

Pop Culture Censorship and Authoritarian Stability*

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Abstract

Censorship is typically understood as a means for dictators to silence opposition. This article, however, develops and tests the theory that one form of censorship – pop culture censorship – serves not only to limit political information, but to reward dictators' conservative supporters. Text analysis of 8,000 films reviewed for distribution during Chile's dictatorship demonstrates that predominantly violent and sexual content was banned. Qualitative and quantitative evidence suggests that moral censorship served as a policy concession to supporters, particularly conservative Catholic groups. Political material was banned for sympathetic depictions of revolution, rather than critiques of right-wing governments, in line with collective action potential theories of censorship. Results cannot be explained by hidden political content, distributor self-censorship, or censor preferences. Findings suggest that even repressive measures can be used in part to maintain support for authoritarian regimes.

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Literature on censorship has emphasized its role in reducing and silencing opposition through press and internet controls (Dimitrov 2014; King, Pan, and Roberts 2015; Lorentzen 2014), aligning with a broader literature on the role of repression in eliminating dissent (Davenport 2010; Svolik 2012). However, most dictators seek not only to suppress opposition, but to ensure the support of their backing coalition (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005). Autocrats adopt a variety of policies to ensure such support, from economic concessions to propaganda (Rozenas and Stukal 2017; Wintrobe 2000). While traditionally understood as a punitive strategy, this article develops and tests a theory that censorship – in particular the censorship of entertainment – can serve as a policy concession to authoritarian supporters.

Two central theories have been posited to explain overtly political censorship: *state critique* theory, which suggests that regimes ban materials that portray them negatively, and *collective action potential* theory, which argues that autocrats censor content that could breed dissent (King, Pan, and Roberts 2015). While this work focuses on press and internet censorship, dictators often censor popular culture. Saudi Arabia banned movie theaters for 35 years; Argentina's last dictatorship banned Rod Stewart's "Do You Think I'm Sexy?"; and Malawi's single party autocracy banned B-movie *Barbarella*. In 2017, more than 550 violations of artistic freedom were documented across 78 countries (Freemuse 2018). In addition to how common such censorship is, freedom of expression – including freedom to produce or consume art – is a fundamental human right. Like press controls, entertainment bans require a large bureaucracy, making them costly for dictators. If anything, however, research suggests that access to entertainment mollifies opposition (Kern and Hainmueller 2009; Wedeen 1999).

This paper argues that pop culture censorship can be used not just to limit political content, as existing theories suggest, but to reward a dictator's backing coalition. Support for censorship in democracies has been linked to the "third-person effect hypothesis": individuals support bans because they believe controversial materials could drive others to commit immoral acts, even if they themselves are unaffected (Davison 1983). Applying the third-person effect to autocratic regimes suggests that conservative supporters may *want* censorship, meaning it could be used as a policy concession. Most centrally, this suggests that violent and sexual content should motivate censorship. To provide evidence for this theory, I draw on original data on all 8,000 films reviewed for distribution during Chile's dictatorship. Text analysis shows that censorship consistently targeted sexual, violent, and morally taboo content, demonstrating that existing theories of censorship are inadequate to explain entertainment restrictions. Qualitative evidence links film censorship to the use of morality policy to reward supporters, particularly influential conservative groups like Opus Dei. Additionally, censors appointed by the Ministry of Education – the branch of government most tightly linked to Opus Dei – were more likely to vote to ban immoral, but not political, materials.

Findings do not preclude a role for political content. Adapting the state critique and collective action potential theories to pop culture, results show that mentions of communism and revolution are correlated with censorship, while depictions of right-wing authoritarian regimes are not. Though findings are inconsistent, this suggests a role for the collective action potential theory: pop culture censorship may serve to ideologically isolate opponents. Supporting this interpretation, councilors affiliated with the armed forces – the group presumably most concerned about the spread of revolutionary ideals – were significantly more likely to vote to ban political films. I additionally address several alternative explanations for central empirical results. Hand-coded metrics reduce concerns that immoral material masked political themes. A difference-in-differences framework demonstrates that distributor self-censorship did not drive findings, comparing rates of review at key times using

a web-scraped database of all films produced worldwide. Censor preferences alone also cannot explain results: democratization had a significant effect on censorship even when all councilors were appointed by dictator Augusto Pinochet. Placing Chile in comparative perspective suggests results are unlikely to be driven by idiosyncratic preferences.

This article makes two primary contributions to research on censorship, human rights, and authoritarian stability. First, it extends literature on authoritarian censorship to identify why dictators place controls on content outside the overtly political. Using original data on movies reviewed for distribution during Chile's dictatorship, this work quantifies the type of materials concerning to the regime. While the data is unique, qualitative evidence suggests similar content is restricted across right-wing dictatorships. Though just one in a broader set of strategies, identifying the role of such social policing can improve our understanding of how dictators govern. Second, the study highlights the role of regime supporters in influencing authoritarian rule, even seemingly punitive behaviors. Public and private goods provision, quasi-democratic institutions, and propaganda have all been found to increase support for dictatorships (Albertus 2015; Magaloni 2008; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005). Such strategies of co-optation, however, are typically treated as distinct from punitive policies like state-led violence and censorship. This research shows even repressive behaviors can be used to reward supporters, offering a benefit unique to authoritarian rule (Acemoglu et al. 2016; Stanley 1996; Stepan 1988). This research additionally contributes to work using archival data to better understand conflict processes and authoritarian rule (Balcells and Sullivan 2018; Davenport 2000; Klor, Saiegh, and Satyanath 2017; Sullivan 2016).

Censorship and Authoritarian Stability

Censorship is traditionally understood as a means to limit the spread of political information damaging to governments. Two central theories explain press and internet censorship. *State critique* theory suggests that autocracies ban materials critical of the state, as a means to limit dissatisfaction. However, this comes at a cost: forums to express criticism may provide citizens a safety valve that encourages dissent within limits acceptable to the regime (Chwe 2013; Dimitrov 2014, 2015; Greitens 2013; Hassid 2012; Lorentzen 2014; Policzer 2009). *Collective action potential* theory claims that autocrats target material that facilitates or inspires dissent. By allowing criticism but suppressing mobilization, the regime can gain information about threats while controlling citizen behavior. In an experimental study of internet censorship in China, for example, King, Pan, and Roberts (2015) find that government censors target blog posts related to collective action, not those expressing discontent.

Less attention has been paid to censorship of pop culture, although work in history and literature has considered the drivers and impact of censorship on art (Calirman 2012; Graham-Jones 2000; Morais 2017). However, entertainment censorship is common in dictatorships, used in regimes from China to South Africa to the Philippines. Normatively, freedom of expression – including freedom to produce or consume art – is a human right (Brett 1998). Entertainment is widely consumed and transmits ideas, and is thus important in shaping identity (Nafisi 2008; Selbin 2013). Film is a particularly powerful medium in this regard, “as one of the greatest artistic harbingers of free speech and expression, and a form that has the ability to shape culture” (Asia Society 2018).

How do existing theories of censorship apply to pop culture? Building on the state critique theory, authoritarian regimes may be concerned with negative depictions of like-governments, since they highlight regime illegitimacy. In the Chilean case, this suggests depictions of right-wing authori-

tarian regimes motivate censorship. Drawing on the collective action potential theory, sympathetic portrayals of revolution or opposition ideology – communism in the Chilean case – could provoke censorship as a means to politically isolate opponents. This aligns with broader work on the role of punitive measures to stifle opposition: research on repression demonstrates that dictators use violence to eliminate or preempt political challenges (Davenport 2007, 2010; Herreros 2006; Svolik 2012; Wintrobe 2000), and political information plays a central role in facilitating opposition (Christensen and Garfias 2018; Crabtree, Darmofal, and Kern 2015; Larreguy, Marshall, and Snyder 2018; Siegel 2011).

However, dictators also seek to maintain some popular support (Morrow et al. 2008; Weeks 2008; Wintrobe 2000). Authoritarian regimes serve “winning coalitions” that they rely on to maintain power (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005), and co-optation helps dictators sustain such backing (Gregory, Schröder, and Sonin 2011; Magaloni, Cayeros, and Estévez 2017; Svolik 2012; Wintrobe 2000). Quasi-democratic institutions and the provision of public goods, for example, can be used to maintain support and ensure compliance with the state (Albertus 2015; Blaydes 2010; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005; Croke et al. 2016; Deacon 2009; Gallagher and Hanson 2013, 2014; Gandhi 2008; Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009; Lust-Okar 2005; Morrow et al. 2008; Truex 2017). Closest to censorship, propaganda allows the state to enforce order and spreads its ideology (Carter and Carter 2016; Geddes and Zaller 1989; Guriev and Treisman 2015; Treisman 2018; Rozenas and Stukal 2017). Berezin (1997), for example, demonstrates that Italy’s fascist government co-opted symbols of Roman Catholicism through public ritual to build support. The need to maintain winning coalitions thus heavily influences authoritarian policies.

Unlike propaganda, censorship is understood as a strategy of denial to limit opposition access to information. However, under this framework pop culture controls represent a particular puzzle. As Wedeen (1999) notes in Syria, even political art is unlikely to inspire collective action. Kern and Hainmueller (2009) show that access to western television increased self-reported contentment with the East German regime, in part because entertainment had a pacifying effect. This suggests that access to pop culture materials may *reduce* dissent. Yet authoritarian regimes regularly ban even completely apolitical content: a great deal of China’s internet censorship apparatus focuses on removing pornography (King, Pan, and Roberts 2015).

Communication research in democratic contexts links individuals’ support for censorship to fears of delinquency in others. The “third-person effect hypothesis” shows that support for censorship of pop culture, like rap music, can be explained by individuals believing it might incite *others* to act delinquently, even if it seems unreasonable that they themselves would be so easily affected (Gunther 1995; Perloff 1993; McLeod, Eveland, and Nathanson 1997; Rojas, Shah, and Faber 1996; Salwen 1998). In an authoritarian context, Gunther and Hwa (1996) apply the third-person effect to the case of Singapore, finding that a substantial portion of the population supports television censorship because of perceived effects on others.

This article proposes that the *authoritarian third-person effect* allows regimes to use popular culture censorship not just to address political expression, but to reward supporters. The third-person effect shows that some conservative citizens actively want entertainment censorship. Regimes can thus use bans to appease members of their winning coalition who believe pop culture has negative social effects. While under a majority-rule government censorship supporters may lack the influence to overcome norms of freedom of expression, as a backing coalition in a minority-rule government they offer strong incentives to ban content. In this way, authoritarian rule offers a benefit

to supporters – censorship of materials deemed offensive – that democracies typically cannot, due to civil liberty protections. If true, we should see heavy censorship of content considered immoral by regimes’ backing coalitions, rather than an emphasis on limiting political content alone. This does not eliminate a role for political censorship, but rather suggests that existing theories do not adequately explain the logic of authoritarian social policing.

I test this in the case of Chile, where a military government depended on the support of the conservative upper classes to maintain power. While left-wing regimes often ban entertainment, this article focuses on the role of conservative supporters in motivating censorship. Thus right-wing dictatorship is the theory’s central scope condition. Left-wing regimes ban many of the same types of content, but qualitative evidence suggests that they do so for different reasons, including cultural protectionism. Chinese film censors, for example, stress “cultural security” and insulation from western influence (Johnson 2012). While this suggests erotica may be banned in both left- and right-wing regimes, the censorship of other content – like films featuring abortion – should vary considerably across governments. Given the authoritarian third-person effect suggests entertainment censorship is a policy concession, a secondary condition is that regimes need popular support (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005). While most autocrats rely on a “winning coalition,” some use widespread repression to prevent restiveness (Lichbach 1987). Such governments are less likely to use morality policy to maintain power.

Empirical Strategy

To identify censored content, this article draws on original data on film censorship during Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship (1973-1989) from Chile’s Council for Cinematic Classification (CCC). Because it practices prior review, the CCC has voted on every film distributed in Chile since 1938. Since few films were produced domestically, most were introduced by international distributors, limiting the possibility for self-censorship. The CCC tended to ban entire movies rather than edit offending scenes, and – even in rare cases where scenes were cut – this should run against findings. Alongside film censorship, Pinochet closed opposition newspapers, enforced prior censorship of the press, and burned books. Movie bans thus represents one of many strategies of information control.

Pinochet significantly expanded the CCC’s operations in 1974, increasing membership from five to 19 councilors. Censors were drawn from the Ministry of Education, armed forces, university rectors, the judiciary, the parents’ group Center for Parents and Guardians, and the School of Journalism. Signaling its importance to the regime, the CCC’s functions were enshrined in the 1980 constitution. The Rules of Cinematic Classification defined four broad types of movies to censor: those that “foment or propagate ideas contrary to the fundamental values of the Fatherland or the nation, like Marxism”; that “offend states with which Chile maintains international relations”; that “run contrary to public order, morality, or good customs”; and that “induce antisocial or delinquent behavior.” Table 1 shows a random sample of banned movies.

Short of being banned, films could be classified as for all ages or for 14, 18, and 21 and over. At least five councilors were supposed to watch every film, and indeed a median of five watched every movie.¹ Censors were assigned to films based on availability to come to the CCC offices, and they did not know in advance the film they were to review. The CCC enforced decisions through theater and video store inspections (Junta de Gobierno, Chile 1975). In rare cases distributors requested

¹There may be concern that the expansion of the CCC led to more discussions among councilors, and in turn to more censorship. In fact, a median of seven councilors watched each movie prior to CCC reform.

re-review by an “appeals court” made up of the education minister, the president of the Supreme Court, the president of the Bar Association, and the head of the Defense Chiefs-of-Staff (Brett 1998).

Table 1: Selection of banned movies

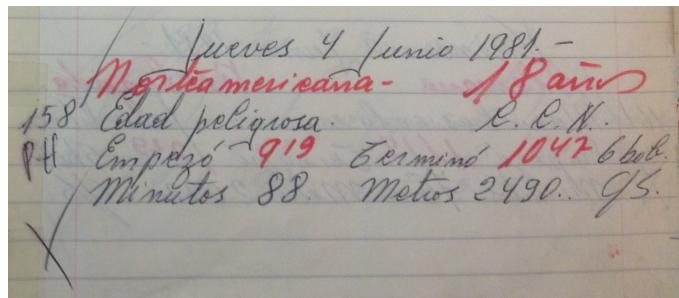
<i>The Eleventh Commandment</i>	<i>The Sunset in Geneva</i>
<i>Bambina</i>	<i>Between the Sheets</i>
<i>The Island of the Bloody Plantation</i>	<i>The Notorious Ones</i>
<i>Cuba</i>	<i>The Brazen Women of Balzac</i>
<i>La Verginella</i>	<i>Campus Pussycats</i>
<i>Hellhole</i>	<i>Last Tango in Paris</i>
<i>I Love You, I Don't</i>	<i>Victims of Vice</i>
<i>Massacre in Rio Grande</i>	<i>White Fire</i>
<i>The Lady of Monza</i>	<i>The Ruling Class</i>
<i>In Trouble</i>	<i>SS Camp 5: Women's Hell</i>

Data

Even after democratization the CCC’s process was highly secretive. Human Rights Watch reported: “The council’s deliberations are secret... It is impossible to know how [councilors] voted” (Brett 1998, 133). To develop a list of banned and permitted films, the CCC granted me access to its archives, where I collected all surviving documents related to film classification during the dictatorship. With this I developed a list of all films permitted and banned under Pinochet, along with how individual censors voted on each movie.

