, the Maine race was considered by political analysts as crucial for both parties (Campbell 1996, Oct 27). Nationally, the election took place against the backdrop of President Clinton's scandal involving Monica Lewinsky and the impending impeachment proceedings. Working to Collins' advantage was a clear-cutting referendum on the state ballot that promised to draw a large turnout among conservative, rural voters in her native 2nd district.

Like Margaret Chase Smith, Collins struck a careful balance on tricky gender issues by appearing feminine while maintaining stances on high-profile issues that were typically considered masculine. For example, Collins became well-known for wearing a red dress in her public appearances, telling supporters at one point, "The next senator will be sworn into office wearing a red dress (Higgins 1996, Jun 15)." Around the same time, the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, a conservative group fighting for gun rights, endorsed Collins. The PAC gave interviews to both Collins and Brennan but decided

that Collins "stands with us 100 percent on all issues, and we unfortunately have serious differences with Joe on firearms issues ("Sportsmen's Group" 1996)." Collins said she was "delighted" by the endorsement because SAM "represents some of the most important values in Maine: freedom, a real understanding of the importance of conservation to our state, a desire to preserve our natural heritage and the independent spirit that has made our state so wonderful ("Sportsmen's Group" 1996)."

However, Collins also sought to position herself as an independent-minded candidate, much as Margaret Chase Smith had done decades earlier. She told voters, for example, that Brennan had voted with his party 93 percent of the time when he was in the House and whereas she would follow in the tradition of Senator Cohen who only voted with his party about half of the time ("Brennan, Collins Face Off" 1996). When the concern was raised that she was not ready to be a U.S. Senator she responded by pointing to George Mitchell saying, "He had never held elected office before, and I think everyone agrees he was a pretty good senator (Weinstein 1996, Oct 30)." She consistently portrayed Brennan as a "toe-the-line" Democrat, positioning herself as an independent voice. In the final debate before the election Collins repeatedly emphasized her image as a moderate, independent who supported a balanced budget over tax relief ("Final Debate" 1996).

By the 1990s television and radio advertising had become an expensive and necessary component of a campaign for the Senate, unlike the races in which Margaret Chase Smith ran. In developing a communications strategy, Williams (1998) notes that women candidates are faced with a "paradox of negativity." Women who engage in negative campaigning risk being called shrill, strident, vicious, unfeminine, or "bitchy" whereas men are simply seen as "fighters." On the other hand, when men run against women they have to be careful not to be seen as "beating up on a woman." In the 1996 race Collins and Brennan both used negative campaign tactics sparingly, seemingly sensing the danger in going negative.

Collins' ads had her speaking directly to the camera and promoting her bus tour that put her on "Main Street" with the voters. In one such 30-second ad called "Open

for Business," Collins mentioned her commitment to helping Maine's small businesses, saying, "Creating new jobs for Maine is my top priority. That's why I'm running for the Senate (Campbell 1996, Sept. 23)."

A number of polls suggested that Collins was faring well with women voters, including those who were Democrats. Both candidates understood the importance of women voters and campaigned hard to attract their support. The National Organization for Women endorsed Brennan. A pro-Collins ad countered by citing her support of the Violence against Women Act and anti-stalking legislation. She also pointed out that, unlike her opponent, she had always been pro-choice. Collins was also supported by several women's groups including the Business and Professional Women's Clubs and the National Women's Political Caucus ("Ads, Fear and Reality" 1996). In a late-summer poll, *The Bangor Daily News* reported that Brennan trailed Collins among male voters 50 percent to 39 percent, and 46 percent to 41 percent among women. Because Republicans traditionally do better with men Brennan would have to make inroads with Democratic, non-enrolled, and moderate GOP women (Day 1996, Aug 10).

