After authoring a paper on the history of affirmative action in front of the Supreme Court, I still wondered about the Supreme Court's role in shaping public policy. Since affirmative action started as an executive order during the Kennedy administration, I sought to analyze how the executive orders have been received in federal court and, more specifically, what factors about an executive order and the court lead to the executive branch receiving a favorable ruling when challenged. Political scientists consistently acknowledge that judge's preferences influence their rulings, and I intended to apply this framework to executive orders by analyzing whether copartisan judges (i.e., those appointed by presidents of the same party as the executive order author) are more likely to rule in favor of the executive.

I reached out to Dr. Patrick Wohlfarth, a specialist in judicial politics, for guidance on this project and to discuss the possibility of him serving as my Honors Thesis Advisor. He agreed, and my first step was determining how to operationalize the project and collect data. Dr. Wohlfarth strongly recommended I utilize Thomson Reuters's Westlaw legal database, which I accessed through the library, to identify the cases that challenged executive orders by their treatment status. By searching the executive order Federal Register citation for each executive order, from Executive Order 9538 to Executive Order 14,062, on Westlaw, I successfully identified all cases that either examined or issued substantive rulings on the executive order through Westlaw's treatment statuses indicator. I composed a comprehensive dataset of all 578 cases examining executive orders since 1945 in federal court. My analysis would not have been possible without the library's access to Thomson Reuters's Westlaw, as its treatment statuses are the field-standard method of determining how laws, in my analysis, executive orders, were incorporated into the case and the subsequent ruling.

Further discussions with Dr. Wohlfarth led me to shift the focus of my analysis from the role of partisan alignment to that of divided and unified government as an influencer on the language and substance of the executive orders and, in turn, judges' rulings. This shift led to a vast shift in the focus of my literature, as I engaged with executive branch scholarship on unilateral directive, in addition to judicial scholarship on the influence of judge's preferred policies (also known as judicial attitudinalism) and judicial deference to the executive. I first delved into this rich literature by reading two *Annual Review of Political Science* articles: "Polarization and the Judiciary" by Dr. Richard Hasen and "Presidential Unilateral Power" by Dr. Kenneth Lowande and Dr. Jon Rogowski. These two articles, which I accessed through *JSTOR*, gave me an in-depth analysis of the state of scholarly work regarding these issues. I then utilized numerous of the references discussed in these articles to branch out my bibliography. To further ensure that I covered the essential literature on presidential unilateral action, judicial attitudinalism, and judicial deference to the executive, I identified key pieces of literature, most especially "To Revoke or Not Revoke" by Dr. Sharece Thrower, and incorporated their primary cites in my thesis.

When determining whether to cite literature in my honors thesis, the final product of this analysis, I had the flexibility to incorporate a diverse range of sources. This enabled me to bolster the theoretical foundation of my argument through citing prior studies that outline the importance

of each independent variable. While writing my thesis, I also consulted Dr. Sarah Croco strongly encouraged me to utilize Dr. Leanne Powner's *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide*. This book was instrumental in shaping the writing in my thesis. Additionally, Dr. Croco was helpful in giving me various resources to utilize R coding software to assist in my statistical analyses and create the data visualizations for the results section of my thesis.

After reflecting on the process of my honors thesis, I have a greater appreciation of the various resources available to students whether it be academic journals to legal databases to archives. Most especially, access to Westlaw was paramount, as it allowed me to build the foundation of my thesis – the executive order legal challenges database. I could not have conducted my analysis without it and, more importantly, gained a passion for conducting empirical research. Due to this experience, I solidified my decision to attend graduate school to eventually reach an end goal of becoming a professor at a research institution. This experience also allowed me to understand the non-linear nature of conducting research due to the various challenges and obstacles I overcame. Lastly, writing my honors thesis also gave me the opportunity to gain first-hand experience in quantitative analyses and applying the statistical methods and coding skills learned in my courses in the Department of Government and Politics and Honors Global Challenges and Solutions Program, respectively.

If I conducted my analysis again, I would cross-check the Westlaw treatment status for each executive order with the Shepard's Citations from Nexis Uni's legal database, as it is a common tool utilized by legal academics. Although Shepard's Citations operate nearly identically to Westlaw's treatment statuses in that both determine the treatment of a law in a future case, legal academics primarily utilize Shepard's Citations. Subsequently, cross-checking this aspect of my analysis would allow for more interdisciplinary implications of my findings. The library could better help undergraduate students' needs by creating a forum for students engaged in research to discuss their research with other like-minded students, as an opportunity to collaborate with each other, and also gain experience distilling the key points of their work simplistically.