Because the archive is paper-based, to minimize missing data I collected, transcribed, and merged three sources. The first catalogs 10,698 movies reviewed between 1938 and 1994, which lists original and Chilean titles, date reviewed, and rating (for all audiences; for 14, 18, or 21 and over; or banned). The second are notebooks recording movies reviewed, a practice that began in 1977 (Figure 1). There is missing data where pages fell out, and notebooks for 1987 and most of 1988 disappeared from the archive. Bias is unlikely in either source, since missingness is due to record-keeping. Regressions include year fixed effects to account for temporal differences in archival practices.

Figure 1: Example CCC notebook entry

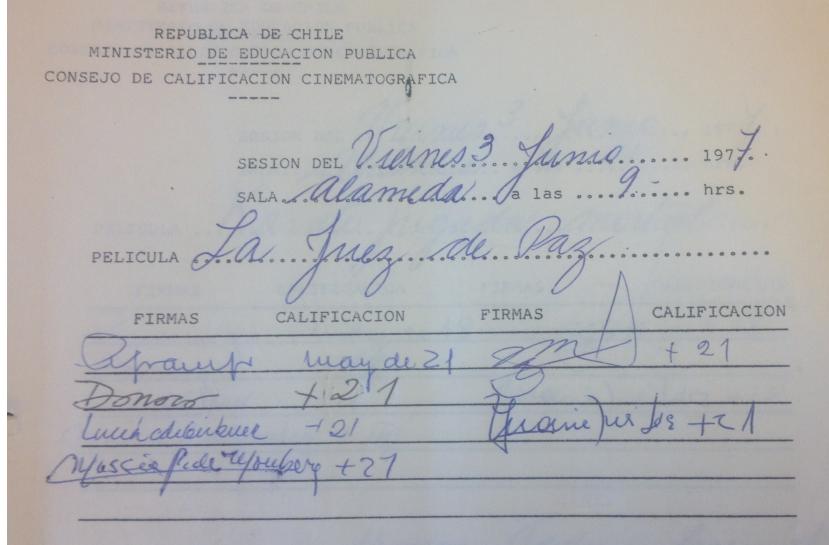


One source for movie data, showing date of review, title, country of origin, and rating (here, 18 and over).

The third source, *expedientes*, contain the date of review, the Chilean title, censors’ signatures, and how councilors voted for films reviewed between 1970 and 1989 (Figure 2). During transcription

each signature was assigned a unique code to create censor fixed effects. 77.98% of all films contained in the dataset are linked to *expedientes*. Missingness is unlikely to create bias, confirmed by the fact results are identical when using all films or just those with *expedientes*. Merging sources produces a dataset of 7,989 films viewed by the CCC between 1974 and 1989.

Figure 2: Example CCC *expediente*



Expedientes show how each censor voted (here 21 and over), as well as date of review and title.

Dependent Variable

My dependent variable is a binary indicator for whether a film was banned. 7.78% of films (604) reviewed were censored during the dictatorship. Figure 3 shows patterns of review and banning, importantly demonstrating a sharp increase in film censorship after CCC reorganization in 1974.² Democracies do ban some films, as shown in Appendix E.1, which compares censorship before and after Chile's coup. Rates of censorship, however, double after CCC's reorganization. This aligns with the third-person effect hypothesis: if censorship roughly follows the preferences of the median selectorate member, and that selectorate under autocracies is smaller and more conservative, bans should increase with the imposition of dictatorship.

Text Corpora

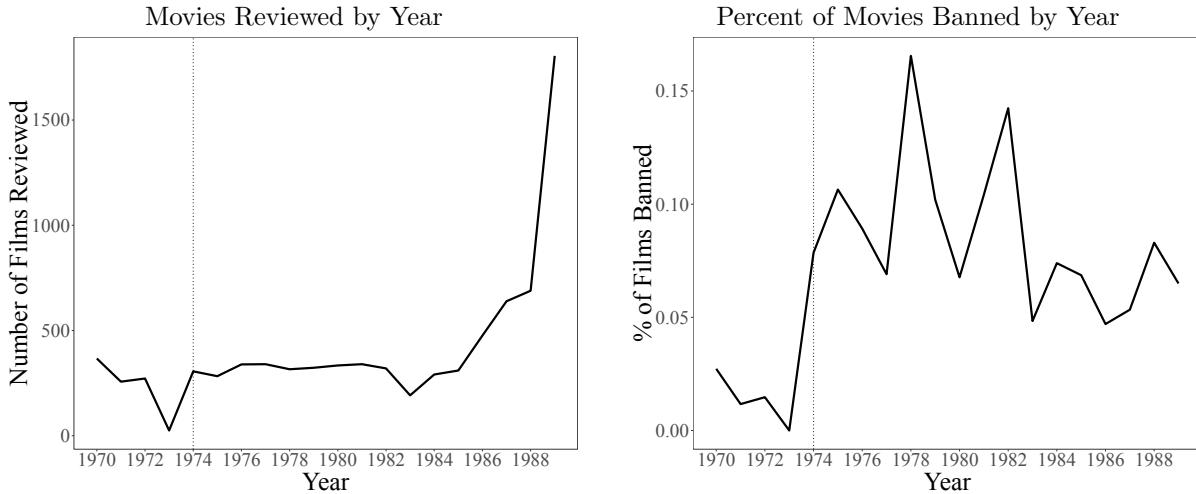
To identify content determinant of censorship, I draw on user-submitted keywords and plot summaries from Internet Movie Database (IMDb) pages.³ 91.41% of movies could be linked to their site. For the banned film *Bluebeard* (1972), keywords include: *aristocrat*, *lesbianism*, *guillotine*, *serial killer*, *corpse*, *uxoricide*, *falconry*, *freezer*, *widower*, *nun*, *impalement* and *suffocation*. Its plot summary reads:

Baron von Sepper is an Austrian aristocrat noted for his blue-toned beard, and his appetite for beautiful wives. His latest spouse, an American beauty named Anne, discovers a vault in his castle that's filled with the frozen bodies of several beautiful

²In 1989 the CCC was also charged with reviewing videos for private use, explaining the spike in films submitted for review.

³Because Chile was a small market and the films banned were mostly unknown until now, censorship was unlikely to affect worldwide popularity or the probability of having user-submitted keywords.

Figure 3: Movies reviewed and banned by year.



Except 1973, when the coup slowed distribution, rates of review were consistent before and after the establishment of the military government. Rates of censorship increased dramatically in 1974, the year the CCC was established.

women. When confronted with this slight oddity, Bluebeard explains to Anne that he found an easier alternative to divorce when he grew bored with his previous wives. In order to avoid being Bluebeard’s next frozen bride, Anne must find a way to outwit her murderous hubby.

Punctuation and stop words are removed from plot summaries and remaining terms “stemmed”⁴ to produce unigrams. Results in the main paper draw only on keywords, since they are more indicative of true meaning: the unigram “bust” may refer to the verb, a statue, or breasts, where keywords require no context. They also signal the appearance of features often excluded from plot summaries, as for *Bluebeard*. For example, 3,003 movies have at least one keyword associated with Marxism, revolution, or authoritarianism, compared to 573 with related unigrams.

Controls

To account for certain classes of films being persistently less likely to be banned, genre controls are included.⁵ Year reviewed fixed effects address shocks impacting CCC decisions or archival practices. I additionally control for the number of keywords and unigrams associated with a movie, since text is user-submitted. I include a binary indicator for whether the movie was a VHS, in case whether it was intended for public use influenced decisions. In some models I control for censor fixed effects, which reduces the sample but accounts for some censors being persistently more or less likely to ban movies.⁶

Text Analysis Methods

This article uses two methods of text analysis. The supervised Indian Buffet Process (sIBP) is a natural language processing method that identifies text “treatments” determinant of an outcome, here censorship (Fong and Grimmer 2016). Treatments are IMDb keywords grouped together based on exclusivity, which can then be interpreted substantively. For example, “cartoons,” “dragon,”

⁴Using the Porter stemmer.

⁵For 227 films, IMDb did not list genre; to account for this I inputted genre from the alternate film sites Filmaffinity.com and tMDB.com, leaving 31 films without genre.

⁶I include only censors who reviewed at least five films.

and “princess” identify children’s films. The sIBP draws on a document-term matrix, indexed by film with keywords as column names. Entries are how many times a term appears on a webpage, by definition one for keywords. The model is built on a training set and effect sizes are identified using withheld data (Egami et al. 2017). To ensure overlap, only those keywords and unigrams appearing at least 40 times across 30 movies are used. For keywords, this produces a dataset with 6,559 films and 1,503 terms. Coefficients reflect the marginal effect of any one feature on the outcome (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014). Under certain conditions, which evidence suggests this study meets, results can be interpreted causally. Appendix A describes the method, including estimation and evidence for causality, in greater detail.

The second method of text analysis relies on manually coding 38,000 keywords and 28,000 unigrams, to create a film content measure. I coded all film keywords and unigrams into categories designed to reflect sIBP results and CCC guidelines: *politics*, *sexual content*, *gore*, and *moral taboos*. With the exception of *gore*, each of these is additionally broken into component pieces (see Appendix A.2). To test the state critique theory, *politics* is broken down into mentions of *revolution*, *communism*, or *authoritarianism*. Because the moral taboos category judges “immoral” behavior from the perspective of conservative Catholics of the time, categories are the most granular, ranging from homosexuality to child abuse. For every film, the number of terms associated with each theme was summed: a movie with keywords “flesh eating” and “cannibal” scores a two for the moral taboo subcategory cannibalism. Content measures are then included as independent variables in logistic regressions, with the dependent variable whether a film was banned.

Coding Political Films

To ensure that political content is not being missed in text analysis, I additionally code every film for whether their plots prominently feature right-wing authoritarianism, communism, or revolution, using IMDb, Wikipedia, and film reviews. I additionally measure the directionality of political references: “revolution” may be mentioned in a negative (e.g., a commando infiltrates guerrillas to rescue his wife), positive (students revolt against an oppressive government), or neutral (a love story set during the French Revolution) way. The state critique theory suggests that negative depictions of right-wing authoritarianism should be censored, while the collective action potential theory suggests sympathetic depictions of revolution or communism should be banned.

Censored Content

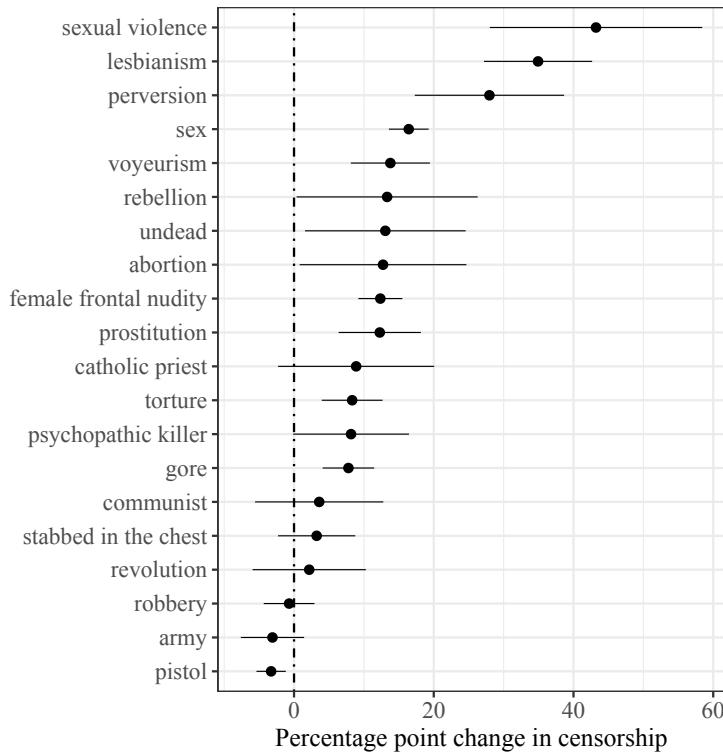
This paper argues that pop culture censorship serves not just to limit political content, but maintain popular support. Central to this theory is that immoral content is in fact censored. Text analysis demonstrates that the films most commonly censored contained violent and sexual material. Descriptively Figure 4 shows differences in the probability of censorship between films with and without given keywords of interest, providing initial descriptive evidence of morality censorship. Appendix B shows the keywords and unigrams most correlated with censorship, almost all of which relate to sex, gore, or moral taboos.

sIBP

Figure 5 shows results of the sIBP, without and with controls.⁷ Each feature represents a type of film, such as westerns (feature 3). Gore (features 5 and 7) increases the probability of censorship by 4 to 7%, and sexual content (8 and 10) by 10 to 12%. Action films (2, 4, and 9) and musicals (6)

⁷Controls are added after fitting the model.

Figure 4: Selected terms and censorship.



