

Censor for a Day 2009 Term 1

Student Survey Results and teacher feedback

Findings from Censor for a Day 2009 (Term 1)

DEFIANCE

Introduction

In Term 1 of 2009, Censor for a Day was held over two weeks. The film *Defiance* was screened to 596 senior students from 29 schools in Wellington and Auckland. Most of the students who attended are studying New Zealand's censorship system as part of their Level 3 NCEA Media Studies. Censor for Day is an opportunity for them to gain first hand experience and insight into the system. It is also a valuable opportunity for the Office of Film and Literature Classification to hear the opinions of young New Zealanders who are generally the sector of the population most affected by the work of the Office.

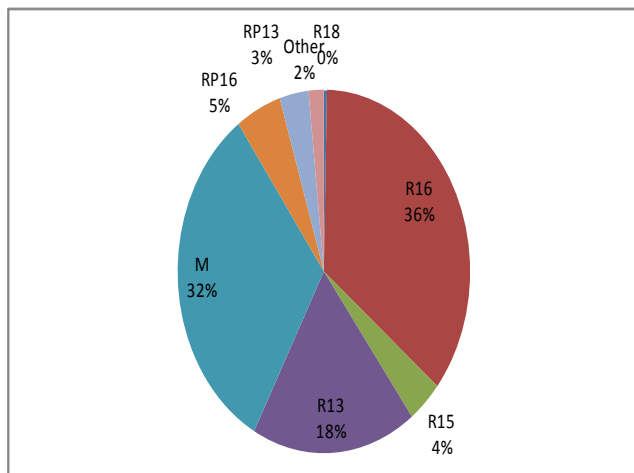


Defiance is based on the true story of the Bielski brothers who during World War II led a resistance against the Nazis in Belo-Russia. Hunted constantly, they and their followers built a community in the forest, building bonds of strength and humanity during one of the darkest periods in human history.

Under the Films, Videos and Publications Classification Act 1993, if a film receives an unrestricted classification in Australia or the UK, then that film automatically receives the same rating in New Zealand (it does however need to carry a New Zealand label). This process is called cross-rating, and is carried out by an organisation called the Film and Video Labelling Body. Therefore most of the films with a G, PG, or M rating have not been seen by the New Zealand Office of Film and Literature Classification.

Defiance received its New Zealand rating through this cross-rating process. The film was classified as M by the Australian Classification Board, and was accordingly cross-rated as M in New Zealand, with the descriptive note "contains violence and offensive language". The M classification is unrestricted - it means that legally anyone can see this film, however it is recommended for mature audiences aged 16 and over.

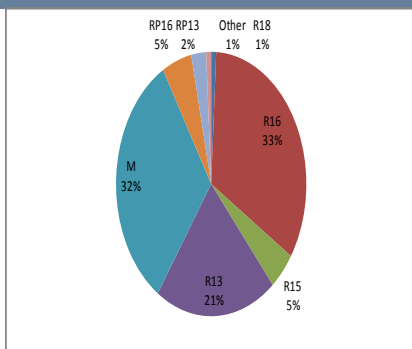
Student Survey Results



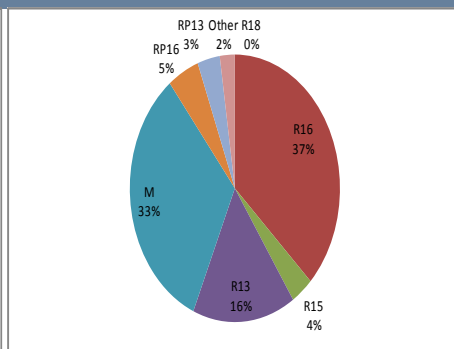
Classifications given by students

Overall, R16 was the most common classification given to *Defiance* by students who attended Censor for Day in Term 1, with 36% of students selecting this classification for the film. The second most common classification was M, with 32% of students selecting this option. In total 68% of students restricted the film, while 32% classified it as unrestricted.

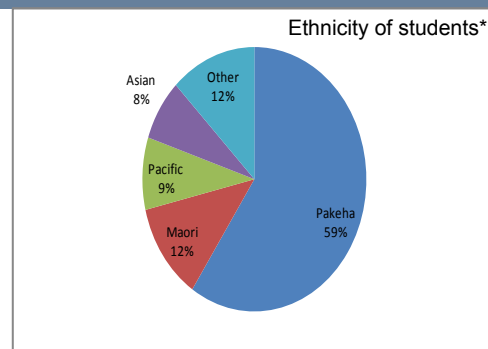
The majority of students felt that the film warranted a restricted rating due to its violent content, however they also acknowledged the violence took place in the context of a war film, and that the realistic portrayal of the events added to the historical and educational merit of the film. This element of merit was noted by many who gave the film a less restrictive classification of R13, and was also the justification given by the majority of students who made the film unrestricted. Many suggested it would be an excellent educational resource, especially for students studying history.



Male classifications



Female classifications

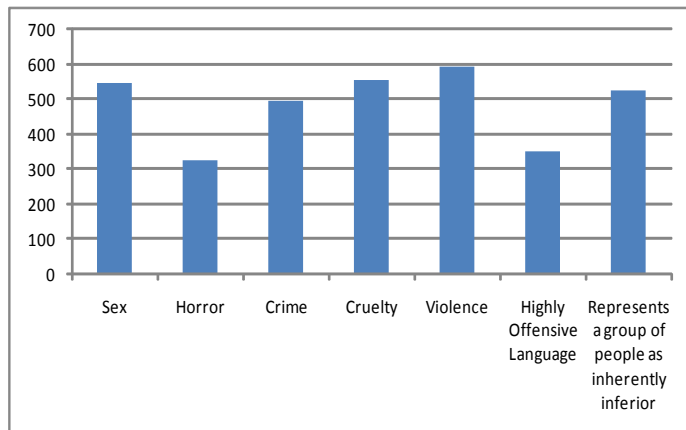


*Some students indicated more than one ethnicity.

