

Banning *The Color Purple*: An Analysis into Book Banning in U.S. Prisons

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Abstract

Incarcerated individuals are experiencing some of the greatest forms of censorship in the United States by process of book banning. However, this censorship varies widely between states with Florida having more than 10,000 books banned in prisons and Wyoming only having 25 total banned in the state. This leads to the question: what explains state variation of books banned in prisons and does book banning have an effect on recidivism? This paper argues that the party control of a state legislature and the governor's party have an effect on the amount of books banned in that state's prisons. Furthermore, this paper argues that the amount of books banned in a state's prisons will be correlated with a higher recidivism rate in that state. The first hypothesis is evaluated with a statistical analysis of the amount of books banned in a state per 1000 prisoners and measures of party control of the state legislature and the governor. The results found partial support for this hypothesis. For the second hypothesis, a statistical approach was taken, examining the relationship between banned books and recidivism in a state. The results found substantial support for this argument. However, the results should be interpreted carefully as many states lack transparency in publishing their list of banned books. Further work in this area is warranted.

1. Introduction

While you may find a copy of *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker in a high school English class, if you are an incarcerated individual in a North Carolina prison, you are not able to even obtain the book. It seems contradictory that North Carolina allows for teenagers who have not finished High School to read a book but does not allow adult individuals who are incarcerated to read it. *The Color Purple* tells the story of Celie, the protagonist who is a poor, fourteen-year-old Black girl and details her experiences living in the rural South during the early 1900s. While North Carolina does not disclose the reasons it bans particular books, politicians often justify it based on sexual content. However, I presume that the book being banned in a North Carolina prison goes beyond sexual content and is actually banned because it deals with racial discrimination in the United States. This may sound like an outlier. However, it represents a much greater issue of prison book banning in the United States. While this is a problem across the US, it varies widely across states. For example in the state of Florida there are more than 10,000 books banned in prisons while Wyoming has only banned 25 in the entire state.

Due to the phenomenon of book banning in prisons, I am led to the questions: what explains state variation of books banned in prisons, and what is the effect of such practice? I argue that Republican control of a state contributes to greater levels of book banning. This is because Republicans support a tougher on crime stance than Democrats who are usually more supportive of prison reform. This tough on crime stance likely means that Republicans support stricter prison policy and therefore support an increase in the amount of books banned in that state's prison. Further, I argue that these book banning practices contribute to higher recidivism rates. Literature supports the claim that education has been proven as one of the most effective ways to reduce recidivism. Books are a form of education so by limiting access to books you are in turn limiting the access to education, leading to higher recidivism rates.

To evaluate these claims, I took a statistical approach. I found partial support for my claims that states with Republican-controlled state legislatures and governors will have higher number of books banned in prisons. In terms of the effects of prison book banning, I find substantial evidence that it contributes to recidivism in states. While there were data limitations in conducting this analysis, the results suggest an important area for reform in the rights of incarcerated individuals.

I believe that access to this information should be available for all individuals. The heart of this issue lies in the following quote from Thurgood Marshall in the case *Procunier v. Martinez*: “When the prison gates slam behind an inmate, he does not lose his human quality; his mind does not become closed to ideas; his intellect does not cease to feed on a free and open interchange of opinions; his yearning for self-respect does not end; nor is his quest for self-realization concluded.” This quote is so important because it recognizes the humanity of incarcerated individuals, which is sometimes lost on police officers and law makers. This issue is also important because there is a racial discrimination in policing practices. Therefore, limiting access to education to incarcerated individuals creates a form of racial discrimination in education.

In what follows, I summarize research on this phenomenon of book banning in prisons. I then lay out my theory of why there is state variation of book banning practices. I will also lay out my arguments about the relationship between book banning and recidivism. I then explain how I will be testing both of my hypotheses. After explaining the statistical approach, I discuss my results. I conclude with a discussion of the necessity of transparency in United States prisons with regards to book banning but also a need to decrease the number of banned books in prisons.