Percentage point difference in probability of censorship for movies with and without selected terms, with 95% confidence intervals through t-tests. Most significant terms relate to immoral content.

are less likely to be banned.⁸ Political content does not appear, though this may reflect political themes being rarer. Results are robust to including censor fixed effects and running models with only films rated as for 18 and 21 and over, to ensure findings are not driven by differences between adult and all audience films (Appendix C.2).⁹

Tracking Themes

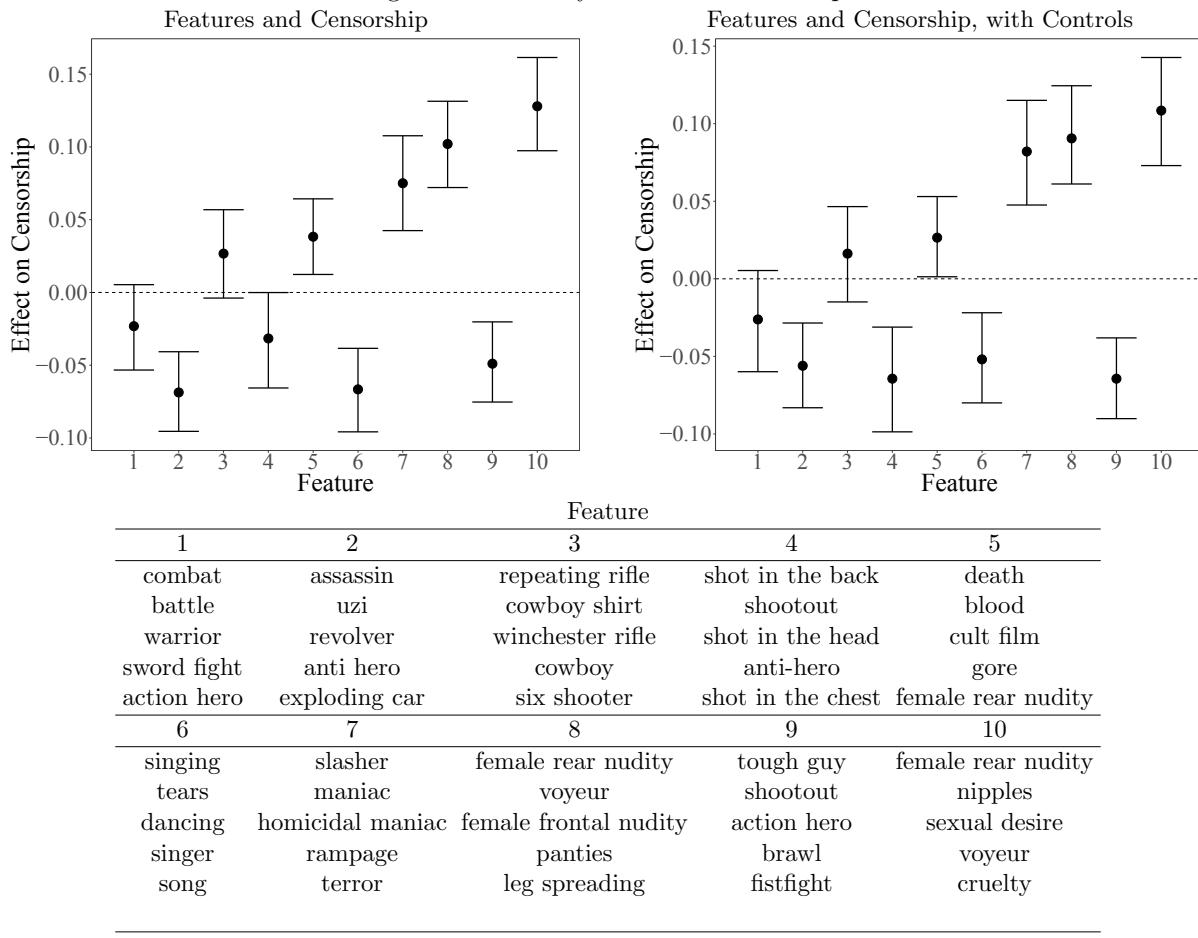
A limitation of the sIBP is that political themes are less common than violence and sex, meaning that it may not pick up the content truly determinant of censorship. The content measure can be used to confirm sIBP results, better explore temporal patterns, and explicitly track political themes. Figure 6 (left) shows the frequency of reviewed films with at least one keyword associated with each main category. Rates of censorship (right) look similar until 1979, when the likelihood that political films were banned drops, explored more when discussing political censorship. Overall 7.31% of movies with political themes, 13.23% with sexual content, 12.05% with gore, and 12.14% containing moral taboos were banned.

More formally, I include content measures in logistic regressions (Table 2). Results track with the sIBP findings: gore, sexual content, and moral taboos are correlated with censorship, while politics has a statistically insignificant and small effect. Figure 7 visualizes the substantive effects

⁸ Appendix Table C1 provides the top 20 words associated with each feature for context.

⁹ Unigrams do not produce substantively or statistically significant sIBP results, likely because there are fewer films and keywords associated with themes of interest.

Figure 5: sIBP Keywords and Censorship.



$N=6,559$. 95% confidence intervals. Genre, year, number of keywords, and video controls. The features most determinant of censorship relate to gore (5, 7) and sexual content (8, 10). Action (2, 4, 9) and musical/family content (6) reduce censorship.

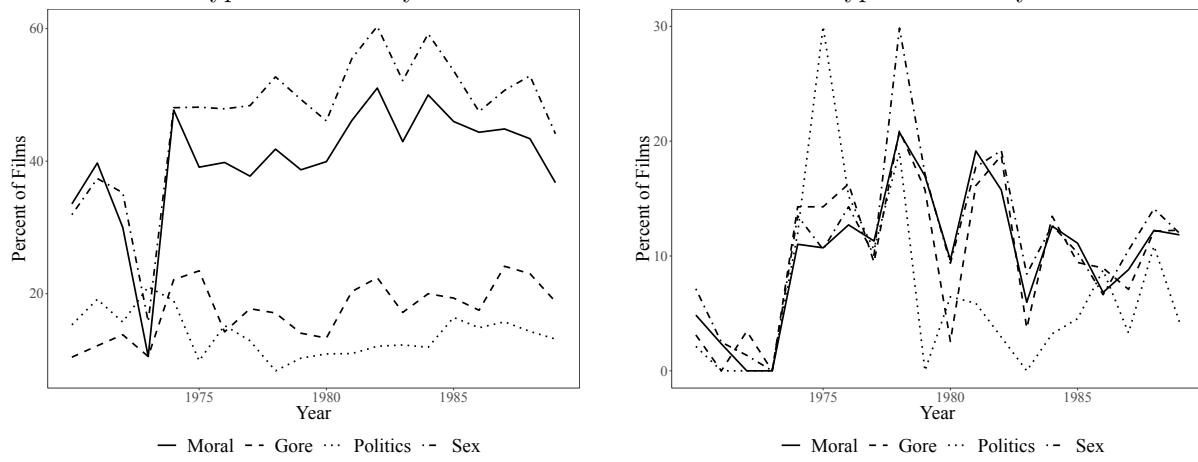
of themes and their component parts using first differences (the observed values approach), taking the average predicted effect of changing the number of thematic keywords from zero to five while holding covariates at their true values.¹⁰ Increasing gore keywords from zero to five, for example, raises the probability of censorship by about 9%. Sexual extremes and assault keywords increase the probability of prohibition by around a third. Results hold when excluding duplicate films, omitting controls, normalizing content measures, restricting analysis to 18 and 21 and over films, or using unigrams (Appendix C.2). Including all four major themes in the same model does make politics positive and significant, demonstrating a weak relationship between politics and censorship.

Chilean censors were not required to explain their votes, so there may be concerns that films were censored for reasons other than those identified through text analysis. Quantitative evidence does not support this: hand-coding political movies shows that just 8% of films with immoral content also had a political component. In 22 cases censors left hand-written notes explaining decisions. Five cite technical problems, while 17 exclusively pinpoint immoral content:

- *The Bionic Man*. “Scenes with lesbianism and grotesque humor.”

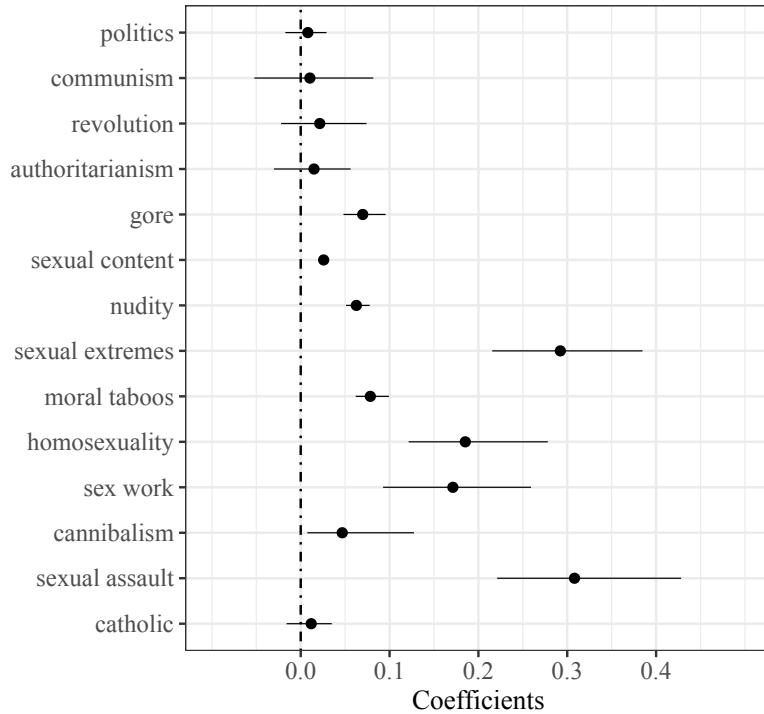
¹⁰Not include all features associated with moral taboos are included.

Figure 6: Movie types, reviewed by year and banned.



The relative frequency of reviewed films with at least one keyword associated with each main theme (left) shows gore and political content appear at similar rates. Censorship (right) looks similar for all themes until 1979, when the likelihood that political films were banned drops.

Figure 7: Censorship and film content.



$N=6,559$, with 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals (5,000 iterations). Genre, year, number of keywords, and video controls. Substantive effects of logit models calculated through first differences, increasing theme terms from zero to five. Immoral content has a strong positive relationship with censorship.

- *Epitaph*. “Movie with unnecessarily violent and morbid scenes.”
- *Lunch Meat*. “Repulsive anthropophagy [cannibalism].”

Table 2: Themes and Censorship

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Politics	0.021 (0.030)			
Gore		0.155*** (0.022)		
Sexual content			0.080*** (0.006)	
Moral taboos				0.190*** (0.016)
Number of keywords	-0.0002 (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)	-0.008*** (0.001)	-0.008*** (0.001)
Video	0.166 (0.150)	0.164 (0.152)	0.110 (0.154)	0.148 (0.152)
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Genre FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	6,354	6,354	6,354	6,354
Log Likelihood	-1,694.732	-1,671.339	-1,596.477	-1,623.255
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,453.465	3,406.678	3,256.953	3,310.511

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Logistic regression including year, genre, video, and number of keywords controls. All themes are positively correlated with censorship, although political content is not statistically significant. Results confirm that moral – rather than just political – content significantly increased censorship.

Moral Censorship

Results above demonstrate that immoral content motivated film censorship. This section links moral censorship to Pinochet’s desire to ensure support (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005). Qualitative evidence demonstrates that Pinochet’s dictatorship used piety to justify rule and that supporters actively pursued morality policy. Conservative groups were particularly influential: legislators pinpointed Catholic organizations as responsible for film censorship. I then exploit the close ties between Opus Dei and the Ministry of Education to show that censors appointed by this organization were more likely to ban immoral content, providing limited quantitative support for the authoritarian third-person effect.

Morality in the Dictatorship

Pinochet came to power with the support of the upper classes by claiming that only the military could effectively fight the communist threat to Chile, though this threat was exaggerated through propaganda and CIA intervention (Esberg 2018; Kornbluh 2005). Still, perceived dangers led the upper-classes and conservatives to back the regime. Years after the coup, the CIA noted that Pinochet was still “genuinely popular” (CIA 1977a). The dictator relied on this support to prevent political restiveness, beat back calls for reform, prevent defection by the military, and effectively govern (CIA 1984, Huneeus 2006, Londregan 2000). Supporters were predominantly conservative Catholics and Evangelicals (Boas 2016).

Along with anti-communism, Pinochet pinned legitimacy to a “moral mandate” (CIA 1978), claiming to “obtain power from God” and to govern because of “divine providence” (The Clinic Online 2013, Schuffenerger 1988). The regime promised to use this authority to “cleanse” the country of

marxism and immorality, tightly linked in its rhetoric. Deposed socialist president Salvador Allende threatened the state not only through communism, but because he “tried to drag the whole country [into] moral corruption” (Junta de Gobierno, Chile 1974, 89). “Spiritual reconstruction,” “moral cleansing,” and “moral resurgence” of the country was a central stated goal (Junta de Gobierno, Chile 1974, 18-47).

Pinochet’s supporters adopted this rhetoric. Rumors circulated that Allende was drunk during the coup to morally discredit him. A former judge recounted how a friend searching Allende’s home became “physically sick” because of the “mountains of [pornography] – the worst kind,” demonstrating Allende was a man “without any moral calibre” (Anderson 1998). Upper-class women agitated for a military coup because they “felt their fundamental values of family and motherhood threatened” (de los Angeles Crummett 1977, 110). Relevant to film censorship, regime supporters called for bans on pornography. In 1981 the head of a woman’s group wrote: “Divorce, abortion, and pornography... are all attacks against the family.... If love and respect are lost, then the family also loses its unity and those who benefit are the marxists” (*La Nación*, 26 July 1981, quoted in Power 2002, 280).

The government explained claimed film censorship was “protecting [spectators’] psychedelic development and their moral values, especially in the youth” (Junta de Gobierno, Chile 1975), rhetoric reflecting the third-person effect. The CCC’s current head stated that the root of moral censorship was simply that Chile was such a “conservative country.”¹¹ The ruling elite thus viewed other citizens as susceptible to moral corruption. While CCC decisions were not actively publicized, they served to eliminate offensive materials from view, and their operations were well-known – built into the last paragraph of the constitution. The provision of widespread moral censorship thus served as a benefit, unique to authoritarian rule, that rewarded conservative supporters.

Regimes may also use suppression of entertainment to demonstrate total control over society. While censorship may serve both to appeal to supporters and signal the reach of the dictatorship, three features suggest the latter was not the central purpose. First, rhetoric around film censorship in Chile was paternalistic rather than watchful, emphasizing protection over control. Second, Pinochet’s supporters pushed for censorship, in line with other work showing that pop culture controls are not unpopular among authoritarian sympathizers (Gunther and Hwa 1996). Even after democratization, conservatives attempted to preserve film bans, demonstrating that such prohibitions still found support even when there were no motives for the state to demonstrate control. Finally, if censorship was punitive, the dictatorship should target more popular movies to signal control. In fact, banned movies were less popular based on the number of IMDb ratings.¹²

The Influence of Conservative Groups

Morality policy was particularly important because Pinochet was opposed by most of the Catholic Church, which was bifurcated between liberal and conservative elements. The mainstream Church decried human rights violations: Pinochet’s Interior Minister called the Church “one of the three greatest obstacles facing the government” (Santa-Cruz 2010). Instead, the regime drew support from sect Opus Dei and lay group Tradition, Family and Property (TFP). The support of these groups offered three central benefits to the regime. First, they attracted support from the dictatorship’s own base, making their buy-in particularly important to maintain cohesion. The wealthy

¹¹ Author interview, November 14, 2017, Ministry of Education, Santiago, Chile.

¹² Rating counts are obviously measured post-treatment, but there is no reason to believe that censorship in Chile affected popularity, and conceivably relative popularity remains the same as when first produced.

flocked to these organizations in response to Church reformism, “vent[ing] their frustrations by joining conservative Catholic organizations” (Gill 1998, 130). Opus Dei developed considerable sway by founding private schools that upper class children attended (Blofield 2001).

Second, these groups offered moral legitimization that the dictatorship could not receive from the mainstream Church. For example, Chile’s Papal Nuncio – ambassador to the Holy See – was Opus Dei, and arranged for Pope John Paul II to give communion to Pinochet in 1987 (Ekaizer 1999; Morley and McGillion 2015). The TFP linked the mainstream church to communism: its 1976 book criticized the Church for opposing the regime with chapters like “The alliance of the rapidly rising revolutionary clergy with terrorism” (*La Iglesia del Silencio en Chile* 1976). Pinochet could thus achieve moral legitimization while discrediting opponents in the mainstream church as Marxists.