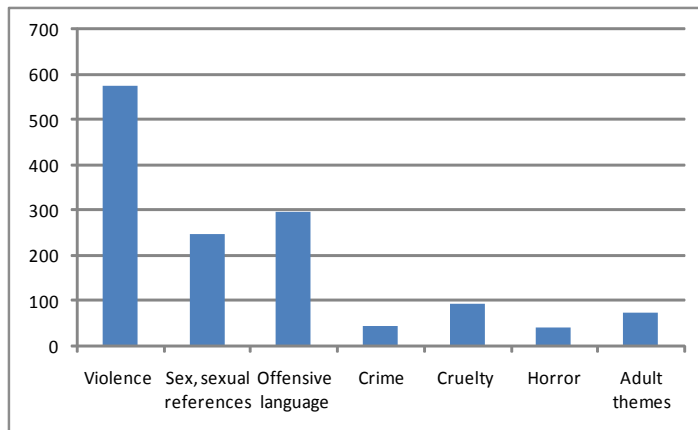
Males and females tended to classify the film in the same way. Of the 596 students who attended Censor for a Day in Term 1, 59% identified as Pakeha, 12% as Maori, 9% as Pacific Islander and 8% as Asian. The remaining 12% either ticked 'other' and specified their ethnicity or did not indicate their ethnicity.

At Censor for a Day, students are given a lecture on the classification system, and learn about the criteria used to classify films in New Zealand. After watching the film, they are given a classification form to complete. This form is an abbreviated 2-page version of the 21-page form used by classification officers. Students indicate on their classification forms whether they felt the film contained any of the key classification criteria set out in section 3 of the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 - sex, horror, crime, cruelty and violence, as well as highly offensive language. They were also asked to think about whether the film had any content which represented a group of people as inherently inferior (under section 3(3)(e) of the Act). The majority of students indicated that the film contained all of these criteria. 99% indicated the presence of violence, 93% indicated the presence of cruelty, and 92% indicated the presence of sex in the film.

Classification criteria totals



Descriptive Notes



In addition to giving the film a classification, students were asked to provide a descriptive note for it. A descriptive note gives an indication of the content featured in the film and helps people make informed choices about what they choose to watch, or allow their children to watch. 96% of students at Censor for a Day gave the film a descriptive note mentioning violence, with notes varying from 'graphic war violence' to 'low level violence'.



In classifying the film, students were asked to consider and identify the likely audience of the film, the dominant effect of the film on this audience, the impact (if any) of watching the film in a cinema compared to DVD, and whether the film had any merit, value, or importance in terms of literary, social, cultural, educational or scientific matters. Students identified the likely audience of this film as being older teenagers and adults, particularly those interested in history, World War II or action films. Many also felt that the film was more likely to appeal to a male audience.

The students felt that the film would shock and disturb people who saw it, yet at the same time leave them feeling enlightened and inspired at the conclusion of the film. They thought the dominant effect of the film would be *“to show and create understanding about the struggles and determination of these people. They would feel inspired, enlightened”* and that audiences would be *“inspired by the strength of human nature in times of stress, also disgusted by the behaviour of other humans, also informed about WWII”*. Watching a film set in a different country in a different time to their own, students reflected upon how New Zealand audiences might feel after watching it: *“feel sad - lots of people died, sacrificed heaps. Made me feel more appreciative for being in NZ”*; *“sad, made me realise there are worse things than the things I complain about. Not to give up”*; *“the dominant effect they will feel is they will feel sad after watching it but then you realise how lucky you are and to stop complaining about things that aren’t important because you realise how hard life was for them”*.

As part of the classification process, when the Office of Film and Literature Classification examines films it takes into consideration whether or not the film has any merit, value or importance in terms of literary, social, cultural, educational or scientific matters. When asked to apply this criteria to *Defiance*, the majority of students felt that the film had merit or value primarily in regard to social, historical, educational and cultural matters. They suggested that the film’s portrayal of strength and courage could show audiences the importance of family and perseverance in the face of great hardship. The film’s atypical portrayal of Jewish people as survivors, not just passive victims, was seen as important as it allowed a different side of the story of World War II to be told. That the film is based on a true story was also seen by the students to be a key point in terms of educational and historical merit. The following quotes from student forms illustrate these points:

It holds significant historical and cultural merit in the means of showing that this event should never occur again and that it can help its audience learn from historical mistakes.

The film will have a positive impact on society as it helps to educate people about the past and hopefully stop something like that from ever happening again.

This film has great historical merit. It is a representation of past events and communicates messages to the audience in terms of equality and embracing diversity.

It shows the audience the value of family and staying together and working together with people to make things work/succeed.

Students were also asked to think about the impact of watching a movie in the cinema and whether it would be any different to watch the film on DVD. Most students commented on the large screen and surround sound of the cinema, saying that these things would heighten the impact of the action scenes and explosions in the film. They pointed out that in the cinema, you feel more involved in the story but at the same time may be influenced by the audience around you in terms of your emotional response to what is happening on the screen. In contrast, students felt that the film may have less impact on DVD, however the ability to skip or replay scenes would be an advantage (though some students felt that this could ruin the effect of the story).

Watching this film on the big screen makes the audience feel as though they are there in the war zone. The sound is also louder and the picture is clearer making it seem realistic.

Violence has a bigger impact as it is magnified. On DVD violence can be paused, skipped and stopped if it is too much to cope with.

Makes the violence and emotional sequences much more dramatic and thus effective due to the detail and sound the cinema experience presents. In the triumphant scenes, the emotions of other people in the cinema rub off on you and you feel more overwhelmed by the character’s success.

Students used this information, along with their impression of how the classification criteria were presented in the film, to reach their classification and descriptive note.

Teacher Feedback

In order to ensure that the Censor for a Day programme is meeting the needs of students studying censorship as part of the NCEA and to make improvements where possible, teachers who attended Censor for a Day were asked to fill in a feedback form on the event.

All teachers indicated that the length of the programme was suitable, and most found that the time-slot worked, though a few noted the potential difficulty of getting to the cinema in the morning due to traffic congestion. A few teachers also suggested having a break in between the lecture and the screening of the film. It was great to see that all teachers surveyed found that the form filled out by the students was easy to follow, and that the event gave students a lot of information and enhanced their understanding of film censorship.