Brennan tried to raise concerns about Collins with women by tying her to the National Rifle Association. However, Chris Potholm, a polling consultant for King, believed that making an issue of the NRA, in a state with a quarter-million hunters, did more to hurt Brennan with rural, male voters than it helped him with women (Day 1996, Aug 10). In order to gain more Democratic support, especially among women, Collins created a coalition of over 170 Democrats that were supporting her campaign called "Democrats for Collins." Over 60 percent of the names on the list were women. Collins also held a series of "ladies luncheons" in different towns over the course of the campaign. The luncheons served as a way to meet with women voters and hear their concerns (Campbell 1996, Sept 15). Brennan also realized the importance of gaining the women's vote and held meetings with small groups of women across the state to listen to their concerns and get his message out to them. In response to Brennan's increased effort Collins said, "There's no doubt that he is concerned about where women voters are going, since Democrats (traditionally) do far better with women than men

(Campbell 1996, Sept 15)." Brennan, in referring to his NOW endorsement called it a sign of his "strong record of leadership in standing up and fighting for the women in Maine." The Collins campaign responded by pointing out that NOW always supported the Democratic candidate, including in 1994 when they endorsed Thomas Andrews over Olympia Snowe. Collins said, "I think Democratic and independent women are looking for someone with fresh ideas (Campbell 1996, Sept 15)."

Frank Luntz, a pollster who helped Republicans draft the "Contract with America" in 1994, spent over 2,000 hours with focus groups that resulted in a memorandum sent to all Republican candidates. He determined that, "the average American voter is a 32.7 year-old-white woman," and they "are harshly anti-partisan . . .they don't want to hear candidates call each other ideological names. . .The angry, indignant, inflammatory candidate is a turnoff (Day 1996, Oct 8)." Despite the "R" next to her name, Collins worked hard to portray herself as someone who would be an independent and nonpartisan Senator.

By October Collins and Brennan had raised about $1.5 million and $750,000, respectively. After Collins accepted $7,000 in contributions from employees of the Maine gun manufacturer Bushmaster, Brennan attacked her and accused her of siding with the gun lobby. By continually discussing Collins' support for gun owners, Brennan probably helped Collins in neutralizing a tricky gender issue among male voters. She may also have benefited from her support to repeal a ban on assault weapons (Campbell 1996, Nov 3).

On election day, Collins defeated Brennan by a margin of 49 to 44 percent. With her victory, Maine became the first state to have two sitting Republican female senators. Analysts cited Collins' appeal to independent voters as an important factor in her victory. The same exit polls showed 22 percent of Democrats supported Collins while only 13 percent of Republicans backed Brennan. She also won among independents by 51 to 38 percent. Her appeal to Mainers' sense of independence was a crucial factor in her victory in the same way it was for Margaret Chase Smith. Brennan was seen as partisan, while Collins portrayed herself as a new breed who would provide Maine

with an independent voice in the Senate. Echoing Margaret Chase Smith's focus on military affairs, Collins immediately spoke with the Senate Majority Leader, Trent Lott about the importance of either her or Senator Snowe getting a spot on the Armed Services Committee (Campbell 1996, Nov 7).

The 2008 Senate Race

After winning a Senate seat in 1996, Collins defeated Democrat Chellie Pingree in 2002 for a second term. In 2008 Collins was unopposed in the primary and faced Representative Tom Allen in the general election. Allen was undoubtedly a quality candidate, having served six terms in the House from Maine's 1st District. He felt confident he could defeat Collins based on her support for the unpopular Republican President, George W. Bush. At the time Allen announced his candidacy in May 2007, many national political observers said Collins was vulnerable (Bradbury 2008, Nov 5).

During her two terms in the Senate, Collins became a highly visible congressional leader on the issues of homeland security and intelligence reform, which may have worked to neutralize any latent gender biases against her. As a result, the role of gender in the 2008 election was significantly less than it had been in 1996. In many ways 2008 showed that Collins had been able to move beyond the issue and focus on her record in office instead. Still, the media featured a number of stories about Collins' personality and style of dress, as well as her status as a single woman, topics largely ignored in media coverage of Allen. This is consistent with Dolan's (2004) finding that the media tend to focus on such topics to a greater extent when covering female candidates, which can reinforce stereotyped impressions that voters may have that women are less serious candidates.

With the unpopularity of Republicans in 2008, Collins understandably tried to distance herself from her party, instead stressing her record of political independence. Notably, she chose not to attend the Republican National Convention in September in order to remain in Maine. She also cited a "prior commitment" in declining to appear with vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin during a campaign stop in Bangor. Her campaign ads and literature never mentioned her party label and the word

"independent" was almost always featured prominently. She used her record as an incumbent to convince voters that she would be a more effective senator than Allen. During a debate with Allen in Brewer she told the audience, "You deserve a senator who knows how to get things done, a senator who has been effective for you. I have a long record of legislative accomplishments (Trotter 2008, Oct 18)." She made a point of noting that she had voted with the Republican majority in the Senate only 67 percent of the time, while Allen had voted with Democrats 98 percent of the time (Bradbury 2008, Nov 5).