Third, these groups developed considerable influence within the government. Jaime Guzmán, the regime’s central ideologue, was a TFP member. He later wrote Pinochet’s *Declaration of Principles*, which promised to “cleanse our democratic system of the vices that had facilitated its destruction” (Ugarte 1974). Ruderer (2012) describes: “[The TFP] must have had the support of the military government. For this, they got inserts in *El Mercurio*, the largest and most influential newspaper in Chile.... There were close personal ties ... [to] the Pinochet economic group. There were [also strong] links with the military.” Opus Dei denies involvement with the dictatorship, but Guzmán was believed to be a supporter (Hutchinson 2006). A founder of an Opus Dei University contributed to Pinochet’s 1980 Constitution (Monckeberg 2016). Many of Pinochet’s advisors came from the Institute for General Studies (IGS), linked to Opus Dei (Landis 1979; Biblioteca Nacional de Chile 2018; Lee 1983; Walsh 2004). At minimum, “many members and collaborators of Opus Dei participated in different public roles” (Monckeberg 2016, 658). That these groups were so influential but espoused philosophies quite different from the mainstream Church explains why no priests sat on the council.

Opus Dei and TFP had an active interest in pop culture censorship. In 1963 TFP newsletter *Fiducia* stated: “[We must] recognize that those who... manage to stop immoral or agnostic cinema or television would be doing much more for the Counter-Revolution than if they unseated a leftist cabinet” (TFP 1963, 8). During the dictatorship the group encouraged censorship internationally, praising the U.S. Coalition for Better Television for boycotting channels depicting sex and violence (TFP 1981a). TFP encouraged “combatting immorality” through “the fight against pornography” and the “retraction of feminism and homosexuality” (TFP 1981b, 12).

The role of these conservative organizations in film censorship became more explicit after democratization. When upon re-review the CCC permitted Martin Scorsese’s *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Opus Dei-linked group *El Porvenir de Chile* took the case to the Supreme Court as representatives of the Catholic Church and Jesus Christ (Inter-American Courts of Human Rights 2001). Many of the lawyers involved were TFP members (*La Redacción* 1997). Both *El Porvenir de Chile* and TFP called the film “blasphemy” and declared that anyone who watched it should be excommunicated (González 1996). Using their considerable lobbying power, these groups forced a local television channel to cancel a talk show that dealt with “immoral” themes like sexuality and reproductive health by causing advertisers to leave the show (González 1996).

Cultural censorship was consistently blamed on their influence. A film director stated: “We have lived too much time with Opus Dei all over us, dominated by obscurantism” (Rohter 2002). During democratization, the movement against social change was credited to “the conservative press and

its allies, particularly a small but highly influential entrepreneurial elite and the Roman Catholic Church” (LaFranchi 1996). Chilean legislators themselves blame film censorship on the influence of conservative organizations. In the parliamentary debate that ended film censorship in 2001, one senator reflected:

We live in a democratic political system, but the debatable and questionable part is if we live in a democratic society.... The influence of recalcitrant and very conservative [groups] remains, such as *El Porvenir de Chile*, Opus Dei, and others groups ... that impose their criteria and vision of things for our country, convinced that they have the truth and absolute wisdom and that all the rest of us are children that need to be protected (Chilean Legislature 2001, 65).

This statement directly reflects the third person effect: the policy survived because of a small group of paternalistic conservatives. Later in the same discussion, senators explicitly discussed the TFP:

The law in debate represents a very important step for cultural liberty in Chile. However, many films will end up being debated in the courts.... On the one hand, there will be lawyers for freedom of expression... and on the other hand there will be [TFP], which is also very well organized, which defends good morals and is well informed about everything happening in this area... who will defend their positions in the courts with great zeal (164).

These statements provide strong support for the role of these organizations in upholding film censorship. Along with other evidence on moral rhetoric and Pinochet’s supporters, this thus suggests that film bans served as policy concessions to supporters, and particularly influential conservative Catholic groups.

Film Censors and Opus Dei

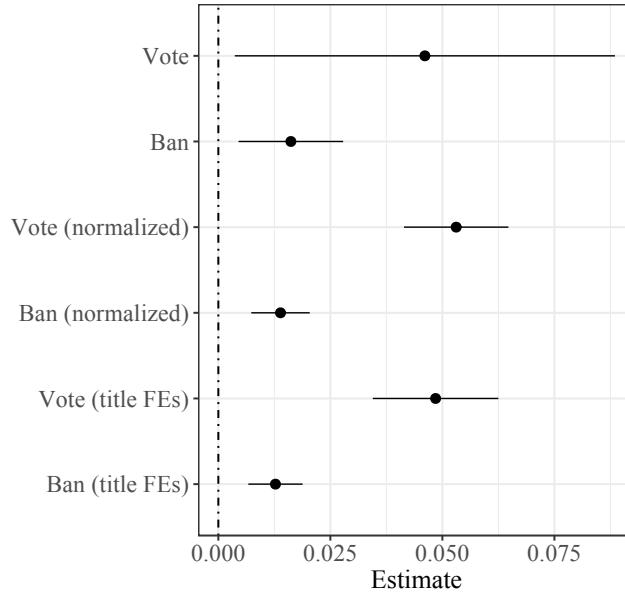
An expectation generated by this article’s theory is that councilors linked to these conservative organizations should be more stringent in their ratings decisions. To test this, I exploit the fact that the Ministry of Education (MoE) had deep ties to Opus Dei relative to other organizations that provided councilors: “the nation’s educational system was taken in hand by [Opus Dei]” (Hutchinson 2006, 214). Three ministers of education and at least one superintendent of education were followers. We can thus expect that councilors from the armed forces, judiciary, and journalism school are relatively more independent than those appointed by the MoE. The MoE appointed councilors from within the ministry and from the Center for Parents and Guardians, while other councilors were nominated by their own institutions. I thus test whether education-appointed censors were more likely to place restrictions on immoral content.

To do so I build a dataset of censor votes, though a major limitation of this analysis is that it includes only censors whose signatures are legible and whose names can be linked to an organization. 20 of 67 signatures are linked to institutions. However, bias is unlikely, and a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test shows no difference in the distribution of ratings for censors whose institutions could and could not be identified. Five censors were known to be appointed by the MoE, and results hold when dropping any one censor. Three estimation strategies are used to identify whether education-appointed censors placed stricter limits on films. First, I regress censors’ votes on an indicator for whether they were education-appointed, controlling for measures of film content and year fixed effects. The dependent variable is either an indicator for a “ban” vote, or a binned vote measure ranging from zero (“for all audiences”) to four (banned). Second, to account for variation in movie

content I normalize votes by subtracting films' final ratings from censors' individual votes (e.g., censors that vote to ban films ultimately rated as 21 and over score one). Third, censor votes are regressed on the education-appointment indicator and title fixed effects, exploiting within-movie voting heterogeneity. All models are OLS.

Across these metrics education-appointed councilors were more likely to vote to ban or restrict films (Figure 8). Though effect sizes are small, given overall censorship rates they are still substantively significant. Findings reflect censorship of moral, rather than political, content. Education-appointed censors were much more likely to vote to ban films with sexual content, even when the majority of censors voted to permit a film (6.45% to 2.59%, $p < .01$), but were roughly equally likely to vote to ban films with political content (Appendix E.3). This aligns with the interpretation that moral censorship was motivated in part by the regime's relationship to Opus Dei.¹³ Supporting this interpretation, results reverse for military censors: they were equally likely to ban immoral content but more likely to ban political material, in line with censors reflecting the institutional preferences of the organizations that appoint them (Appendix E.4). While this analysis has limitations, along with the qualitative evidence it supports the authoritarian third-person effect.

Figure 8: Education-appointed censors and voting.



Correlation between education-appointed censors and voting. N = 14,797. OLS coefficients and 95% confidence intervals, with robust standard errors. 'Vote' models use a binned version of censor decisions from 0 to 4, while 'Ban' models use the indicator for whether a censor voted for a film to be banned. Results suggest that censors appointed by the Ministry of Education, the organization most linked to Opus Dei, are also the most likely to vote for immoral movie bans.

Political Censorship

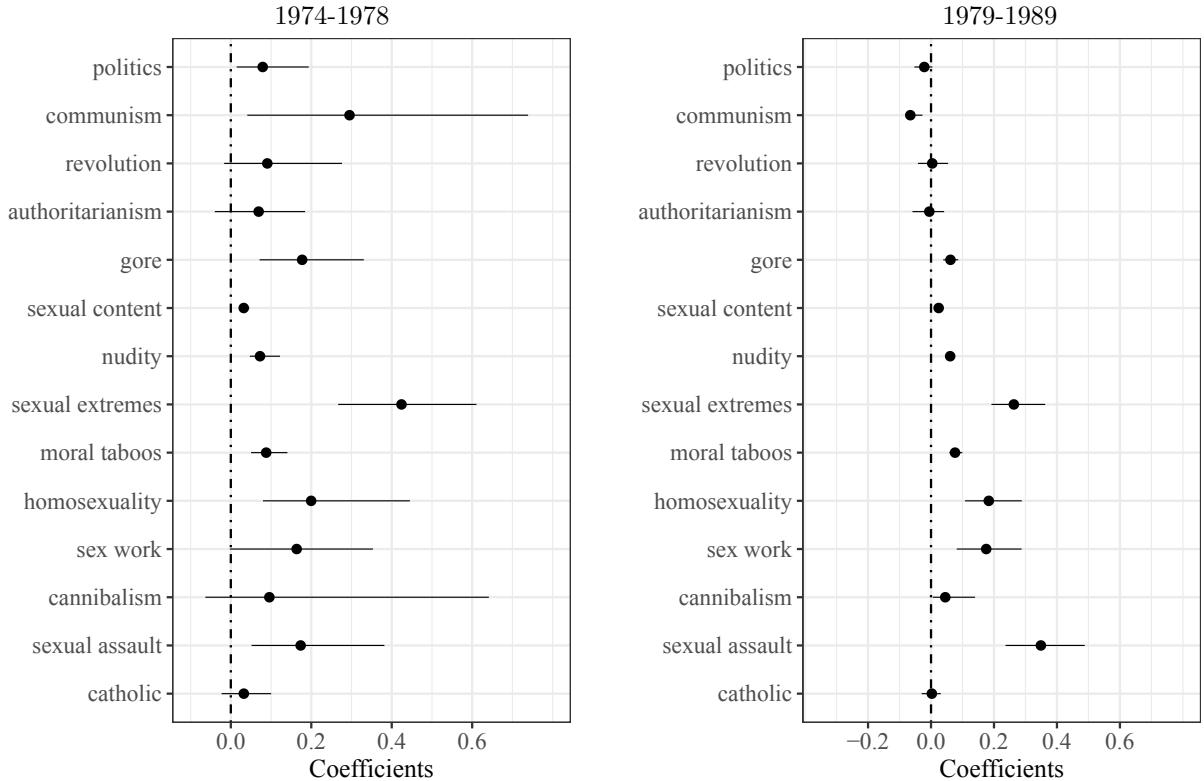
While this article focuses predominantly on understanding how pop culture censorship can be used as a policy concession, results do not suggest that political content was unrelated to censorship.

¹³Since the MoE appointed university rectors – although did not choose which of these rectors to put on the CCC – in Appendix E.3 I additionally show that results hold when including rectors as education-appointed censors.

Appendix E.1 demonstrates that, while political content is least likely to be banned during the dictatorship, the change from the pre-dictatorship period is roughly equivalent to the change for immoral content: highly conservative Chile already banned some sexual and violent content before the dictatorship, and less commonly banned political material. This is confirmed in a difference-in-differences design. That 7.31% of political films were still censored shows that politics did play a significant role in bans. The analysis that follows provides some evidence that, at least during regime consolidation, the collective action potential theory motivated censorship.

Figure 6 breaks “tracking themes” results into two periods, demonstrating that communism-related terms are significantly correlated with censorship prior to 1979 (Figure 9), but not after. Hand-coding films for political content confirms that sympathetic depictions of communism and revolution are positively correlated with censorship only before 1979, providing greater confidence in the text results (Appendix E.2). Negative depictions of right-wing authoritarian regimes, however, are not significantly correlated with censorship, providing support for the collective action potential theory of censorship. Qualitatively, the dictatorship allowed the distribution of more explicitly political films in later years: for example, *Night of the Pencils* (1986), about student activists disappeared by the Argentine dictatorship, was permitted, while *Nicholas and Alexandra* (1971), about the fall of Tzar Nicholas II, was banned.

Figure 9: Censorship and film content, pre- and post-1978



$N=1,422$ (left) and $N=5,137$ (right), with 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals (5,000 iterations). Genre, year, number of keywords, and video controls. Political content (particularly communism) is significantly related to censorship before the 1979 regime realignment, but not after.

Given that banning any individual film is low cost, why did political censorship decrease after 1979? That year the CCC appointed a civilian as Minister of Education for the first time since

the coup. Given that censors from the armed forces were significantly more likely to vote to ban political content, this may explain the move away from political censorship (Appendix E.4). This corresponds to a change in repression more broadly: the security service was reorganized in 1977, after which repression fell and some rights of association were restored. Restrictions on political content may thus have been emphasized while the regime was consolidating power.

Additionally, it may have been more difficult for censors to agree on when political content deserved to be banned. Censors may agree about the line at which immoral content triggers censorship, such as depicting homosexual relationships, but this line may be more difficult to determine for political content. Conditional on ultimately being censored, films containing positive depictions of communism or revolution, or negative depictions of right-wing authoritarian regimes, were 16.7% more likely to have at least one councilor disagree than movies with immoral content ($p = .051$).¹⁴ This effect is particularly large after 1979 (26.9%, $p = .06$). This suggests greater disagreement around political censorship, potentially helping to explain the findings here.

Wilhelm (1991) makes a more political claim to explain why some revolutionary films were shown during Argentina's dictatorship: "One speculation as to why [a film depicting revolution] was acceptable... was that the Argentine military government hoped that the film's action, which was directed against the 'Yankee devil,' would discharge or redirect some of the strong antigovernment feeling which had built up in the Argentines against their own government" (25). This logic suggests something similar to safety valve theories of censorship, which argue that permitting criticism serves to diffuse tension and reduce the potential for collective action (Hassid 2012). While difficult to prove this political explanation, at minimum results suggest that administrative changes within the regime may explain political censorship results.

Distributor Self-Censorship

The weak relationship between politics and censorship – and the comparatively stronger correlation between bans and immorality – may be driven by distributors withholding movies they anticipate will be banned (Brett 1998). To test for this I compare films reviewed to all movies produced between 1960 and 1995, scraping information from the Movie Database (TMDb), an IMDb alternative that permits webscraping.¹⁵ Reviewed films are compared to unreviewed movies released two years prior, the median delay in reaching Chile. Figure 10 shows no visible difference in review, comparing political movies to all films (left) and to only films not linked to a theme (right), in case immoral content is also subject to self-censorship.