Teachers described the event as interesting and entertaining. We asked them whether they thought the content of the film was appropriate for the students:

The film was challenging but did not glamourise the issues. Tied in with history curriculum too.

Great choice. Most kids have a little background knowledge about WWII - it challenges their perspectives.

It was an excellent choice - it stimulated a range of discussion

In response to the question “Could the format of the programme be improved?” all but two teachers ticked no. Suggestions were made to start the programme slightly later (and finish later to compensate), and to have a more ‘modern’ presentation on the law, using powerpoint instead of the overhead projector.

All teachers indicated that their school would wish to participate in a similar event in the future and when asked how they would rate the experience of Censor for a Day, four teachers circled ‘Very Good’, eight circled ‘Excellent’, and one teacher did not answer this question.

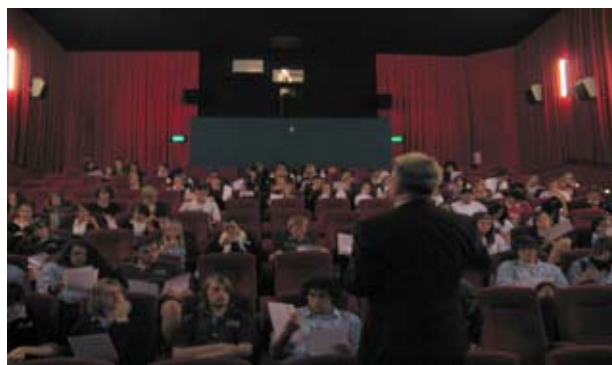
We asked teachers if they had any other comments on Censor for a Day. These are a few of the responses we received:

This was, as always, very useful and worthwhile programme. The choice of film this year was superb and raised really interesting issues and stimulated thoughtful discussion! - St Catherine’s College, Wellington.

A fantastic experience for students and teachers alike. Excellent insight into the censorship process. Extremely valuable to media studies. - Glendowie College, Auckland.

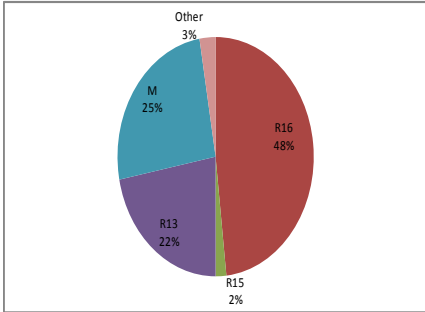
It raised some interesting issues that went beyond and enriched the curriculum. - Howick College, Auckland.

As this was our first time, my students were impressed by the knowledge expressed by the other students and how well they could articulate, focus and form opinions that related to censorship. They were impressed by the questions and looked at films differently, not just as entertainment, but critically analysing their worth. - Te Kura Kaupapa Maori O Mangere, Auckland.

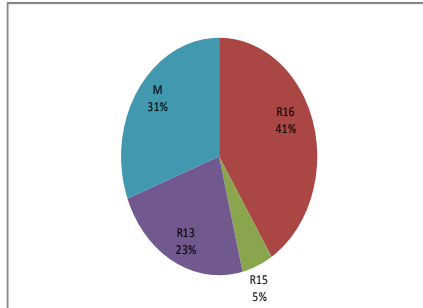


Wellington

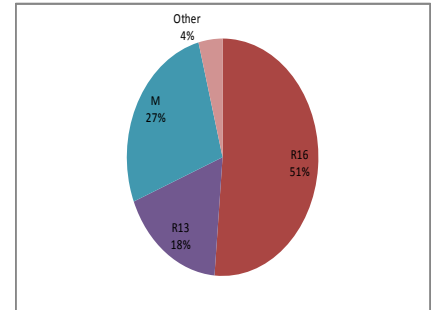
The first Censor for a Day event was held in Wellington on 26 March, with representatives attending from St Catherine's College, St Patrick's College, Taita College, Paraparaumu College, Queen Margaret College, Rongotai College and Tawa College. There were 38 male students, 74 female students and 1 student who did not specify a gender. The majority of Wellington students (75%) recommended a restricted classification for the film, with the majority of students choosing the R16 classification. Males and females tended to give the film similar classifications, with slightly more females choosing an unrestricted classification.



Classifications given by students

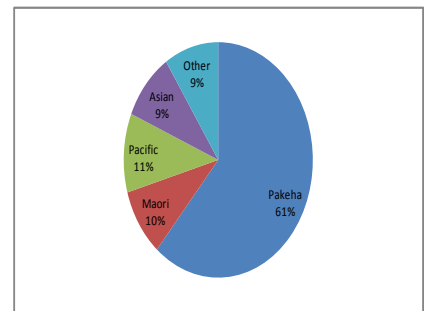


Male classifications

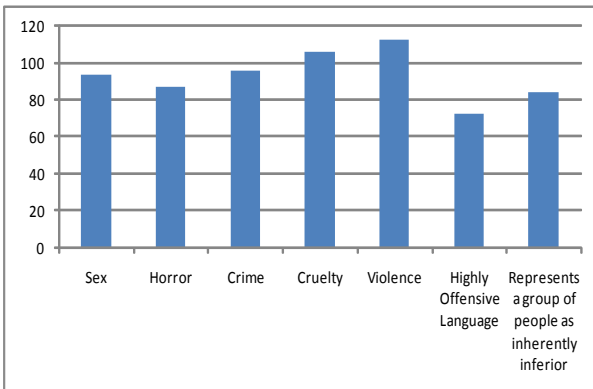


Female classifications

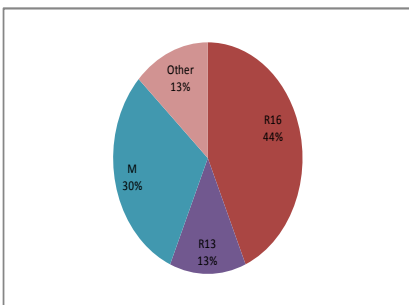
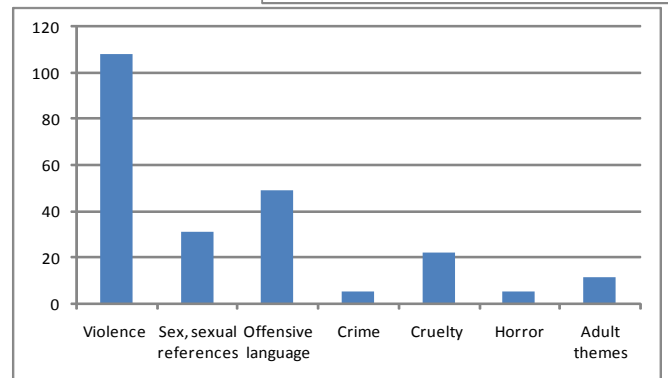
Ethnicity of Wellington students