2. Literature Review

The legality of book banning in U.S. prisons is predominantly shown in two court cases. Those court cases were *Procunier v. Martinez* in 1974 and *Turner v. Safley* in 1987². *Procunier v. Martinez* states the importance of knowledge and human rights for those in prisons but does not lay the groundwork for preserving those rights. The Supreme Court states that censorship is allowed if there is substantial government interest. *Turner v. Safley* gives us the precedent of the Turner Test, which is a test for prison officials to help guide them with book and material censorship². There are four factors to consider when banning material. The four factors being “Whether there exists a valid, rational connection between the regulation and the governmental interest put forward to justify it; Whether inmates are left with alternative means of exercising the right that the regulation restricts; Whether accommodating the asserted right would have a significant ripple effect on fellow inmates or prison staff; And whether there is a ready alternative to the regulation that fully accommodates the asserted right at a minimal cost to valid penological interests”⁸. This flexibility allows prison officials to essentially ban any material they choose, especially as there are no federal laws that directly address censorship. Cauley notes that prisons engage in two types of book banning practices: content-based and content-neutral bans².

A content-based ban allows prison officials to restrict access to books on the basis of topics covered in books they believe to be dangerous to prisoners these areas include: “Sexual content, nudity, or obscenity, depictions of violence or language perceived to encourage it, depictions of criminal activity or language perceived to encourage it, depictions of escape or language perceived to encourage it, encouragement of ‘group disruption’ or anti-authority attitudes or actions, and racial animus or language perceived to encourage hatred”¹². Notably, in most states, officials need not be transparent on the exact reason a book is banned, which opens up the abuse of this power and significant censorship. Another way that prison officials go about book banning in prisons is by only allowing materials to be sent from a pre-approved vendor¹². This does not give prisoners the freedom to receive books from family members or friends. This is also limiting for prisoners as they have to pay to receive books from these vendors. These bans are not based on content, but still significantly decrease access.

Arford conducted a case study in Texas to better understand these dynamics¹. Arford interviewed prison library officials and found that “88 percent of librarians said that certain types or categories of materials are restricted from their libraries”¹. While this article focuses on Texas, this shows that it is still an issue that widely affects many prisons and prisoners. The study also shows that banned materials based on sexual content far outnumber the rest¹. This information gives us an insight into what prison officials deem necessary to be banned.

While there is a substantial number of articles and information on the types and content of books banned in prisons, there was a lack of scholarship on state variation of banned books. This project seeks to fill this hole in the literature by examining how state politics affect these practices and what the effect of prison book banning is across the states.

In particular, I will explore the relationship between prison censorship and recidivism. Recidivism is the rate at which previously incarcerated individuals return to prison. Hall et al found that, “The Bureau of Justice Statistics

(2002) found that 67.5 % of prisoners released in 15 states during 1994 recidivated within three years of release²⁵. This shows how high of a percentage previously incarcerated individuals return to prison. However, Vacca (2004) found that incarcerated individuals with access to education have lower recidivism rates. This knowledge leads me to believe that banning books in prisons may also affect these dynamics. Other research confirms these findings^{4,11,&13}.

3. Theory

One explanation for state variation in books banned in prisons is party leadership of a state. Party leadership is determined by which political party has control of the state legislature as well as the governor. The governor of a state has a large impact on books banned in prisons. This is because governors are in charge of law enforcement, often including the selection of top prison officials, which are often the officials who have the discretion over which and how many books to ban⁶. Therefore, their political affiliation is likely to impact the number of books banned. The party of the state legislature also has an impact on the number of books banned because state legislators can reflect the political ideology in the state and because they can pass legislation regarding book banning practices.

Republican and Democratic controlled states will likely have a difference in the number of books banned. This is due to the fact that the Republican and Democratic parties have varying beliefs on the punishment of crime. Republicans are more likely to support a tough on crime stance. This is shown specifically in the 2012 Republican platform that called for “mandatory prison sentencing for gang crimes, violent or sexual offenses against children, repeat drug dealers, rape, robbery, and murder”¹⁰. Republicans are also generally more supportive of the death penalty. This tough on crime stance can impact the number of books banned in prisons as Republicans are more likely to support the use of limiting access to prisoners compared to Democrats.