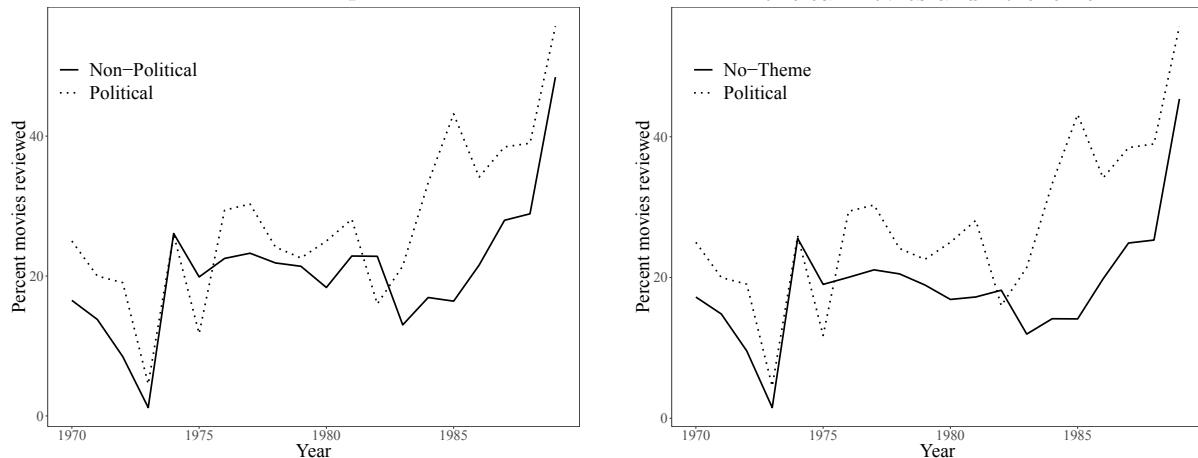
Appendix F.1 uses a difference-in-differences framework to identify whether probability of review for political and nonpolitical movies changed with the CCC's creation in 1974 or in 1979, when the Ministry of Education came under civilian control. Results confirm a stable rate of review. Since restrictions on political material were relaxed with democratization in 1990, I additionally test for changes in review after democratization using the list of films reviewed by the CCC through 1994, confirming null results. Immoral films also do not experience self-censorship.¹⁶ Why did distributors not self-censor? Distributors did not have complete knowledge of banned and permitted films, and,

¹⁴While the direction remains stable and the substantive effects large, results using tracking themes – rather than the hand-coded metric of political content – are not statistically significant.

¹⁵To ensure validity, Appendix F.1, Figure E1 reruns the analysis with TMDb data.

¹⁶I additionally show there is no change in the rate of submission of movies classified by the MPAA as R or higher, demonstrating that increased censorship in 1974 reflects institutional change rather than an increase in controversial films.

Figure 10: Percent of all movies reviewed, political versus nonpolitical.
Political and nonpolitical



There is no visible change in the rate at which distributors submitted political films, either after the coup or in 1979, comparing them to non-political movies or movies with no associated themes of interest. A difference in differences design confirms no change in review.

since Chile was a small market, they may not have bothered to learn preferences. The cost of submitting for distribution was also small relative to the larger potential benefits of distribution.

Censor Preferences

Patterns may alternatively be a function not of regime strategy, but of the decision to select conservative censors. While in part this should be true – the regime drew from conservative organizations – the authoritarian third person effect relies on institutional environment playing a role. While censor fixed effects reduce concerns that preferences drive results, I show that rates of censorship drop significantly after democratization, while CCC structure – and even members – changed very little. A democratically elected president took power in March 1990, but the new constitution eased restrictions on political materials only. Until 2001 the CCC had the same structure and could ban films. Still, Table 3 shows a nearly 50% decrease in the probability of censorship after democratization. Results hold when excluding political films, including only immoral movies, or using logistic regression with genre and year fixed effects (Appendix F.2).

This change could be explained by the democratic government appointing new, liberal censors. Ministry of Education releases, which announced all new councilors starting in the late 1980s, show that the democratic government did not appoint any new censors in 1990 and the Pinochet regime changed just two councilors in 1989. Thus between 1989 and 1990 the CCC included only Pinochet-appointed censors. Censorship drops by nearly half just in these years (Table 3). While these results could be the result of either the autocratic government encouraging censorship or the democratic government discouraging it, they provide evidence of a role for regime type in determining bans.

Censors may alternatively use bans in response to real or perceived career rewards. To address this I first compare the voting behavior of censors whose contracts were and were not renewed for a second two-year term, finding that if anything renewed censors rated films less harshly. This holds

Table 3: Censorship before and after democratization

	1985-1989	1990-1993	Difference
All movies	8.3%	4.26%	4.05%***
Non-political movies	8.49%	4.43%	3.88%***
Immoral movies	11.89%	6.77%	5.13%***
Pinochet Censors			
	1989	1990	Difference
All movies	7.12%	3.66%	3.47%***
Non-political movies	7.46%	3.82%	3.64%***
Immoral movies	11%	5.88%	5.12%***

Difference in means using t-tests. Although no formal rules changed except prohibitions on political content, censorship falls by nearly half after democratization. This holds when comparing 1989 and 1990, when all censors were appointed by Pinochet.

comparing mean vote (from 0, for all audiences, to 4, for a ban), normalizing censors' votes by the final rating, or using a binary metric for whether censors voted for a ban. To test whether censors behave differently when *perceiving* their jobs to be secure, I compare (1) ratings in renewed censors' first year versus their second year, when they may change behavior to ensure reappointment, and (2) ratings pre- and post-renewal. Findings show no differences.

Chile in Comparative Perspective

Pinochet was known as a religious man, so censorship of immoral films may reflect his preferences, rather than a strategy to build support. The ubiquity of these bans in right-wing dictatorships offers some evidence that this is not the case. Dictator Ferdinand Marcos established the Philippines' film review board, lauded in one newspaper as "necessary if the community's welfare is to be safeguarded" (quoted in de Vega 1975). Argentina regularly banned non-political songs like Donna Sommer's "Jungle Fever". Iranian censors edit out sexual content, once superimposing a vase over a woman's low-cut top (Fisher 2012). South Africa banned films to promote "the dominant (i.e. white) ideology", which meant banning not just interracial relationships but immoral content like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Tomaselli 2008, 1). Just how common pop culture censorship is suggests a strategic logic beyond dictators' idiosyncratic preferences.

Comparing material censored during Francisco Franco's regime in Spain provides greater confidence that results are not due to Pinochet's preferences. Like Pinochet, Franco relied on Catholicism, anti-communism, and capitalism to maintain support. However, unlike Pinochet Franco was not a devout Catholic (Aróstegui and Viñas 2012). Still, censorship targeted immoral content. To avoid showing female adultery, Spanish censors dubbed the film *Mogambo* so that husband and wife became brother and sister (Zatlin 2005). Since censors in Spain typically dubbed or edited offending scenes, censor comments on three films entirely banned in Chile – collected from Spain's Archives of Administration – demonstrate the preoccupation of Spanish censors with morality:

- *Karatista Asesino.* "Delete the frames with nudity – all."
- *The Wilby Conspiracy.* "Substitute the word 'foreskin' with 'beard.' In general, change the expression that the lead repeats varies times, 'how is there a God.'"
- *The Savage Three.* "[Cut] the strangest aspects of the sex scene and the frames of female nudity after hanging up the telephone. Cut the clearest blows to the testicles."

One concern may be that censorship of immoral content reflects that powerful individuals – like Opus Dei – captured the CCC, rather than a strategic decision by the regime. Turning to morality policy provides evidence that the Pinochet regime actively used the fight against social immorality to appeal to conservative sectorså. Pinochet rolled back family planning laws implemented under Allende, to appease conservatives and “win[] the sympathy of the Catholic Church” (Jiles Moreno 1992, 187). Responding to conservative groups, by the end of the dictatorship Pinochet had banned all forms of abortion (Power 2002). While divorce had been illegal in Chile prior to the dictatorship, Pinochet maintained the policy, claiming separation disrupted the nuclear family (Power 2002). These policies again find parallels in Spain, where Franco implemented the “Social Danger Laws” against homosexuality, drugs, prostitution, and pornography.

Conclusion

A wide literature on press and internet censorship highlights the role of information controls in restricting opposition. This research suggests that censorship of popular culture serves not only to limit the spread of controversial political ideas, but to maintain the support of conservative supporters. Text analysis of nearly 8,000 films reviewed during Pinochet’s dictatorship reveals that gory, sexual, and morally taboo content drove censorship. Qualitative evidence suggests that restricting access to immoral materials served to reward the dictatorship’s base of support, including wealthy conservatives and influential Catholic groups. Analysis of censors’ votes provides further suggestive evidence that those councilors most directly linked to Opus Dei were more likely to ban immoral content. This does not exclude a role for political material in motivating censorship: results provide evidence for the collective action potential theory, particularly in the regime’s early years.

This research thus expands literature on censorship to entertainment. While the collective action potential theory can explain political censorship, bans on apolitical content show a different logic. The third-person effect hypothesis argues that certain individuals support entertainment censorship because, while they themselves are strong enough to resist, they expect others to be susceptible to pop culture’s corrupting influence (Davison 1983). While in democratic states these individuals may lack the voting power to consistently influence policy, in dictatorships they often make up the winning coalition (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005).

This paper demonstrates how policing the moral sphere serves as an additional tool of authoritarian survival, alongside other methods like private goods provision and violence. While one in a broader set of morality policies, understanding the purpose of entertainment censorship offers new insight into how dictators govern. Many autocracies adopt social controls on their population (Berezin 1997). Text analysis of all films submitted for distribution in Chile quantifies the types of materials that motivate such prohibitions, improving our understanding of the logic behind morality policing.

Moreover, while censorship is typically understood as a means to isolate and deter opposition, this research shows that even seemingly punitive policies may be used to reward a regime’s backing coalition. Research on authoritarian rule typically treats strategies of co-optation and repression separately, since they are believed to be aimed at different audiences (Wintrobe 2000). Yet the third person effect provides a framework suggesting that conservative autocrats’ backing coalition may *want* restrictions on social freedoms. This paper thus helps to demonstrate that even punitive policies are influenced by dictators’ need to maintain popular support.

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Supplementary Appendix for Pop Culture Censorship & Authoritarian Stability

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Appendix A: Text Analysis Methods

A.1 sIBP Estimation

The supervised Indian Buffet Process (sIBP) takes as an input a document term matrix, in this case of either film keywords or plot summary unigrams. 50% of observations are then used to train a model, and 50% to test the model, to identify coefficient estimates and 95% confidence intervals. The sIBP estimates the marginal effect of any one feature on the outcome (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014), accounting for the fact that bigger values on one dimension often imply smaller values on another (Fong and Grimmer 2016). In particular, the sIBP estimates the Average Marginal Component Specific Effect for factor k (AMCE $_k$). Identification is dependent on two parameters: α , which determines how common the text treatments are, and σ , which determines the degree to which the treatments must explain variation in the text. Since outcomes are sensitive to starting values, I search across several. The sIBP does not explicitly find the most important features, but rather allows text treatments to be selected qualitatively. I report the most substantively and statistically meaningful results.

Under certain conditions the sIBP can be interpreted causally for observational data (Fong and Grimmer 2016). Two issues threaten inference with the CCC documents. First, IMDb pages may not reflect every factor influencing censorship decisions, though the sIBP requires only that missing treatments are orthogonal to those identified. I qualitatively validate that the content identified does indeed drive censorship using comments left on some *expedientes*. Second, censors may persistently watch or not watch certain classes of film. While partially accounted for through censor fixed effects, it remains an issue if censors consistently watched or were excluded from watching types of movies. CCC administrative practices reduce these concerns: councilors were assigned to parlors to watch films at different times depending on schedules, and multiple censors watched each film. Still, to empirically explore this I test

whether any censors were significantly more or less likely to watch films rated as R or higher by the MPAA.¹ Of 71 censors, 14 were significantly more or less likely to watch R-rated films, but just six were more than five percentage points different. Removing these censors or the movies they rated from analysis does not affect results. This provides confidence in a causal interpretation, but at minimum results can be understood as identifying correlations between content and censorship.

A.2 Tracking Themes Coding Scheme

Table A1: Coding scheme.

Politics	
<i>Revolution</i>	References to real uprisings (“Russian Revolution”) or collective action (“rebellion”, “protest”).
<i>Communism</i>	Mention of communism (“Marxism”, “Trotsky”) and communism-related ideas (“class warfare”).
<i>Authoritarianism</i>	References to dictatorships (“autocrat”) and right-wing ideologies (“fascism”, “Nazis”).
Gore	
<i>Gore</i>	Particularly violent imagery or gore, e.g. “beheading.”
Sexual Content	
<i>Nudity</i>	Partial or complete nudity (e.g., “nude male”, “breasts”).
<i>Sexual extremes</i>	Sexual activities or preferences considered extreme, like fetishes (e.g. “bondage”, “voyeurism”).
<i>Other</i>	Terms referencing sexual content not included in categories above (e.g. “panties,” “sex comedy”).
Moral Taboos	
<i>Homosexuality</i>	References to homosexuality.
<i>Gender identity</i>	References to transgenderism, transsexualism, or transvestitism.
<i>Abortion</i>	References to abortion.
<i>Sexual assault</i>	Nonconsensual sexual content, e.g. “rape.”
<i>Sex work</i>	References to sex work or sex workers.
<i>Suicide</i>	References to suicide.
<i>Drugs</i>	References to drugs or drug use.
<i>Cheating</i>	Terms related to extramarital affairs (e.g., “mistress”).
<i>Cannibalism</i>	Reference to cannibalism, zombies, vampires, eating flesh.
<i>Catholic themes</i>	References to biblical characters or Catholic figures.
<i>Child abuse</i>	References to abusing children.
<i>Incest</i>	References to incestuous relationships.
<i>Necrophilia</i>	References to necrophilia.
<i>Bestiality</i>	References to bestiality.

¹I compare the rate of submission of R-rated films for each censor to the period in which the censors were operating, to account for the fact that R-rated films made up between 20 and 36% of submitted films depending on the year.

Appendix B: Correlations Between Terms and Censorship

Figures B1 and B2 identify the IMDb keywords and unigrams most correlated with censorship, meaning that a film associated with that term is considerably more likely to be censored than one without. Virtually all relate to gore, sexuality, or moral taboos, although “revolutionari-” also appears among the unigrams.

Figure B1: Most influential keywords.