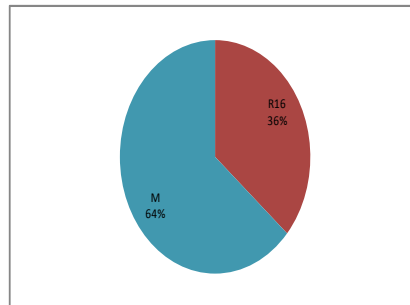
Classification criteria totals



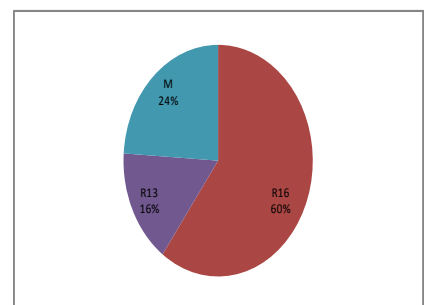
Descriptive Notes



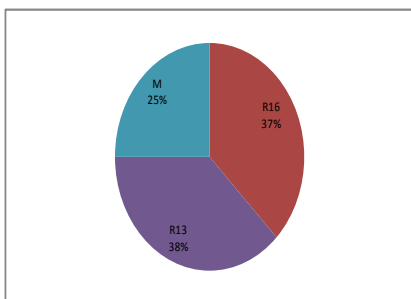
St Catherine's College/ St Patrick's College



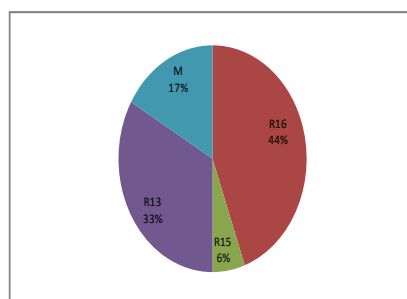
Taita College



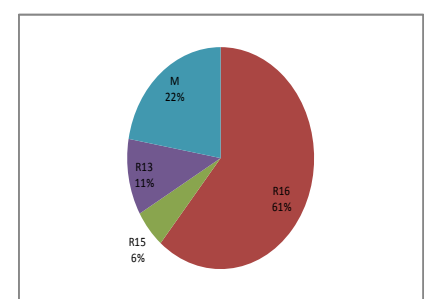
Paraparaumu College



Queen Margaret College



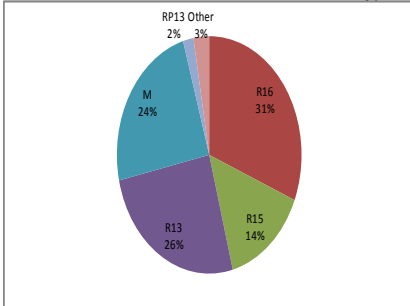
Rongotai College



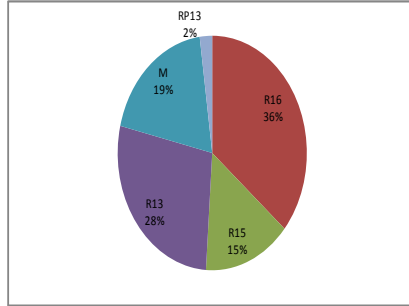
Tawa College

West Auckland

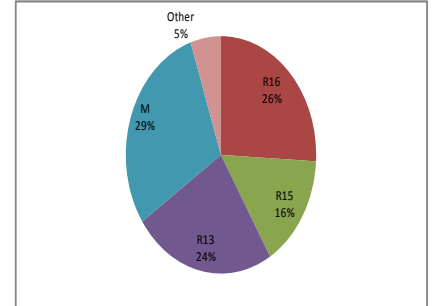
The second event for Term 1, and the first event in Auckland, was held in West Auckland on 30 March with representatives attending from St Dominic's College, Waitakere College, Glenfield College, Western Springs College and Henderson High School. There were 46 male students, 58 female students and 4 students who did not specify a gender. The majority of West Auckland students (76%) recommended a restricted classification for the film, with the majority of students choosing the R16 classification. Males and females tended to give the film similar classifications, with slightly more females choosing an unrestricted classification.