As a House member, Allen had some incumbency advantages but these were mostly limited to the 1st district. In order to unseat Collins he had to overcome the significant geographic and cultural obstacles that typically face politicians from southern Maine who choose to run in statewide races. Allen was not nearly as well known as Collins in northern and eastern Maine, so Allen had to spend extra time campaigning in the 2nd district. This was not an easy task considering that it is the largest district east of the Mississippi covering nearly 27,326 square miles. While Allen didn't have to win the 2nd district, he needed to do well enough to offset any support for Collins in the 1st district. Dennis Bailey, a Democratic political strategist commented on the challenges facing Allen, "When you run against a popular incumbent, it isn't enough to say, 'I'm a good guy, vote for me,' you've got to give people a reason not to vote for (Collins). It's like a heavyweight fight. In order to win against the champion, you have to take the fight to them (Bell 2008, Sep 29)."

Northern Maine voters often resent voters from southern Maine because they perceive them as being wealthier and do not believe that urban politicians understand their rural culture. Maine's 1st district covers the southern urban and coastal areas of York, Cumberland, Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc counties and most of Kennebec County. The much larger 2nd district encompasses everything else. The 2nd district is typically more conservative especially on the issues of gun rights and abortion. In 2004, when Bush won the presidential election, both districts chose Kerry. However there were two counties that Bush won and both were in the 2nd district. Allen, a Portland

native, had easily won his 1st district seat in the House, but the 2008 campaign for the Senate would require him to appeal to voters in both districts. Tom Valley, a northern Maine Democrat who supported Collins, told *The Portland Press Herald*, "Tom is from the big city in Portland. And he tells people what they want to hear (Bell 2008, Oct 12)."

Despite their differences, voters in both districts are known for judging candidates more on personality than partisan issues. Maine is also known for its intolerance of negative campaign tactics compared to other states. Allen was criticized by many Democrats throughout the campaign for not being "tougher" on Collins. Because Collins was a popular incumbent, political analysts believed that Allen would have to deal with issues of her character in order to convince voters to replace her. In his political blog, "The Maine Race," Kevin Wack suggested that Allen should have made a stronger case that Collins was "politically expedient" and that her bipartisan votes showed a "lack of principle." He suggested that perhaps Allen didn't use this tactic because it was too negative and too risky. "It's much more personal; it cuts to the core of who Collins is," Wack wrote. "It seems that Maine voters will punish a candidate who strays from the issues and attacks his opponent's character (Kesich 2008, Nov. 5)." Allen's task was also complicated by the fact that it is often risky for a male candidate to attack a female candidate in fear of crossing the cultural taboo against "beating up on a woman (Williams 1998)."

Overall, Collins' ad campaign focused on constituent service while Allen focused more on national issues. Sandy Maisel, Director of the Goldfarb Center at Colby College, said that Allen's big-picture focus made sense because most Maine voters agreed with him on national issues, but he also pointed out that Collins' emphasis on her bipartisan efforts, even if the issues she focused on were smaller, worked to soften her political stances and made it more difficult for Allen to draw sharp contrasts between himself and Collins. In one such ad the narrator says Collins "brought Republicans and Democrats together" to pass legislation to increase the availability of Automated External Defibrillators in rural communities (Bell 2008, Sep 29). Collins also released a television ad dealing with the financial crisis titled, "A Time for

Bipartisanship." A male narrator tells the viewer, "It's a time for bipartisanship. America faces a grave threat to our financial system. In dealing with this crisis, Susan Collins has been guided by three principles: Strong protections for taxpayers and homeowners; curbs on excessive executive pay; and tough oversight. While Susan works for a bipartisan solution, Tom Allen launched a new attack ad against her. That's not leadership. Susan Collins - an independent voice for Maine (Bradbury 2008, Oct. 3)." This ad worked to reinforce Collins' image as a moderate who was focused on solutions rather than partisan wrangling.

Herrnson and Lucas (2006) found that female candidates are more likely than male candidates to disapprove of negative campaigning. When women candidates do raise negative issues they are more likely to avoid family matters because of the risk in drawing attention to the fact they are breaking with traditional gender stereotypes by running for office. Because Collins did not have a family of her own she had to be particularly careful here. At one point, the Collins campaign strayed into this tricky area in pointing out that Allen had missed a number of votes during his time in the House. Allen responded, with his family at his side for support, that he was caring for his cancer-stricken wife at the time.