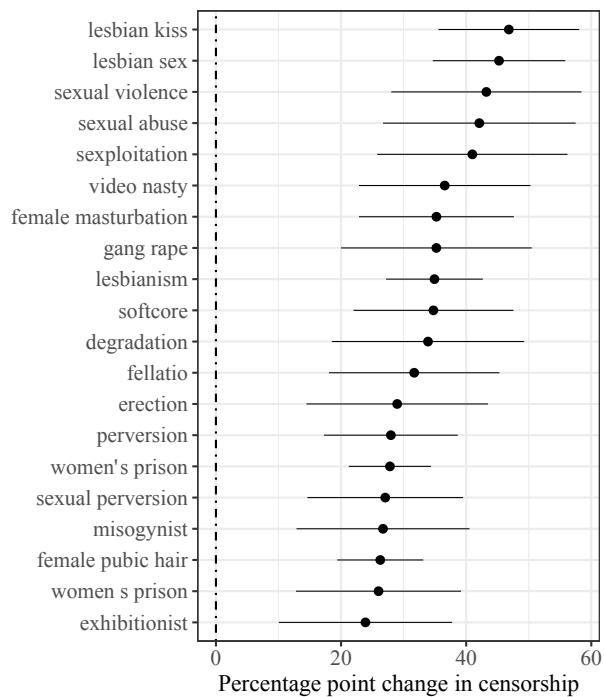
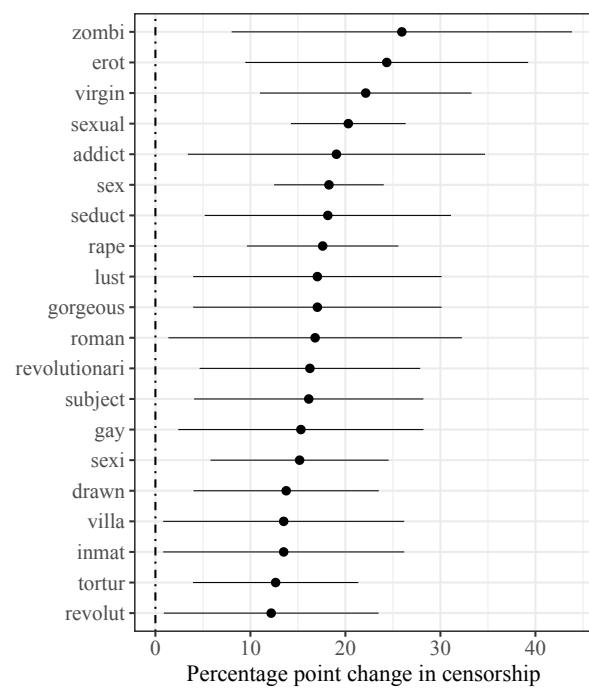


Figure B2: Most influential unigrams.



Appendix C: sIBP Additional Information

C.1 sIBP Features

Table C1: Top 20 feature keywords.

Feature	Keywords
1	combat, battle, warrior, sword fight, action hero, hero, martial arts, battlefield, sword, hand to hand combat, martial arts master, spear, chop socky, duel, martial artist, kung fu, mixed martial arts, kung fu classic, disarming someone, sword duel
2	assassin, uzi, revolver, anti-hero, exploding car, explosion, machine gun, punched in the face, deception, assassination attempt, one man army, punched in the chest, silencer, tough guy, shot in the chest, bomb, hostage, cigarette smoking, double cross, rifle
3	repeating rifle, cowboy shirt, winchester rifle, cowboy, six shooter, hero, gunfight, shootout, brawl, tough guy, fistfight, one against many, female removes her clothes, cowboy hat, outlaw gang, bar fight, street shootout, gunslinger, black panties
4	shot in the back, shootout, shot in the head, anti-hero, shot in the chest, assassination attempt, gunfight, machine gun, punched in the chest, shot to death, assassin, silencer, sniper, hitman, shot in the arm, betrayal, car chase, police brutality, tough cop
5	death, blood, cult film, gore, female rear nudity, sadism, murder, screaming, female frontal nudity, evil, knife, kiss, blood splatter, fire, cruelty, nipples, breasts, impalement, panties
6	singing, tears, dancing, singer, song, dancer, mother son relationship, piano, crying, husband wife relationship, mother daughter relationship, food, photograph, drinking, father son relationship, apology, family relationships, applause, lie
7	slasher, maniac, homicidal maniac, rampage, terror, gore, evil, psycho, psychopathic killer, slashing, video nasty, stabbed to death, human monster, psycho thriller, american horror, decapitation, grind house film, grind house, characters killed one by one
8	female rear nudity, voyeur, female frontal nudity, panties, leg spreading, scantily clad female, pubic hair, crying, female removes her clothes, female pubic hair, sexual desire, nipples, desire, underwear, drinking, fondling, telephone call, bedroom, female full frontal nudity
9	tough guy, shootout, action hero, brawl, fistfight, gunfight, one man army, ambush, violence, martial arts, hero, revolver, hand to hand combat, blood splatter, one against many, machine gun, warrior, disarming someone, shot in the chest
10	female rear nudity, nipples, sexual desire, voyeur, cruelty, leg spreading, perversion, pubic hair, scantily clad female, female pubic hair, female removes her clothes, female frontal nudity, desire, fondling, maniac, sadism, breasts, attraction, panties

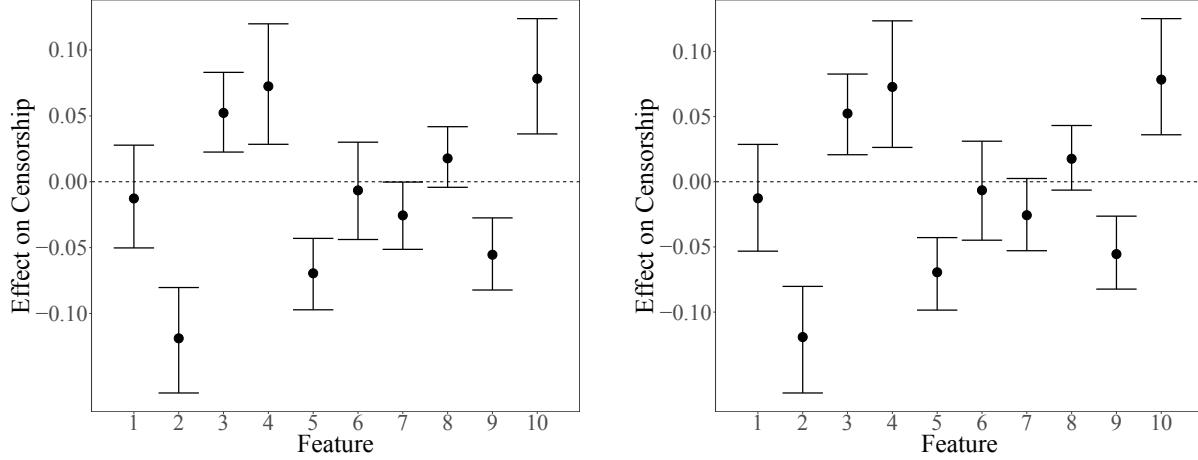
C.2 sIBP Robustness Checks

In order to ensure that the results of the sIBP analysis truly reflect the most important text treatments, I run several robustness checks. Figure C1 shows the results with censor fixed effects. This increases confidence in results in three ways. First, it shows that missingness in the *expedientes* data does not significantly change results, reducing concerns of bias. Sec-

ond, it reduces threats to non-random assignment, strengthening the causal interpretation of findings. Third, it shows that idiosyncratic censor preferences are unlikely to be the central driver of findings.

Figure C1: Keywords and censorship, with censor fixed effects.

Features and Censorship Features and Censorship, with Controls



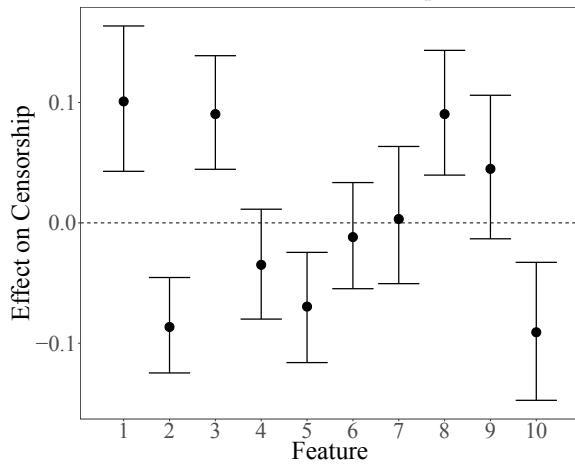
1	2	3	4	5
psychopathic killer	singing	female removes her clothes	voyeur	brawl
slasher	tears	female frontal nudity	female rear nudity	action hero
maniac	song	voyeur	police station	tough guy
terror	drinking	scantly clad female	scantly clad female	fistfight
rampage	dancer	female rear nudity	shot to death	martial arts
6	7	8	9	10
singing	teenage boy	action hero	action hero	gore
dancing	singing	hero	tough guy	blood
tears	teenage girl	one man army	gunfight	slasher
mother daughter relationship		one against many	one man army	maniac
song	tears	hand to hand combat	shootout	stabbed to death

$N = 4,716$. 95% confidence intervals. Censor, genre, year, number of keywords, and video controls. Feature 1 having no significant relationship with censorship may appear surprising, but the full list of terms shows that most keywords relate to general action film themes.

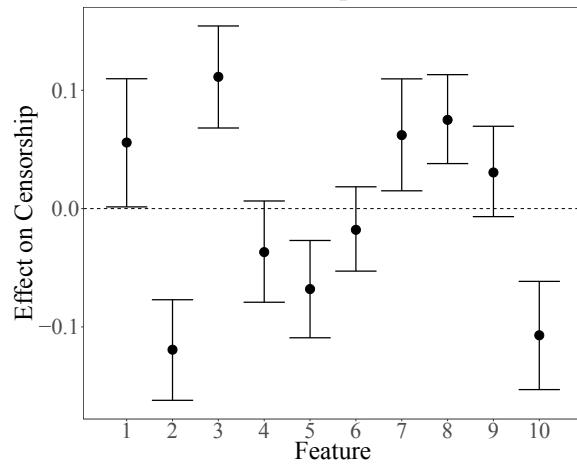
Figures C2 and C3 subset the data to include only movies that were rated as for 18 or 21 and over or higher. This reduces concerns that the sIBP results simply capture the content of movies suitable only for adults. Results hold, although standard errors are larger due reduction in sample size.

Figure C2: Keywords and censorship, 18+ only.

Features and Censorship



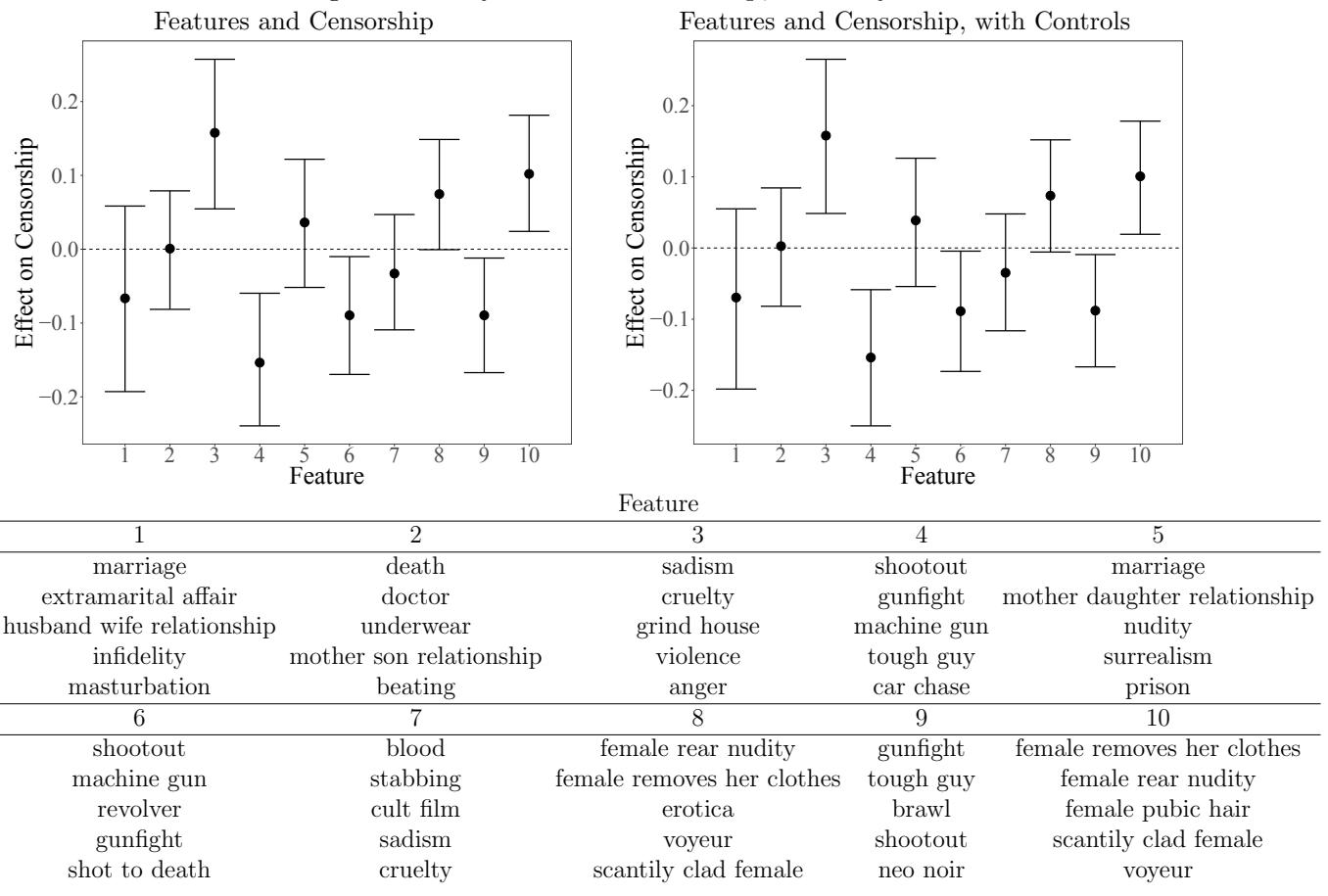
Features and Censorship, with Controls



1	2	3	4	5
evil	photograph	leg spreading	musician	one man army
sadism	police station	scantly clad female	wealth	one against many
stabbed to death	rifle	blonde	singer	tough guy
rampage	cigarette smoking	fondling	brother sister relationship	action hero
grindhouse	telephone call	voyeurism	manhattan	mixed martial arts
6	7	8	9	10
blood	evil	scantly clad female	scantly clad female	tough guy
violence	stabbed to death	female removes her clothes	female removes her clothes	action hero
blood splatter	rampage	erotica	white panties	one many army
machine gun	terror	white panties	erotic 70s	gunfight
chase	cruelty	leg spreading	leg spreading	brawl

$N = 2,706$. 95% confidence intervals. Genre, year, number of keywords, and video controls. Restricting analysis to movies rated as for 18 and over reduces concerns that results are driven by the difference between adult and children's movies.

Figure C3: Keywords and censorship, 21+ only.



N = 1,523. 95% confidence intervals. Genre, year, number of keywords, and video controls. Restricting analysis to movies rated as 21 and over reduces concerns that results are driven by the difference between adult and children's movies.