Classifications given by students

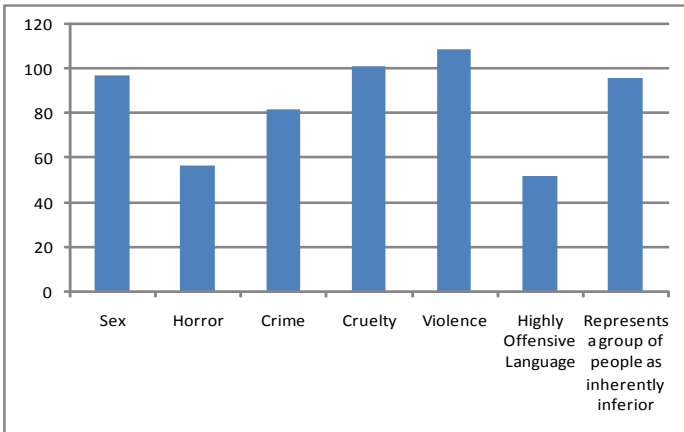


Male classifications

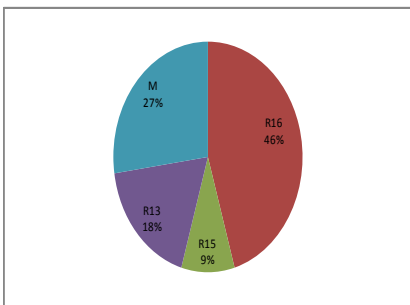
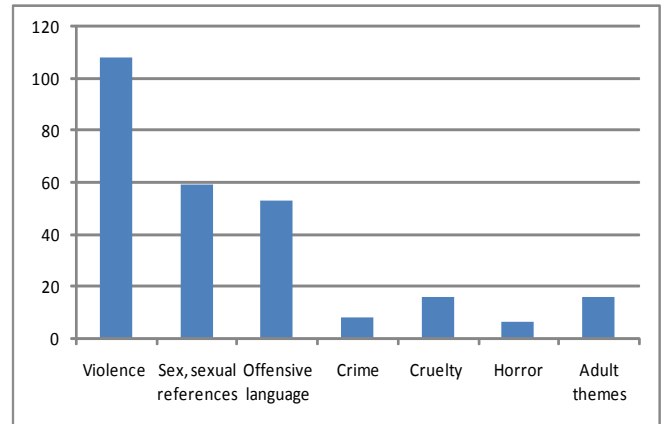


Female classifications

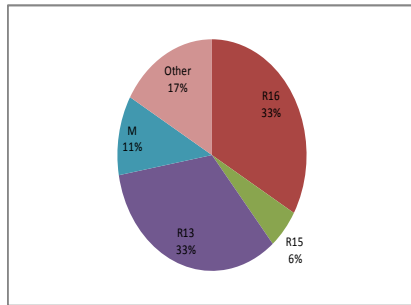
Classification criteria totals



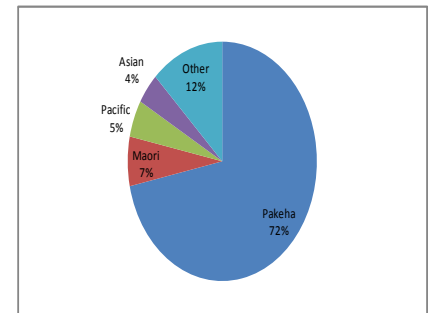
Descriptive Notes



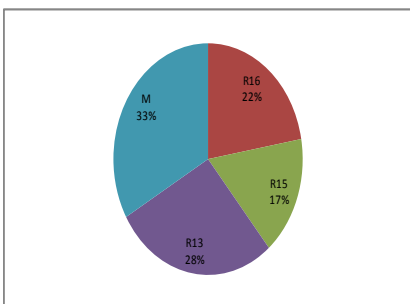
St Dominic's College



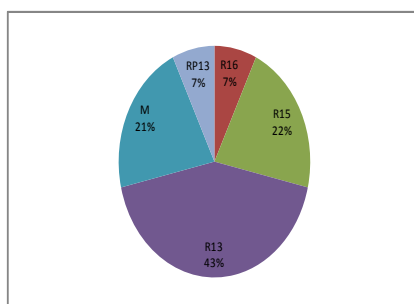
Waitakere College



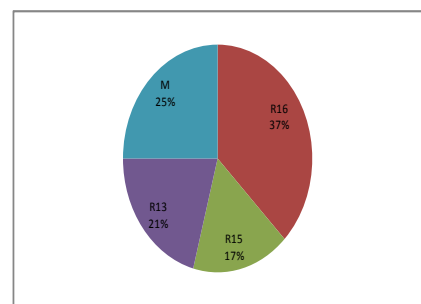
Ethnicity of West Auckland students



Glenfield College



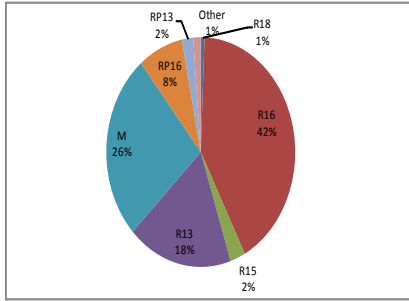
Henderson High School



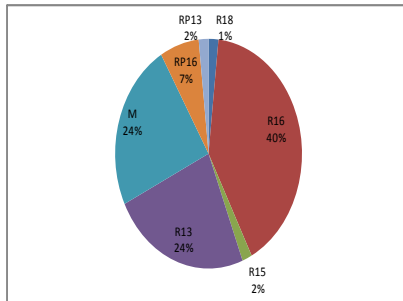
Western Springs College

South Auckland

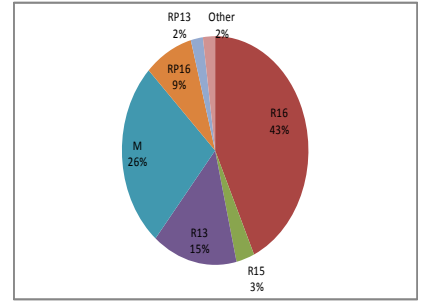
The second Auckland event was held in South Auckland on Tuesday 31 March and was attended by 156 students and their teachers (58 male students and 96 female students, and 2 students who did not specify their gender). Students came from Sancta Maria College, Te Kura Kaupapa Maori O Mangere, Macleans College, Glendowie College, Rosehill College, Selwyn College. The majority of South Auckland students favoured a restricted classification, with only 26% of students giving the film an unrestricted classification of M.



