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As I reflect on the culmination of my undergraduate journey at the University of Notre Dame, the significance of the library and its resources in shaping my scholarly endeavors becomes unmistakably clear. Over the past year, I have immersed myself in original research focused on women's participation in the Zambian parliament, a journey that has culminated in my senior thesis titled "Advocacy or Family Relations? Pathways for Women into the Zambian National Assembly." This research holds profound personal significance for me, as it not only aligns with my passion for politics but also stems from a deep-rooted curiosity about the pathways women navigate to attain political leadership in Zambia—a country that has yet to see a woman ascend to the presidency.

My journey towards crafting this thesis commenced in my sophomore year, under the guidance of my research advisor, Fr. Bob Dowd, who entrusted me with the task of delving into the realm of women's representation in African politics. This led me to discover the plethora of resources available through the Hesburgh Library.

The library's online catalog emerged as my gateway to a wealth of literature, where I chanced upon seminal works such as "Women and Power in Post-Conflict Africa" by Aili Mari Tripp. This foundational text ignited many questions for me such as the role of women in politics and how women are getting into political leadership.

As my journey progressed into my junior year, I consulted Mark Robison, our Political Science librarian. I spoke with Mark for the first time during a class discussion where he shared about different databases that we can make use of as we build our literature reviews. I spoke to him individually and during our discussions, Mark introduced me to a myriad of databases, including

the Political Science, Social Science, and International Political Science Abstract databases. Moreover, he recommended tools such as RefWorks and Zotero for organizing literature and references—a recommendation that revolutionized my research process.

The International Political Science Abstract database played a pivotal role in my research journey, serving as a cornerstone for uncovering relevant sources efficiently. Its robust search functionalities allowed me to tailor my queries based on specific criteria, enabling me to swiftly identify scholarly insights that resonated with the nuances of my research topic. The ability to filter searches based on author, subject, or abstract proved instrumental in navigating through the vast expanse of literature and pinpointing sources pertinent to my thesis inquiry.

Furthermore, Zotero was indispensable in helping me manage the plethora of sources I encountered. With its intuitive interface, I curated and organized my bibliography, ensuring that every citation was cataloged with precision and easily accessible. This organization not only streamlined the writing process but also facilitated the seamless integration of sources into my thesis narrative.

After delving into the library resources and familiarizing myself with the literature, I began to prepare for my fieldwork and I had another meeting with Mark Robison where I asked him about how to conduct archival research in a government library. This conversation was very productive because it helped me gain insight into my method even before I went into the field. Furthermore, Mark suggested some articles and authors that I should look at to better understand my topic. Seeing that there is not much literature on the topic specifically for Africa, I looked at North and Latin American literature using the Social Science database. This proved very useful in further understanding the themes and topics within my research question.

As I ventured into the field, I immersed myself in the archives of the *Zambian National Assembly*. Guided by the advice of Mark Robison, I navigated the intricacies of archival research, mining through government order papers and parliamentary debates spanning over two decades. Additionally, I conducted interviews with key stakeholders, seeking to understand the pathways for women into political leadership.

Upon my return to Notre Dame, the library remained a great resource as I delved into the analysis of my findings. The Transcription Pedal was pivotal in streamlining the transcription process of my interviews and enabling me to proceed with data analysis swiftly. After analyzing my data, I continued to use the International Political Science Abstract database, where I reviewed a collection of peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters spanning the time period from 1990 to 2023. I used new search phrases that came up from field work such as ‘political dynasty’ and ‘resource mobilization in politics’. Doing this helped me contextualize my findings and put them in conversation with existing literature.

In the final stages of my thesis, the library’s comprehensive resources, coupled with the guidance of Mark Robison and my advisor, Jaimie Bleck, enabled me to weave together a narrative that shed light on the nuanced dynamics of women’s political participation in Zambia. While my thesis primarily relied on literature reviews and interviews, the archival data collected during my fieldwork will serve as a cornerstone for future research endeavors, including my forthcoming studies at Oxford where I intend to further explore the role of female members of parliament in the *Zambian parliament*.

Utilizing the invaluable Hesburgh library resources, engaging in insightful discussions with Mark Robison, and maintaining regular biweekly meetings with my advisor, Jaimie Bleck, has

not only deepened my understanding of a topic I am truly passionate about but has also enabled me to craft an informative and impactful thesis. The culmination of this collective effort resulted in a comprehensive exploration of the nuanced influence of family background on women's pathways to political leadership in Zambia. This experience stands as a testament to the collaborative spirit at Notre Dame, reaffirming the adage that meaningful research is indeed a collective endeavor, requiring the collective efforts of a supportive community and world-class resources.