Appendix D: Tracking Themes Additional Information

D.1 Themes and Unigrams

Table D1 and Figure D1 show that results hold when using unigrams instead of keywords.

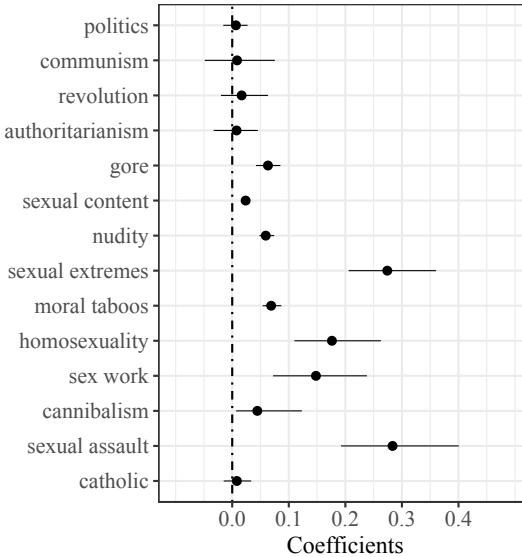
Table D1: Themes (unigrams) and censorship

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Politics	0.023 (0.030)			
Gore		0.154*** (0.022)		
Sexual content			0.083*** (0.006)	
Moral taboos				0.184*** (0.016)
Number of keywords	0.001 (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.006*** (0.001)	-0.006*** (0.001)
Constant	-1.981*** (0.274)	-1.899*** (0.275)	-2.018*** (0.282)	-2.163*** (0.287)
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Genre FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	6,162	6,162	6,162	6,162
Log Likelihood	-1,512.273	-1,489.289	-1,411.229	-1,446.349
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,100.546	3,054.578	2,898.457	2,968.699

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Logistic models with censor, genre, year, number of keywords, and video controls.

Figure D1: Themes and censorship, unigrams.



N=6,162, with 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals (5,000 iterations). Genre, year, number of unigrams, and video controls. Substantive effects of logit models calculated through first differences, increasing theme terms from zero to five.

D.2 Robustness Checks

Results hold when removing duplicates; controlling for censor fixed effects; considering bivariate correlations only; normalizing theme measures by the number of keywords in a film, to account for variation in user-submitted text; and including only films rated as for 18 or 21 and over, to ensure that results differentiate mature films from one another. All figures show substantive effects with 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals, with genre, year, number of keyword, and video controls. Normalized models show the effect of increasing theme keywords by one, while the others show the effect of increasing theme keywords by five.

Figure D2: No duplicates.

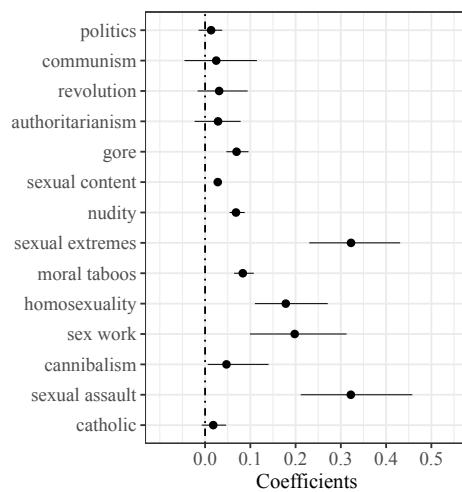


Figure D3: Censor controls.

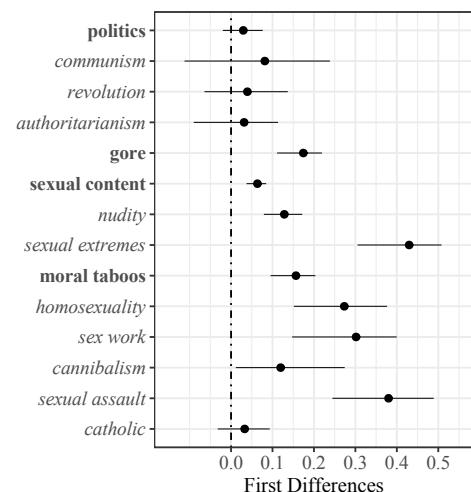


Figure D4: Bivariate relationships.

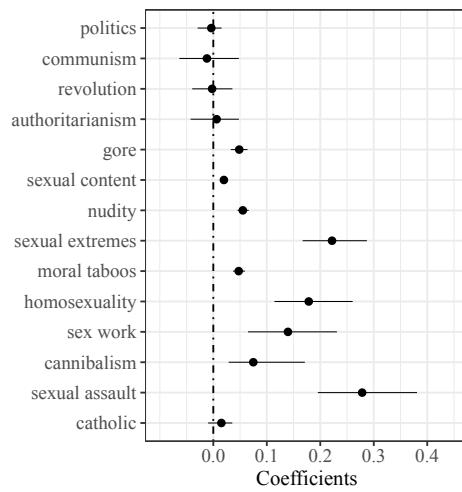


Figure D5: Normalized by keywords.

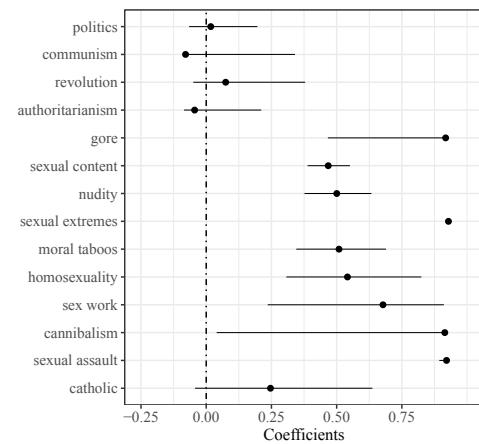


Figure D6: 18+ movies.

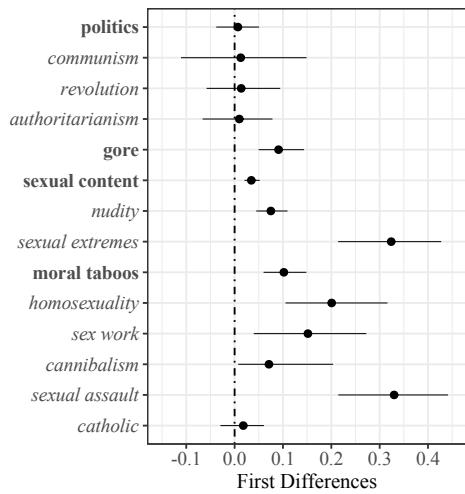
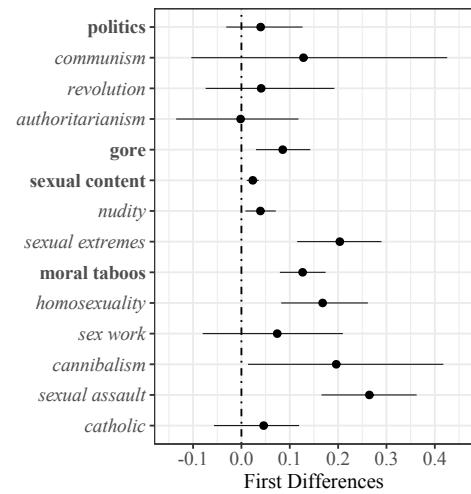


Figure D7: 21+ movies.



Incorporating all themes as controls for one another in a single logistic model does lead to the coefficient on political themes becoming positive (Figure D8). To explore this further, I separately include gore, sexual content, and moral taboos as controls in a model with politics as the central independent variable. Only when controlling for both number of keywords and sexual content does politics become significant, providing weak evidence of politics and censorship being correlated (Figure D9).

Figure D8: All themes and censorship.

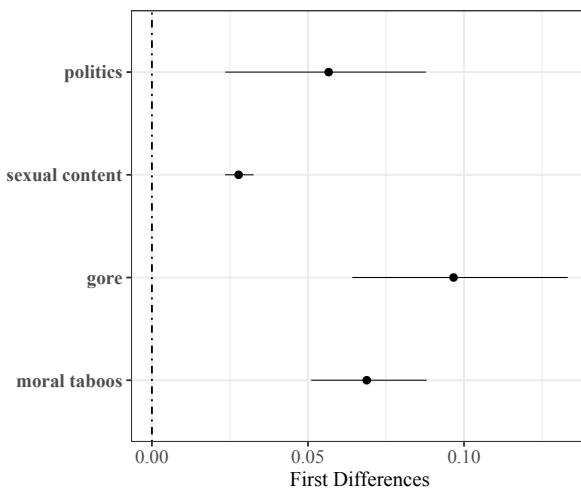
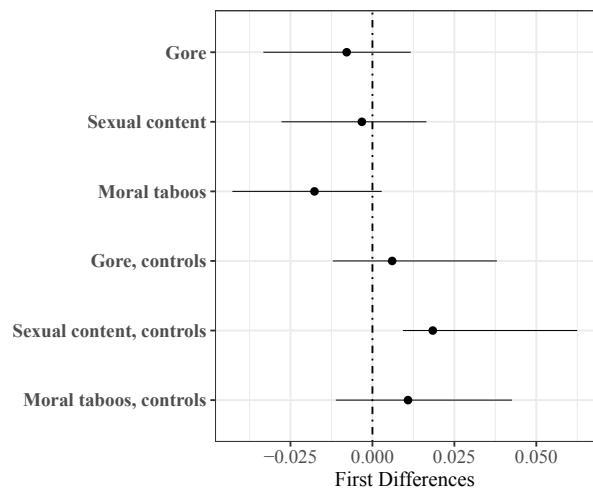


Figure D9: Political content effects.



Appendix E: Political Content

E.1 Censorship Change

The results of this paper do not suggest that political themes played no role in censorship. Table D2 demonstrates that the *change* in censorship of political content is roughly equal to the change in rates of censorship for immoral content. Table D3 uses a difference in differences framework to show that political censorship increased in 1974. Results are not significant when comparing change in political censorship before and after the CCC reorganization to all films reviewed throughout the dictatorship, in line with results presented here, but this change becomes statistically significant when excluding immoral content, suggesting that results are in part due to relative rates of censorship.

Table D2: Rates of Censorship Before and After CCC Reform

1970-1989			
	1970-1973	1974-1989	Difference
Political content	4%	7.02%	-3.02%***
Sexual content	7.09%	13.22%	-6.13%***
Gore	6.9%	11.94%	-5.04%***
Moral taboos	5.53%	12.2%	-6.67%***
1960-1989			
	1960-1973	1974-1989	Difference
Political content	6.25%	9.76%	-3.51%***
Sexual content	8.37%	17.4%	-9.03%***
Gore	8.51%	14.92%	-6.41%***
Moral taboos	5.93%	16.06%	-10.13%***

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

This shows the difference in censorship prior to and following the dictatorship's reformation of the CCC in 1974. The top table uses the most complete form of the dataset, including expedientes. The bottom table extends the time period prior to the dictatorship, using the list of films produced by the CCC and covering the period 1938 to 1994. While less complete, this allows the exploration of censorship prior to Allende's government.

Table D3: Change in Political Censorship in 1974

	1970-78	1970-89	Excluding immoral
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Politics * Change Year	0.941*** (0.269)	0.059 (0.153)	1.077*** (0.385)
Constant	-1.871*** (0.354)	-1.673*** (0.263)	-2.296*** (0.802)
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Controls	Y	Y	Y
Observations	1,343	6,354	2,308
Log Likelihood	-404.866	-1,695.501	-271.479
Akaike Inf. Crit.	849.733	3,453.002	604.957

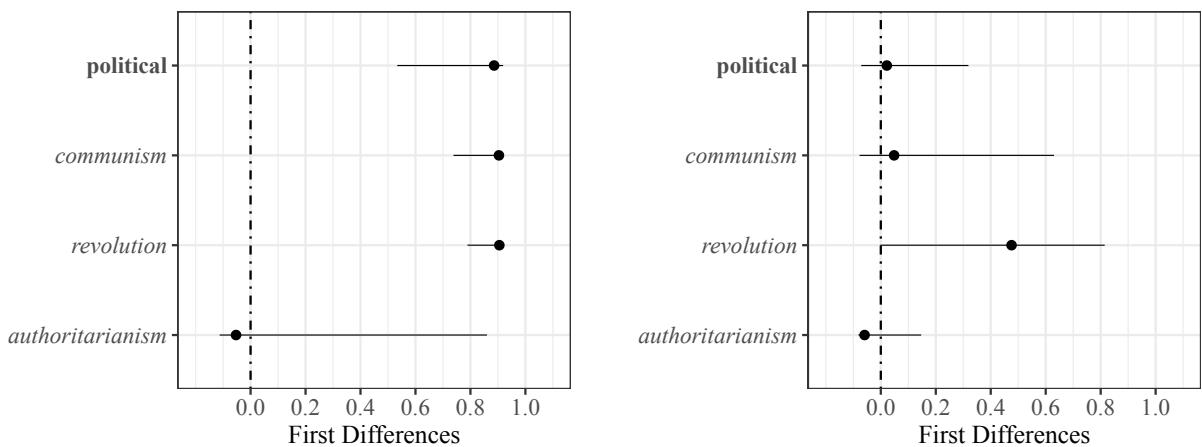
*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Difference in differences, looking at change in political censorship in 1974. In order, models look at change between 1970 and 1978 compared to all other films; 1970 and 1989 compared to all other films; and 1970 and 1989, excluding immoral films. Controls are genre fixed effects and number of keywords.

E.2 Hand-Coded Political Content

To ensure that results are not a reflection of the data generating process, I additionally hand-code films for whether they contain negative depictions of right-wing authoritarianism or sympathetic portrayals of revolution or communism. As with the text analysis measure, political content related to collective action impacts censorship predominantly during the early years of the regime.

Figure D10: Censorship and political content (hand-coded), pre- and post-1978

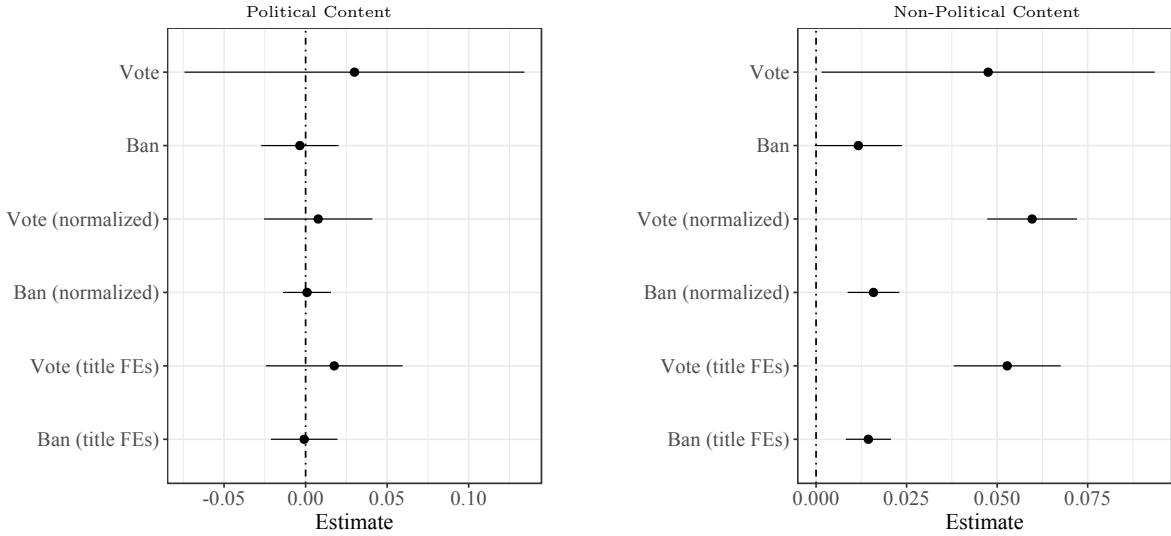


N=1,422 (left) and N=5,137 (right), with 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals (5,000 iterations). Genre and year controls.