Classifications given by students

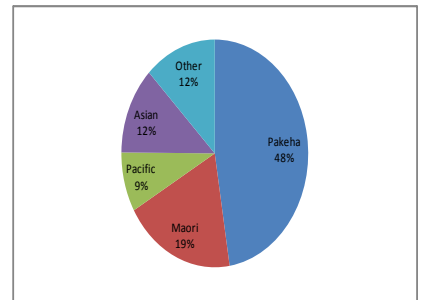
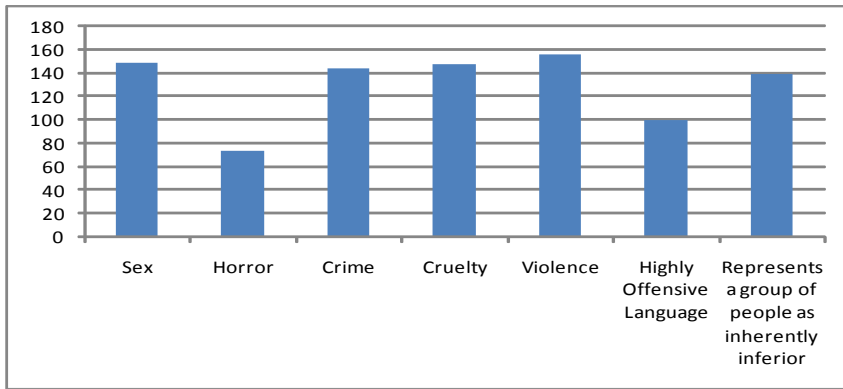


Male classifications



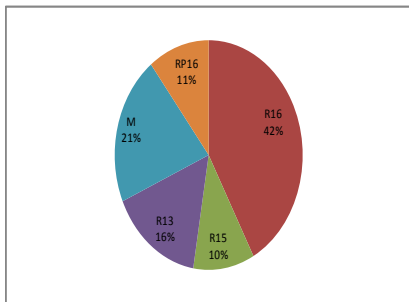
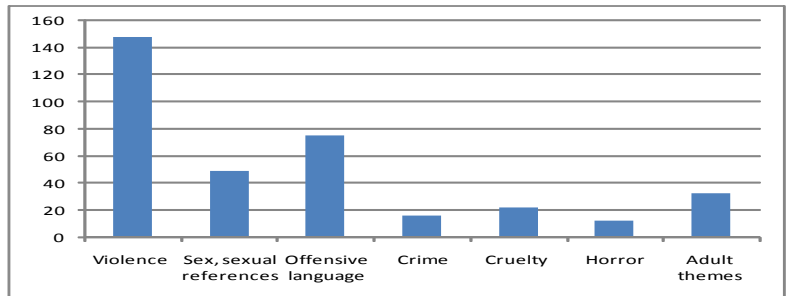
Female classifications

Classification criteria totals

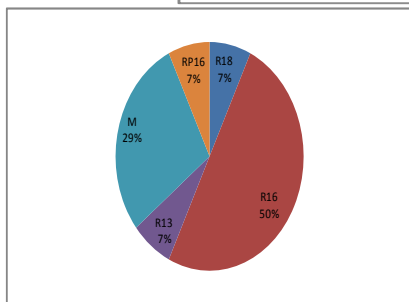


Ethnicity of South Auckland students

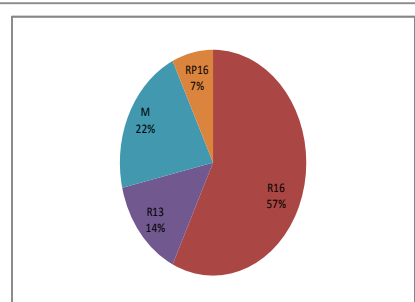
Descriptive Notes



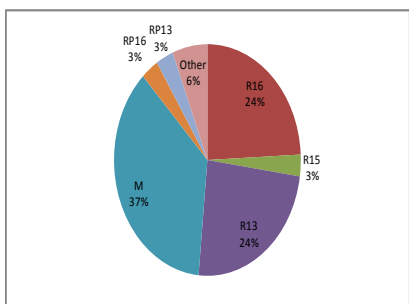
Sancta Maria College



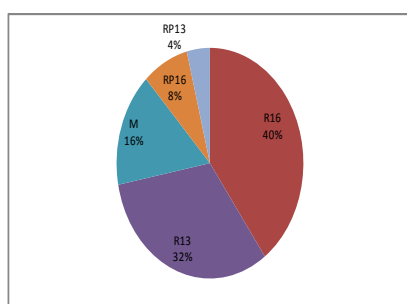
Te Kur Kaupapa Maori O Mangere



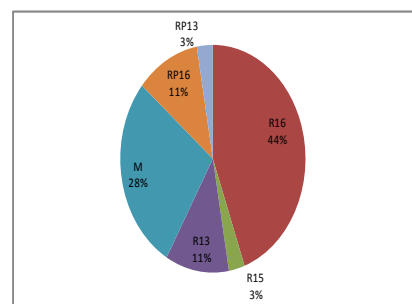
Rosehill College



Macleans College



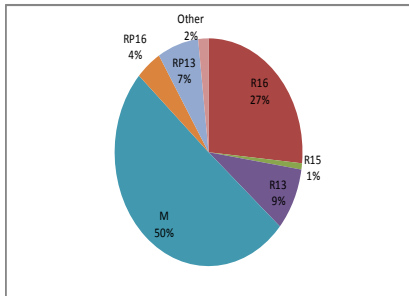
Glendowie College



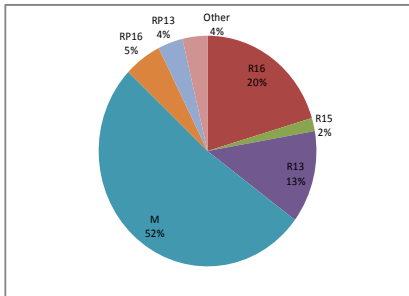
Selwyn College

Central Auckland Day One

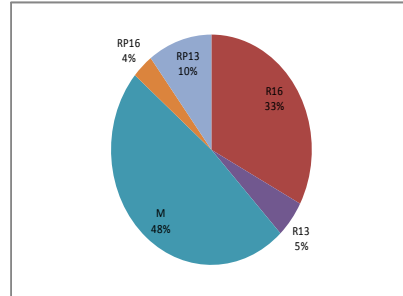
Due to the high interest from schools, two events were held in Central Auckland. The first of these was held on Wednesday 1 April and was attended by 113 students and their teachers (54 male students and 58 female students, and 1 student who did not specify a gender). Students came from James Cook High School, Northcote College, Sacred Heart College, Takapuna Grammar School, Onehunga High School, and Mt Roskill Grammar School. Students at this event were evenly split in their classification choices for the film, with 50% choosing an unrestricted classification and 50% restricting the film.