During the debates, Collins again worked to reinforce her message of independence, while emphasizing that Allen consistently voted the Democratic position. She pointed to instances when she deviated from Republican policies or worked with Democrats to fashion legislation on energy, the war in Iraq, and other concerns. Collins told the audience, "That bipartisan approach has made me effective in dealing with many of the challenges of our time (Bradbury 2008, Oct. 15)." Although women are more likely to be Democrats, studies have shown the gender gap is smaller when the Republican candidate is a woman. A September poll conducted by Survey USA showed Collins leading Allen 59 percent to 38 percent among men and 51 percent to 40 percent among women (Tuttle 2008, Sep 26).

On election day, Collins handily defeated Allen. She won every county, including her native Aroostook County nearly three-to-one and Penobscot County by

more than two-to-one. The only places where Allen collected more votes were his hometown of Portland, South Portland and Waterville. Winning her third term in the Senate, Collins was the only Republican elected to federal office in New England in 2008 ("Collins at the Center" 2008). Collins' win was widely attributed to her skillful campaign that played up her strengths and minimized her vulnerabilities. Allen was not able to capitalize on those vulnerabilities and was certainly hindered by the decline in prominence of the Iraq War on the national agenda.

Conclusion

The four case studies presented here show that gender may interact with a state's political environment in ways that provide women candidates with both opportunities and constraints. The dearth of women members of Congress is often explained by the dearth of women as candidates. The experiences of Margaret Chase Smith and Susan Collins, although similar in some respects, illustrate important changes over time in the political opportunity structure faced by women in U.S. politics. Whereas Margaret Chase Smith initially entered politics as the widow of a member of Congress, Susan Collins saw herself in politics from a young age, earning a college degree in government and navigating the pipeline of experience in the political sphere. Existing studies claim recruitment is the missing link to women in political office but these case studies suggest it is an obstacle that can be overcome since neither Smith nor Collins were recruited by their party. Further research should be conducted to determine whether political parties affect the destiny of female candidates differently in various states.

Recently, campaigns have been growing longer and more expensive. Margaret Chase Smith encountered a financial disadvantage in 1948 but managed to spin it to the detriment of her wealthy opponents. Because Mainers considered themselves humble and frugal they favored her grass-roots volunteer campaign style to campaigns run on personal wealth. In this way, the prevailing political culture of the 1940s allowed Smith to overcome a potentially debilitating disadvantage. Both Smith and Collins used their knowledge of the idiosyncratic Maine electorate to craft their communications strategy. Although Smith did not have direct control of her message in the way Collins would

through purchased media, she created an image of an independent and down-to-business lady without a feminist agenda. Collins' image presented through the media was noticeably similar to Smith's in that it focused on her qualifications as a candidate rather than on her qualifications as a woman.

In Smith's 1948 Senate race, her opponents underestimated how much the voters would disapprove of their negative campaign tactics. Attacks on Smith because of her gender, among other reasons, offended Mainers inherent sense of fairness and decency and gave Smith the ability to run as the underdog. Smith used reverse spin to take on the issue of her gender by drawing attention to Hildreth's exhortations against women in politics.

Voter bias, based on culturally ingrained gender stereotypes, leads voters to evaluate female candidates differently than male candidates. Both Smith and Collins countered these stereotypes by focusing on the masculine issues of defense and war. Also, both candidates actively courted women's groups across the state. Historically, Maine's political culture has valued women who demonstrate independence and the ability to overcome adversity. Maine's harsh winters required women to do a fair share of the work necessary to survive. This celebration of rugged and independent Maine women suggests this concept of gender is accepted by the people of the state and goes a long way toward explaining the political success of

Margaret Chase Smith and Susan Collins in the traditionally male-dominated realm of politics. Although Margaret Chase Smith had to deal with the gender issue in a much more direct way than did Susan Collins, their experiences resembled each other some notable ways, especially in the way both women candidates worked hard to position themselves as an independent voice to match the independent spirit of the Maine voters. Both women understood how to work this image to their advantage, by adopting a theme of independence in their public communications. By demonstrating that women might use their gender as an advantage in certain contexts, we hope to foster further research on the ways that gender interacts with the variety of political cultures found in different states.

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