E.3 Education Censors and Voting

This section provides further detail about the type of content education-appointed ministers were likely to ban. I first break down analysis to include only movies without known political content (Figure D11, left) and only those that include at least one political keyword (right). Three methods of estimation are used. First, I regress censors' votes on an indicator for whether they were appointed by the Ministry of Education, controlling for measures of film content and year fixed effects. The dependent variable is either an indicator for a ban vote, or a measure ranging from zero ("for all audiences") to four (banned). Second, to account for variation in movie content I normalize censors' votes by subtracting films' final ratings from censors' votes (e.g., censors that vote to ban films ultimately rated as 21 and over score one). Third, censor votes are regressed on the education indicator with title fixed effects, exploiting within-movie voting heterogeneity. All models are OLS. Results show that education-appointed censors were more likely to ban immoral, but not political, content.

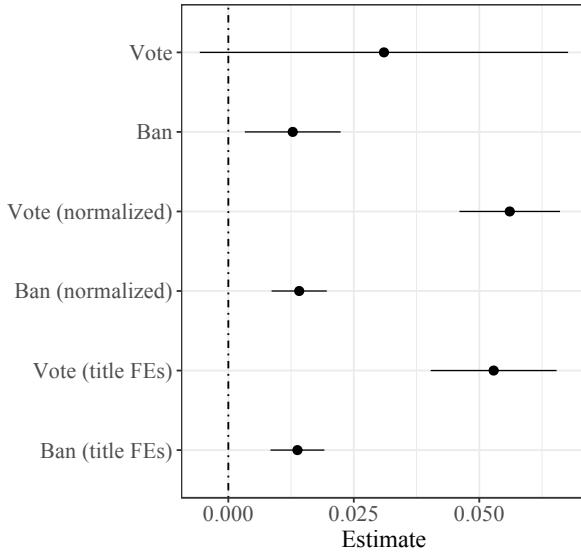
Figure D11: Education-appointed censors and votes, political (left) and non-political (right) content.



$N=1,771$ (left) and $N=14,763$ (right), with 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals (5,000 iterations).

I additionally demonstrate that results hold when including university rectors as being education-appointed. While the Ministry of Education did not choose the rectors who would

Figure D12: Education-appointed censors and votes, including rectors.

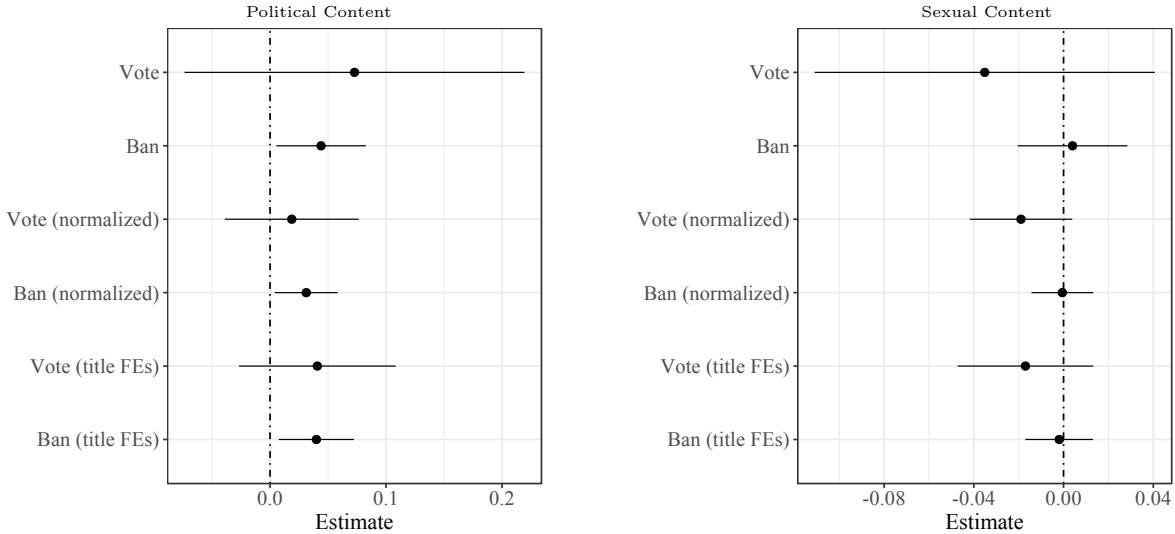


serve as censors with the CCC, it did elect the rectors, and at least one Catholic University rector was known to be Opus Dei (Hutchinson 2006). Figure D12 demonstrates that results broadly hold.

E.4 Armed Forces and Voting

This section demonstrates that members of the armed forces were more likely to vote to ban political, but not immoral, content. As with the education-appointed censor analysis, three methods of estimation are used, this time with an indicator for whether a censor belonged to the armed forces. Figure D13 shows that members of the armed forces were more likely to ban political, but not immoral, content than other censors. However, this holds only for bans rather than for more stringent voting. Results provide some additional suggestive evidence that political bans were meant to limit the potential for dissent, since the armed forces are presumably the organization with the greatest interest in limiting revolutionary content.

Figure D13: Armed forces and votes, political (left) and sexual (right) content.



$N=1,772$ (left) and $N=7,048$ (right), with 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals (5,000 iterations).

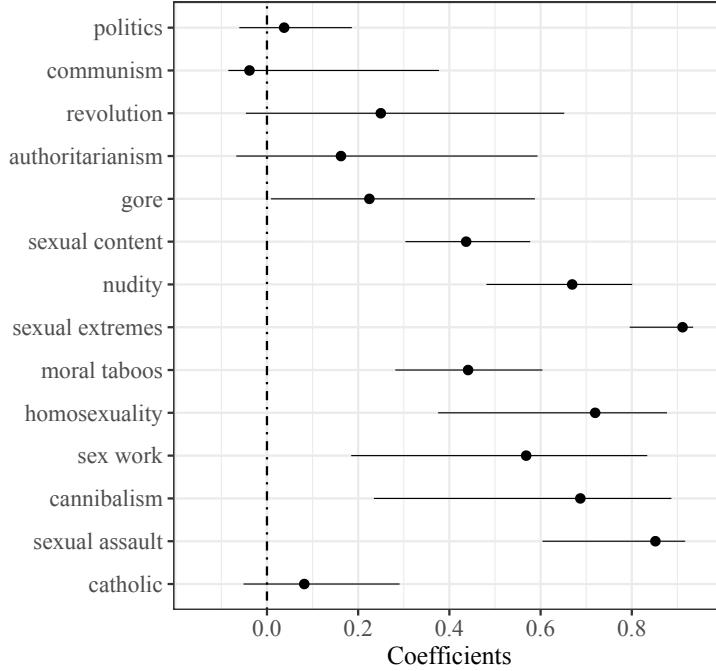
Appendix F: Alternative Explanations

F.1 Distributor Self-Censorship

I look for evidence of distributor self-censorship at two points: the creation of the CCC in 1974 and regime reorganization in 1979, when communism-related themes stop being significantly correlated with censorship. To explore this I scrape the webpages of all movies produced between 1960 and 1995 from the Movie Database (TMDb). 53,798 movies were produced between 1970 and 1989, 36.03% of which have at least one keyword. I compare films to those produced two years before, since this was the median delay in movies reaching Chile. To ensure the validity of TMDb results, I first show that substantive effects hold when using this data (Figure E1).

I then use a difference in differences framework to identify whether rates of review for political versus non-political films changed in 1974 or 1979. Political films are those with at least one political keyword. Table E1 shows that, while the rate of review does increase considerably in 1974 – largely because of the virtual cessation of review in 1973 – this change is nearly identical for political and non-political films. In case self-censorship also affects

Figure E1: Substantive effects, using Movie Database keywords.



N=4,127, with 95% confidence intervals. Controls are genre, year, number of keywords, and video.

sexual, gory, or morally taboo content, I also compare political films to films not associated with any of the four themes, with the same result.

Table E1: Probability of Review, Political and Non-Political Films

Before and After CCC			
	1969-1973	1974-1978	Difference
Political movies	17.39%	25.71%	8.32%**
Non-political movies	10.13%	22.77%	12.64%***
No-theme movies	10.96%	21.67%	10.7%***
Before and After 1979			
	1974-1978	1979-1983	Difference
Political movies	25.71%	22.86%	-2.86%
Non-political movies	22.77%	19.76%	-3.01%
No-theme movies	21.67%	17.7%	-3.97%***

Difference in means using t-tests. Results compare the rates of review before and after key years of change.

To formalize this I use logistic regression where the dependent variable is a binary indicator (*Reviewed*) for whether a film was reviewed by the CCC. The data is restricted to the three years directly before and directly after the change of interest, whether 1974 or 1979. I fit

the following model:

$$Reviewed_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ChangeYear_i + \beta_2 Political_i + \beta_3 ChangeYear_i * Political_i + \chi_i + \gamma_i + \epsilon_i$$

Politics is a binary variable capturing whether a film has at least one political keyword in the TMDb text data. *Change Year* captures whether the year of release or review was before or after (inclusive) 1974 or 1979. The coefficient of interest is β_3 , which reflects whether there is a significant decrease in the probability that a political film is reviewed compared to non-political films. χ_i represent controls, here genre fixed effects and number of keywords. β_0 is a constant, ϵ_i are error terms, and γ_i are year fixed effects. Results in Table E2 show political movies do not become any less likely to be reviewed in 1974 or 1979.

Table E2: Political and Non-Political Movies at Inflection Years

	1974 (1)	1979 (2)	1974 (3)	1979 (4)
Politics	0.301 (0.310)	-0.207 (0.221)		
Change Year	1.043*** (0.078)	-0.201*** (0.060)		
Politics * Change Year	-0.482 (0.377)	-0.153 (0.321)	-0.201 (0.220)	-0.334 (0.238)
Constant	-3.591*** (0.103)	-2.566*** (0.077)	-3.018*** (0.131)	-2.487*** (0.109)
Year FE	N	N	Y	Y
Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	7,335	8,502	7,335	8,502
Log Likelihood	-2,803.268	-3,751.534	-2,734.023	-3,727.115
Akaike Inf. Crit.	5,642.535	7,539.067	5,516.046	7,504.231

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Difference in differences design, restricted to the three years before and after the inflection year of interest. Controls are genre fixed effects and number of keywords.

I additionally re-run results using the full list of films produced by the CCC, covering 1938 to 1994. This data is less complete than the *expedientes*, particularly before the dictatorship. However, it permits looking at any changes that occur during democratization in 1990. Since restrictions on political materials were removed from the CCC guidelines in the new constitution, an increase in the percent of political films reviewed after 1989 would provide

evidence of distributor self-censorship. Results confirm the findings above (Tables E3, E4). There is no change in the percent of political movies before and after democratization.

Table E3: Probability of Review, Political and Non-Political Films, 1965-1993

Before and After CCC			
	1965-1973	1974-1978	Difference
Political movies	3.56%	18.66%	15.1%***
Non-political movies	1.66%	16.15%	14.49%***
Difference	1.9%	2.51%	
Before and After 1979			
	1974-1978	1979-1983	Difference
Political movies	18.66%	10.83%	-7.83%**
Non-political movies	16.15%	9.7%	-6.45%***
Difference	2.51%	1.13%	
Before and After Democratization			
	1986-1989	1990-1993	Difference
Political movies	36.36%	31.66%	-4.71%
Non-political movies	26.03%	26.44%	0.41%
No-theme movies	23.61%	23.88%	

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Difference in means using t-tests. Results compare the rates of review before and after key years of change.

Table E4: Comparing Political and Non-Political Movies at Inflection Points, 1965-1993

	1974 (1)	1979 (2)	1990 (3)	1974 (4)	1979 (5)	1990 (6)
Politics	0.508 (0.404)	-0.173 (0.248)	0.356* (0.216)			
Change Year	2.702*** (0.115)	-0.642*** (0.073)	0.652*** (0.055)			
Politics * Change Year	-0.654 (0.471)	-0.182 (0.377)	-0.311 (0.262)	-0.197 (0.251)	-0.316 (0.295)	-0.043 (0.157)
Constant	-5.602*** (0.145)	-2.888*** (0.090)	-2.585*** (0.071)	-6.830*** (0.473)	-2.721*** (0.122)	-3.660*** (0.150)
Year FE	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	11,099	8,443	10,628	11,099	8,443	10,628
Log Likelihood	-2,107.922	-2,786.648	-5,148.268	-2,034.854	-2,751.746	-4,963.057
Akaike Inf. Crit.	4,251.844	5,609.297	10,332.540	4,127.707	5,553.493	9,974.114

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Difference in differences design, restricted to the three years before and after the inflection year of interest. Controls are genre fixed effects and number of keywords.

To additionally confirm that there was no distributor self-censorship of immoral content, I show that there is no change in rates of review for movies classified by the U.S. MPAA as R, NC-17, or X-rated. Not all films received or reported an MPAA rating, and those that did

were more likely to be rated high. Still, it shows no apparent change with the coup in the rate of R-rated films entering the country, either positive – suggesting that censorship was a mechanistic response to a change in the type of films entering the country – or negative, suggesting distributor self-censorship. Similarly, there is no increase or decrease in rates of review for R-rated films following democratization (Figure E2). Re-running the difference in difference analyses above with MPAA ratings similarly shows null results (not reported).

Figure E2: Percent of Films Rated as R or higher by MPAA



F.2 Censor Preferences

To demonstrate that the institutional environment plays a role in censorship independent of councilor preferences, Table E5 shows that democratization significantly decreases the probability of censorship even when controlling for year and genre fixed effects.

Table E5: Democratization and censorship

	All (1)	No political (2)	Immoral (3)
Democratization	-2.172*** (0.335)	-2.091*** (0.355)	-1.765*** (0.407)
Number of keywords	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	-0.003** (0.001)
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Genre FE	Y	Y	Y
Observations	6,892	6,251	3,341
Log Likelihood	-1,278.766	-1,167.381	-871.566
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,615.532	2,392.762	1,801.133

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Logistic regression with year, genre, number of keywords, and video controls.

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