In addition to the tough on crime stance, Republicans also are more likely to support the criminalization of drug use. The criminalization of drug use is causing a tremendous increase in the number of prisoners. The criminalization of drug use means that Republicans generally support mandatory prison time for drug users. This is contradictory to the general belief of Democrats on the issue. Democrats generally support decriminalization and rehabilitation of drug users. This means that Democrats support helping the individual rather than punishing them. This goes back to book banning because limiting access to books is further punishment for prisoners. Therefore, Republicans are more likely to hold this stance and ban more books, whereas Democrats support rehabilitation prisoners by giving them educational access.

Additionally, Democrats are more likely to support prison reform compared to Republicans. This is shown on the website democrats.org in the following quote: “Democrats believe we need to overhaul the criminal justice system from top to bottom”³. This call for prison reform is a contrasting opinion to that of Republicans who call for more police involvement. This means the Democrats are more likely to support access to materials and education to prisoners. This support of access to materials would create a decrease in the number of books banned in Democratic controlled states.

Furthermore, the majority of books banned in prisons are banned in the context of sexual content. Republicans have a greater belief in censorship of sexual content. This is likely due to religious reasons. The Pew Research Center found that “ninety percent of Republicans or individuals who lean Republican believed in God, seventy-three percent were certain of their Religious belief and seventeen percent were fairly certain”⁹. Religious individuals specifically Christians are more likely to support censorship of sexual content because the Bible says sexual relations can only happen between “a man and wife.” Therefore, this censorship of sexual content would lead to an increase in the number of books banned in a state. Ultimately, these findings lead to the conclusion that if a state is controlled by Republicans there is likely going to be more books banned in that state's prisons.

- Hypothesis 1: Republican controlled states are likely to ban more books in prisons than Democratic controlled states.

Further I argue that the impact of state variation of the number of books banned in prisons is likely to be shown in recidivism rates. Recidivism is the rate at which previously incarcerated individuals return to prisons. One of the most effective ways to reduce recidivism rates is education. This information has been studied since the 1990s and the findings have been conclusive that education does lead to a decrease in recidivism¹³. In Ohio, for instance, “statistics show that inmates graduating from the college program reduced the rate of recidivism by 72 percent when compared with inmates not participating in any education program”¹³.

One reason the individuals who were involved with education programs in prison had lower rates of recidivism is that they had more skills to better equip themselves for life outside of prison. The majority of prisoners do not have a high school degree and a majority of these individuals cannot read¹³. After incarcerated individuals leave prison, they often have difficulties getting a job because of their time in prison as well as this dispositional disadvantage of education. Prison education programs provide knowledge and skills that will help them once they leave prison and this makes them less likely to return. Access to books is critical for this skill set.

Book banning in prisons can also affect the emotional wellbeing of prisoners. Bibliotherapy is a concept created to help reform prisoners through reading. This therapy has been linked to a decrease in depression in inmates⁷. The importance of books in prisons is also shown in the following quote: “inmates with access to good library services were less likely to file lawsuits about prison conditions”⁷. This shows that having access to a library creates better conditions in a prison. This would also save money for prisons in the long run because they are less likely to be sued. If prisoners have access to books, this then could serve as a form of rehabilitation and can help the formerly incarcerated cope with and adapt to the emotional stressors upon release that could contribute to recidivism. The negative emotional wellbeing that is created by book banning in prison likely continues when the incarcerated individual leaves. This negative emotional wellbeing makes life after prison more difficult and means they are more likely to turn to prison leading to a higher recidivism rate. Having access to a library also would decrease recidivism rates as access to education has a negative correlation to recidivism. However, if an incarcerated individual does not have access to library services or education programs, they can gain knowledge through books sent from friends or family members.

Therefore, limiting the number of books that can be sent from friends or family limits the amount of education access for these incarcerated individuals and negatively impacts their well-being. Many prisons do not have adequate library services or education programs and this is leaving these prisoners at a disadvantage. The lack of education for incarcerated individuals is an ever growing issue as the rate of banned materials is increasing. However, if we decrease the number of books banned to prisoners and increase educational opportunities for prisoners we would likely see a decrease in recidivism.

