Lisa Miller
Annotated Bibliography

Bartels, L. M. (2009). *Unequal democracy: The political economy of the new gilded age.*

Princeton University Press.

The cornerstone of my voting section and integral to my entire project, this book is

very important to the development of many of my key ideas. It is an almost entirely

data driven book, which contrasts from a lot of books on the topic. It may seem

intuitive to use data to explain these topics, but the amount original research that

goes into something like that is extraordinarily large, which is a testament to

Professor Bartels.

The most extraordinary thing about his work is that he challenges commonly held

beliefs (even in the political science community) and often finds solid data to display

how they might all be wrong. There are at least four different key points that

directly contradict modern political theory that could change the way we look at the

way people behave in a democracy, at least in was as highly free market as ours.

I use the book to show how things that politics have taught people to believe, might

actually be false. The point that I am trying to make is not that everything we know

is wrong, but that we should still challenge these ideas and that we haven't

developed beyond the point of finding new ways to influence people.

Freeman, R. B. (2007). *America Works: Thoughts on an Exceptional US Labor Market.* Russell

Sage Foundation.

This book by Freeman outlines the pros and cons a capitalist society, especially in the context of the US and its nearly free-market system. Of course he notes many benefits to the system like rates of low unemployment, high per capita income, and continually growing GDP. But for every perk of such a system there are two downsides, and Freeman tells a brief story of these capitalist shortfalls. They include the fact that we are poor at reducing poverty or raising the wages of the average worker and have seen stagnant living standards and wage growth over the past forty years. He blames union decline, while also admitting how the labor force of industrialization is what gave us the warped sense of accomplishment and work culture we still hold today.

This book provides context for one of the most important sections of my project where I go into the specifics of voting and behavior. It is a strange social phenomenon where people do not view the rich as being the beneficiaries of inequality, but rather see them as having earned the money they are allowed to hoard.

Hacker, J. S., & Pierson, P. (2011). *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer--and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class.* Simon and Schuster.

Written about income, and not necessarily wealth, this book shows the history of how we have created a country where the rich can remain so wealthy. One of their biggest concerns, and reasonably so, is the middle class. Their new take is to accuse politics, instead of the natural forces of capitalism for getting us to where we are

today. They claim that the rich have used their political muscle in the form of campaign contributions to control the direction of politics in order to raise themselves up and that the inevitable result is the stagnation of the middle class. Their take is, in the end, rather bleak. In terms of recommendations for the future, they see the rich as being too powerful, organized, and established to be reckoned with. This is where my interpretation differed from these men, since this book was written before the Tea Party was in full swing, and I honestly believe that they have given power back into the hands of the middle class by showing them how dysfunctional politics can get.

This book basically showed me the data behind the history of income inequality, and pointed me towards solutions when I disagreed with them.

Oliver, M. L., & Shapiro, T. M. (2006). *Black wealth, white wealth: A new perspective on racial inequality*. Taylor & Francis.

Oliver and Shapiro create compelling arguments for the origins of White and Black wealth and how our current wealth distribution is rooted in slavery and other historical injustices. Not only do they make the case for historical reasoning, but also point to current tax code and policy that hinders African Americans from catching up to Whites when it comes to wealth. Though lacking in concrete data and graphs, their evidence for racial inequality is overwhelming in their story telling.

This narrative is particularly useful to my own work because it led me through a possible telling of the story I wanted to tell. It helped me to organize my ideas (since

theirs were organized so well) and to think about new approaches, like certain

facets of the tax code I hadn't considered. This led me to talk about race and wealth

not just as the statistics that arise from this intersection but as a historical

relationship that shows no signs of going away.

I wound up using the book in my own telling of racial wealth inequality,

intermingling their evidence with my own research. Using the examples they give

for current institutional racism, and then showing the effects of those trends,

seemed to be the most effective way to blend the two ideas.

http://stateofworkingamerica.org/

A site controlled by the economic policy institute, they provide very good visual and

hard data about economic issues. Specifically they have a great deal of data on

incomes and how they are distributed according to all sorts of demographics. Their

goal is, as I understand it, to display the effects of the economy on the lives of every

kind of American. This is why almost all of their data is analyzed by age,

race/ethnicity, gender, education level, etc. They understand that the disparities

that we see between specific groups of people say a lot about the inequalities in our

country especially as it applies to working Americans.

I specifically use two different data sets. One compares productivity to mean income

over time to see how the two have diverged over the years. The other data set

contains income statistics by race. These were necessary statistics for me to include

in order to develop my arguments on the state of inequality as it stands now. The

site itself was invaluable because this data is otherwise difficult to find and never presented in a clear way.

This website is for a nonprofit think tank through Bard College that does research and creates publications on contemporary policy issues. I use a specific publication in which they outline recent trends in household wealth.

This is where I found all of the data I would need for my pie chart. The data that I used contained average wealth distribution statistics that I then ran through a formula to create my pie chart. This was used to then represent what would happen to the various groups based on how much they are taxed. Basically for every percentile group **y=a(x-b) + b** where a is tax rate, b is exemption level, x is original wealth, and y is resulting wealth. It is a relatively straightforward way to look at taxes, but does an effective job of expressing how the death tax works.

This information is relatively hard to find since wealth is a difficult statistic to measure. Since it is comprised of many different facets of a person's financial world, collecting the information is a hassle. This, in addition to the fact that the raw data provide by the census is almost impossible to read without an expert, made this study invaluable to my research.