Classifications given by students

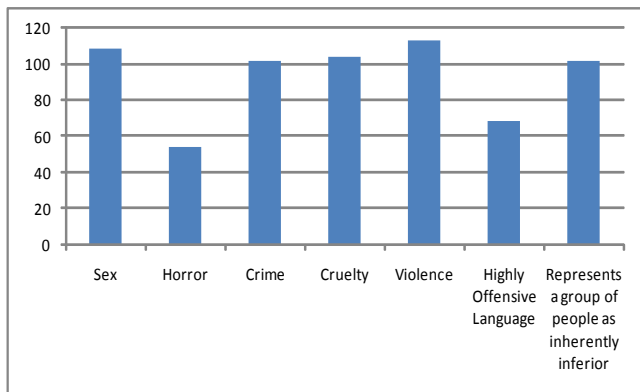


Male classifications

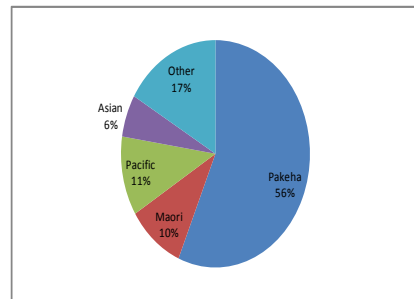


Female classifications

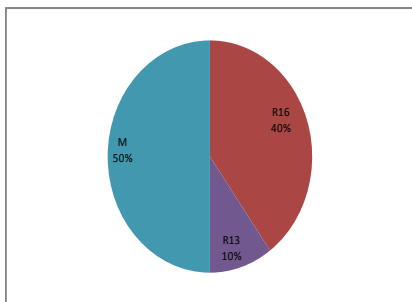
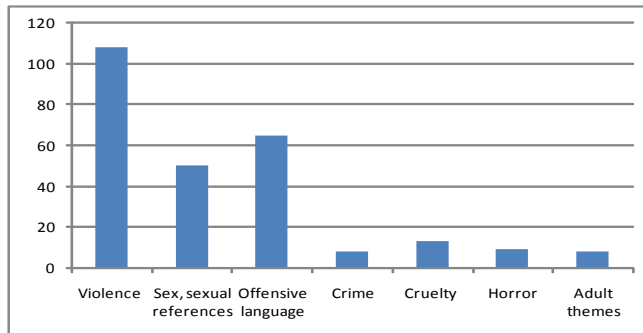
Classification criteria totals



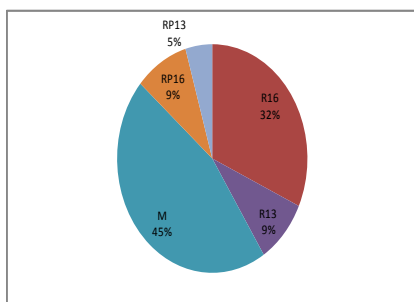
Ethnicity of Central Auckland Day One students



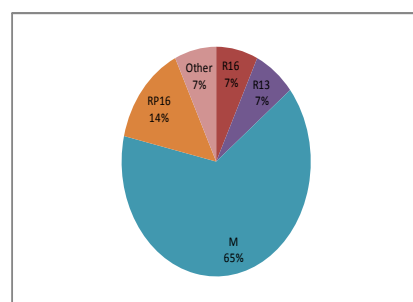
Descriptive Notes



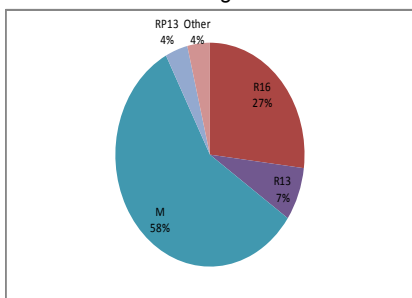
James Cook High School



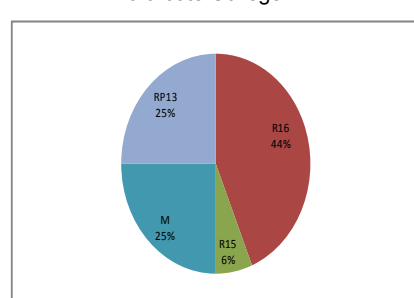
Northcote College



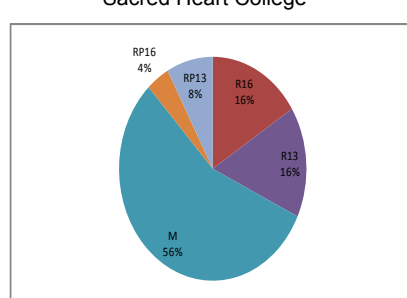
Sacred Heart College



Onehunga High School



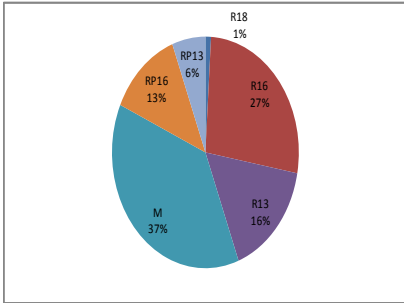
Mt Roskill Grammar School



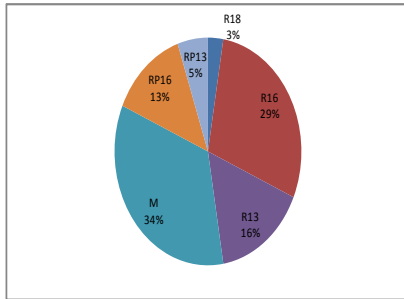
Takapuna Grammar School

Central Auckland Day Two

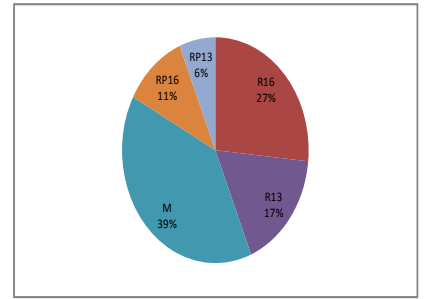
The final event for the Term 1 Censor for a Day programme was held in Central Auckland on Thursday 2 April, attended by 104 students and their teachers (38 male students and 64 female students, and 2 students who did not specify their gender). Students came from Whangaparaoa College, Marist College, Massey High School, Howick College, Baradene College. As in the other locations, the majority of these students favoured a restricted classification, with only 37% of students giving the film an unrestricted classification of M.