- Hypothesis 2: An increase in the number of books banned in a state will contribute to an increase in the rate of recidivism in that state.

4. Empirics

To test my hypotheses of interest, I take a statistical approach. For both analyses, the unit of analysis is the U.S. State. To evaluate Hypothesis 1, which looks at the causes of book banning practices across the states, I collect data for the year 2018/ 2019. These are the only years for which the necessary data is available. To evaluate Hypothesis 2, which looks at the impact of book banning practices, I use data primarily from the year 2021.

Hypothesis 1 states that Republican controlled states are likely to ban more books in prisons than Democratic controlled states. To test this hypothesis, the dependent variable is book banning in the states. I measure this as the total number of books banned in 2018/2019 per 1000 incarcerated people in each state. Providing a per capita figure allows us to more directly compare across states. The data needed to calculate this measure is made available by the Prison Legal News arm of the Human Rights Defence Center. States do not have to make their master lists of banned books publicly available, so to receive this information, the organization submitted Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests in every state. To gather the information from the FOIA requests, I read through approximately 60 documents to identify the lists of banned books per state and then counted the number of books on each list. I then calculated the figures per 1000 prisoners. However, it is important to note that not all states complied with these requests. In fact, after going through the documents, I found that only 16 of 50 states complied. Further, because these states all have different reporting styles, it is difficult to assess the level of completion of each state's list for those that did comply. As such, the measure of the dependent variable has limitations, but it is the best data available to study the phenomenon of interest. In total, there were thirty four states that did not submit data about book banning amounts in prison. Of the 16 states included in the analysis, the minimum amount of books banned per 1000 prisoners was found to be 5.13 and was in New Jersey. The maximum number of books banned per 1000 prisoners was found to be 360.56 and was in Kansas. The average number of books banned per 1000 prisoners was found to be 94.42. The standard deviation was found to be 103.62.

My independent variable was party control of the state. This was measured in two ways: the party of governor and the majority party of the state legislature. The party of governor and majority party of state legislature were coded as

a 1 if Republican and a 0 otherwise. This data on party control comes from the National Conference of State Legislatures. There were 11 states in the data set that had a Republican governors and were coded as 1. There were 5 states without a Republican governor in the data set and those were listed as a 0. States with a Republican control of the state legislature included Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, Virginia, and Wyoming. States without a Republican control of the state legislature include California, Connecticut, Illinois, New Jersey, and Oregon.

I also control for other factors that may explain the variation in prison book banning across states. The factors I wanted to control for include the percentage of a state that voted for Trump in 2016, as well as the Black-to-white ratio and Latino-to-white ratio in incarceration rates. I included the percentage that voted for Trump in that state because conservative voters can influence the book banning practices of elected officials. I found this data from the *New York Times* website of the 2016 election results. After collecting this data, I found that the state in the analysis with the minimum percent that voted for Trump in 2016 to be California at 31.5 percent. I also found the maximum percent to be Wyoming with 68.2 percent. The average percent that voted for Trump was found to be 47.1 percent. The standard deviation was 8.15 percent. I included controls for racial and ethnic disparities in the incarcerated population as the amount of banned books per state could reflect a racial bias of the prison staff. The variables are measured as the number of Black and Latino prisoners for every white prisoner in a state's prisons. I found this data from the Sentencing Project. I found the state with the minimum ratio of Black-to-white incarcerated individuals to be Wyoming with 3.5. The maximum ratio was New Jersey with 12.2. The average ratio was found to be 6.59 and the standard deviation was 2.6. Additionally, I found that the state with the lowest ratio of Latino-to-white incarcerated individuals was in Florida and the ratio was 0.2. The state with the highest ratio was Arizona with 3.2. The average ratio is 1.44 and the standard deviation is 0.78.

Hypothesis 2 states that an increase in the number of books banned in a state will cause an increase in the rate of recidivism in that state. The dependent variable for this hypothesis is the recidivism rate in each state in 2021. This is measured as the percent of formerly incarcerated people that return to prison within five years of being released. This data is available from the World Population Review. The average recidivism rate is 35.83 percent. The minimum recidivism rate was in Texas and was 21.4 percent. The maximum rate was in Arizona and was 57%. The standard deviation was 10.38 percent. The independent variable is the percent of books banned per prisoner in a state in 2018/2019, which was the dependent variable for Hypothesis 1.

The controls for Hypothesis 2 are the strength of a state's prison education program, the poverty rate in a state, and a state's welfare generosity. For the strength of a state's prison program, this is an ordinal variable that ranks states based on the support they give for prison education programs. This includes whether they fund such programs, whether they provide a full range of course offerings and programs, whether they lack restrictions on who can get access to prison education, and whether they provide educational support such as technology and time off work. This data was important to include as education has been proven to decrease recidivism rates. States are ranked from 0 to 4 based on how many of those policies they have. This data is from the Justice Center of the Council of State Governments. For the states I observed, Wyoming was the only one with zero of the policies, and seven of them had one policy. An example of states that had one policy include Arizona and New Hampshire. Eight states had two of the policies. Examples of those states include North Carolina and Virginia. None of the states in the dataset had three or four of the policies. The poverty rate in a state was measured as the percent of individuals in poverty in that state. This data was taken from the 2019 American Community Survey by the Census Bureau. The minimum poverty rate was New Hampshire with 7.3 percent and the maximum poverty rate was Texas with 13.6 percent. The average poverty rate was 11.45 percent and the standard deviation was 1.74 percent. I included the poverty rate as poverty in a state could affect the recidivism rate. States with greater levels of poverty likely have fewer opportunities for the formerly incarcerated. Welfare generosity was measured as state per capita spending on all public welfare programs. This data was from the Tax Policy Center. I found the minimum spending to be Connecticut with 1122 dollars. The maximum was California with 3397 in spending. The average to be 1907.5 dollar and the standard deviation to be 577.52 dollar. I included this measure as states with more generous welfare may provide more support for those released from prison, reducing recidivism.

5. Analysis

I estimate two regressions to evaluate my hypotheses. To evaluate Hypothesis 1, I estimate a regression with the number of banned books per 1000 prisoners as the dependent variable. I include my indicators for the party control in each state, as well as controls. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Effect of Party Control on Book Banning

	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
Y-Intercept	-243.98	271.74	0.39
Party of Legislature	64.35	105.87	0.55
Party of Governor	-18.09	78.85	0.82
Percent for Trump	3.52	6.26	0.59
Black: White Imprisonment Ratio	24.1	15	0.14
Latino: White Imprisonment Ratio	-12.69	42.27	0.77

The results provide partial support for Hypothesis 1. Republican control of the state legislature had the anticipated positive result, but there is an unexpected negative coefficient on governor party. Neither effect is statistically significant. Two of the three controls performed as expected.

For the party of the state legislature, I anticipated in my theory that the results would be positive, signifying that an increase in Republican control of state legislature indicates an increase in books banned in prison. The coefficient on the legislature party is positive, which is consistent with my hypothesis. A Republican controlled state legislature is associated with an increase of 64.35 books banned in prison per 1000 prisoners. I would say that this is a meaningful association and relationship between state control of a legislature and the amount of books banned in prisons. Sixty-four extra books banned per 1000 prisoners is a fairly large effect and cuts down access incarcerated people have to books and education. However, these results were found to not be statistically significant as the p-value was over 0.05. This means that while the direction and size of the effect comport my hypothesis, we fail to reject the null hypothesis of no effect. This is likely due to the fact that I was only able to find book banning in prison data for 16 of the 50 states.

For the party of the governor, I anticipated a positive result between the party of governor and the amount of books banned in prison. However, the coefficient tells us that actually a negative relationship was found. By having a Republican governor, the amount of books banned in prison was found to have a negative effect on overall book banning. According to the regression, Republican governors are correlated with a decrease of 18 banned books per 1000 prisoners. I think this relationship is less substantively significant as 64 is a far greater number than 18. However, it is interesting that by having a Republican governor there is on average 18 less books banned per 1000 prisoners. This was also found to be not statistically significant as the p-value was 0.82.