Classifications given by students

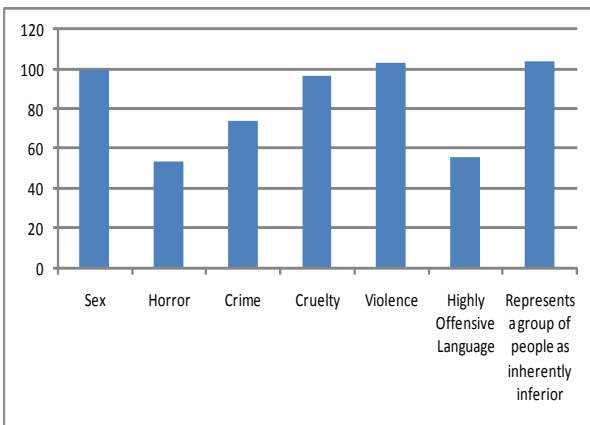


Male classifications

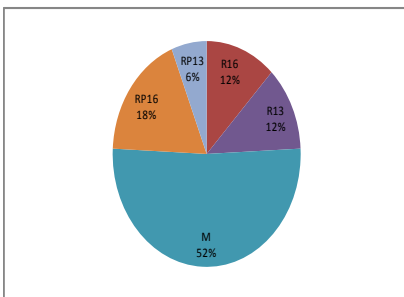
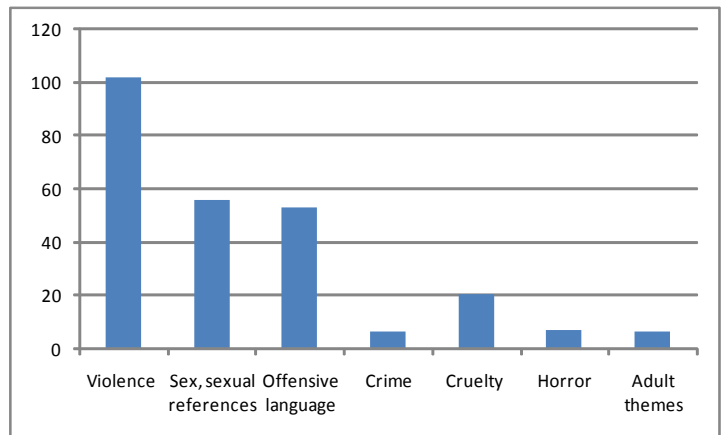


Female classifications

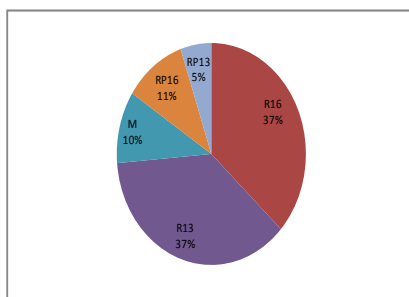
Classification criteria totals



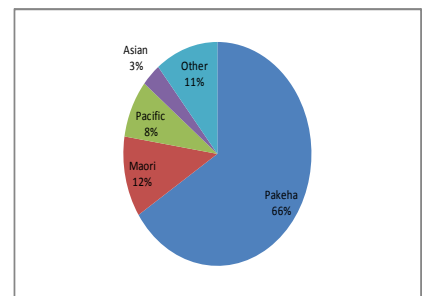
Descriptive Notes



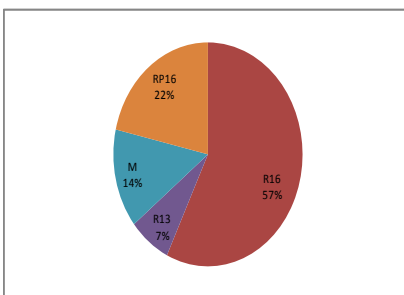
Whangaparaoa College



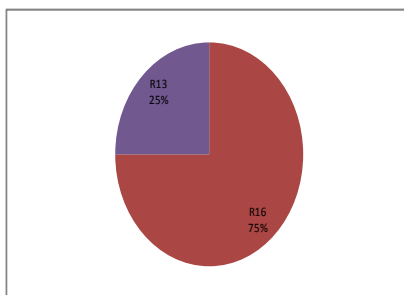
Marist College



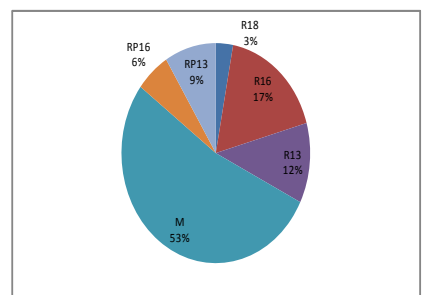
Ethnicity of Central Auckland Day Two students



Howick College



Baradene College



Massey High School

Some comments from the Office

Thank you to all the students and teachers who provided feedback on the Censor for a Day programme. The event attempts to feed into NCEA Level 3 Media Studies, along with our resource booklet and the Schools section of our website.

Censor for a Day continues to be a popular event, and in Term 3 2009 the Office will be running the programme in Palmerston North, Wanganui, New Plymouth, Napier/Hastings, and Wellington.

If we are not scheduled to hold Censor for a Day in your area, or if your class is unable to attend when we are there, the Office is happy to send a speaker out to classes, at no cost to the school. For more information please contact the Office on 0508 CENSOR (0508 236767) or information@copyright.govt.nz

Thanks to Roadshow Distribution for allowing us to use *Defiance* for Censor for a Day, and to the cinemas who hosted us. Thanks also to the schools who took part in the event. Their participation helps improve community understanding of censorship and helps the Office stay in touch with the views of young people.