The control variables I included were the percent of the state population who voted for Trump in 2016, the Black-to-white imprisonment ratio, and the Latino-to-white imprisonment ratio. The percent for Trump variable was found to be positively correlated with books banned per 1000 prisoners. This means that for every 1% increase in those that voted for Trump in 2016, there was a result of 3.5 more books banned per 1000 prisoners. This positive coefficient was expected. I would say that this increase is significant and does show a relationship between percent that voted for Trump and books banned in prisons. The Black-to-white imprisonment ratio was found to have a positive correlation to books banned in prisons. This is consistent of expectations. For every increase by 1 in the Black-to-white imprisonment ratio, there was an increase in books banned per 1000 prisoners by 24 books. I would say that this variable is very significant and shows a strong correlation between Black-to-white imprisonment ratio and books banned in prisons. I expect that the Latino-to-white imprisonment ratio would have a positive correlation with books banned in prison, as well. However, the regression found a negative correlation. An increase of 1 in the Latino-to-white imprisonment ratio is correlated with a decrease in books banned in prisons by 12.7 books. This result is somewhat puzzling given my expectations. All three of the control variables were found to be not statistically significant. The p-value for percent for Trump was 0.59. The p-value for the Black-to-white imprisonment ratio was 0.14. This is the closest to 0.05 that any of the variables had and therefore is the closest to statistically significant.

Lastly, the p-value for Latino-to-white imprisonment ratio was 0.77. As such, statistically speaking, we cannot be confident in these effects. Substantively, however, these effects are meaningful.

My second hypothesis centers on the relationship between prison book banning and recidivism. The dependent variable is the recidivism rate and the independent variable is the number of books banned per 1000 prisoners. The results of this regression, which also includes control variables, are shown in Table 2.

For books banned per 1000 prisoners, I anticipated a positive coefficient, signifying a relationship between the amount of books banned in prisons and recidivism rates. The result is included in the hypothesized direction. For an increase in 1 banned book per 1000 prisoners, recidivism increases by .02 percent. This can also be understood as for every 100 books banned per 1000 prisoners, recidivism rates increase by 2 percent. I would say this is a meaningful relationship and is substantively significant. However, since the p-value is above 0.5, this is not statistically significant.

Table 2: Effects of Book Banning on Recidivism

	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
Y-Intercept	19.91	19.19	0.32
Books Banned per 1000 prisoners	0.02	0.03	0.45
Prison Education Program Strength	-3.98	4.57	0.40
Poverty	0.07	1.53	0.96
Welfare Generosity	0.01	0.005	0.05

The positive coefficient on books banned supports Hypothesis 2, though the effect is not statistically significant. Prison education and poverty also affect recidivism as expected. The positive coefficient on welfare generosity is unexpected.

My control variables for Hypothesis 2 are prison education program strength, poverty, and welfare generosity. For prison education program strength, I anticipated a negative coefficient. The coefficient was found to be -3.98 and therefore was anticipated. Adding one more policy to support the prison education program decreases the recidivism in a state by almost four percent. I would say that this is significant and shows a strong correlation between prison education and recidivism. However, the p-value was 0.45 and therefore not statistically significant.

I expected a positive correlation between recidivism and poverty. This is found in the coefficient of 0.07 percent. For every one percent increase of poverty in a state there is a 0.07 percent increase in recidivism. I would say that this is not a strong correlation and is less significant. The p-value was 0.96 and therefore not statistically significant.

Lastly, I controlled for welfare generosity. For this I expected a negative correlation between recidivism and welfare generosity. However, a positive effect was found. For every dollar increase in welfare generosity, there is an increase in recidivism by 0.01. Another way of looking at this is for every \$100 increase in welfare spending per capita, there is a 1 percent increase in recidivism in a state. This is very puzzling as you would expect welfare spending to have a decrease in recidivism rates. While this coefficient is not extremely significant it is substantive enough to raise questions about this relationship. The p-value was found to be 0.05, which is on the threshold for statistical significance at the 95% confidence level. This could reflect a bias in which states are in the analysis. Perhaps the states most likely to share their book banning practices are also the most likely to have generous welfare policies.

5.1 Robustness Check

I also conducted robustness checks on my results. In particular, I recalculated my measure of book banning to be the number of books banned per 100,000 people in a state, rather than per 1000 prisoners, to ensure measurement was not driving results. As such I re-estimated my Hypothesis 1 with this new measure. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Effect of Party Control on Book Banning: Robustness Check

	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
Y-Intercept	-104.52	163.21	0.54
Party of Legislature	44.70	63.58	0.50
Party of Governor	-5.63	47.36	0.91
Percent for Trump	1.26	3.76	0.74
Black: White Imprisonment Ratio	10.91	9.01	0.25
Latino: White Imprisonment Ratio	-3.02	25.39	0.91

The results provide partial support for Hypothesis 1. This is consistent with the results found on Table 1. None of the results was statistically significant.

For the party of the state legislature, I anticipated a positive coefficient, which was found and is consistent with the regression shown in Table 1. While the coefficient did change from 64.35 in Table 1 to 44.70 in Table 3 this is insignificant as the coefficient did not change directions. For the party of the governor, I anticipated a positive coefficient, however a negative coefficient was found. While this is inconsistent with my theory it is consistent with the results found in Table 1. For the control variables percent that voted for Trump, the Black to White imprisonment, and Latino to White imprisonment ratio they all were the same coefficient sign that was reflected in Table 1. However, none of the results were statistically significant. As such, the change in measurement does not meaningfully alter the results.

Table 4: Effects of Book Banning on Recidivism: Robustness Check

	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
Y-Intercept	20.37	18.70	0.30
Books Banned per 100 Thousand People	0.04	0.04	0.34
Prison Education Program Strength	-3.54	4.56	0.45
Poverty	-0.05	1.52	0.97
Welfare Generosity	0.01	0.004	0.04

The results provide support for Hypothesis 2. This is consistent with the results found on Table 2. Only the control variable welfare generosity was statistically significant.

For the effect of book banning on recidivism with the independent variable as books banned per 100 thousand people the coefficient was positive. This is consistent with Hypothesis 2 and is also consistent with Table 2. While the coefficient did change from 0.02 in Table 2 to 0.04 in Table 4 this is insignificant as the coefficient was the same positive result. For the control variables prison education program strength was consistent with my theory and was

consistent with Table 2. However, the sign of the coefficient for poverty changed from a positive coefficient to a negative coefficient. This is somewhat puzzling of a result however, the p-value is 0.97 and therefore, the result is statistically insignificant. For the control variable welfare generosity the results were inconsistent with my theory however, was consistent with Table 2. Welfare generosity was also found to be statistically significant and was the only variable to be statistically significant. This is again a puzzling result.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that a Republican controlled state legislature or Republican governor would lead to an increase in the amount of books banned in that state's prison. I found support that a Republican controlled state legislature is correlated with an increase in the amount of books banned in the state's prison and the number was found to be substantial. However, I did not find support that a Republican governor is correlated with an increase in the amount of books banned in a state's prisons. For my second hypothesis, I argued that an increase in the amount of books banned in prison would be correlated with an increase in recidivism rate in that state. I found support for this argument.

The implications of this research shows that a way to reduce recidivism rate in a state is to ban fewer books. This is significant because recidivism affects millions of people in the United States each year. By doing something as simple as banning fewer books in a state, you are affecting individuals lives. It can also save states money. It's an easy fix to a pressing problem. It also is clear from my findings that book banning appears to be a partisan issue. However, it should not be. Access to education should be a fundamental right and not vary across partisan lines.

The major limitation of this research was a lack of transparency in the documentation of books banned in prisons in each state. I was only able to find data on 16 out of 50 states' banned books documents. This is extremely significant when you look at the United States as a whole. It is hard to generalize my findings beyond those 16 states, but the results suggest a real need to study this further. It is important to pressure lawmakers to release this information to the public, as this directly affects millions of individuals lives.

In addition to my call for more research into book banning in prisons, I would also suggest more research on the relationship between welfare spending and recidivism. My results suggest a puzzling positive correlation between the two. Recidivism is an important issue, and researchers should further study policy to reduce it.

7. Work Cited

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