

Chapter Five

Results and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The methodology used in this study involved a survey complemented by observations. The survey included a student questionnaire and a teacher questionnaire. Both questionnaires were trialled in a pilot with amendments made before administration to the student and teacher sample within the study school. The pilot questionnaires and amendments were discussed fully in Chapter four.

This chapter will report on the results of the observations and questionnaires and analyse these results within the framework of the research questions as posed in Chapter one. Data will be presented in the form of tables, graphs and charts. From these the researcher will attempt to draw conclusions based on the evidence and relevant to the literature. Responses will be grouped in blocks, using the same three groupings described in Chapter one and identified in Chapter four when discussing the development of the questionnaire. The three blocks are sub-headed:

1. Current practice of DEAR
2. Teacher/Student attitudes to DEAR
3. Aboriginal vs non-Aboriginal attitudes to DEAR

To the researcher's knowledge, no surveys have been undertaken in Australia which compare the attitudes of rural urban Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students towards DEAR. Consequently the study represents original research. As this research has implications for the current practice of DEAR in the study school, the chapter will conclude with the

recommendations made to the school to enhance the effectiveness of this program.

5.2 Current practice of DEAR

In relation to the current practice of DEAR, the research question and sub-questions asked were:

1. Does current practice in the study school fulfil the initial aims of the Program documented in the literature and in school policy documents?
 - a. Is the program being conducted according to recommended guidelines or has there been an erosion of adherence to guidelines over time?
 - b. Have there been any alternative programs introduced in the school being studied?

In terms of the questionnaires, this question relates to items 14-27 on the Student Questionnaire (see Appendix B2) and items 10-21 on the Teacher Questionnaire (see Appendix C2). A discussion of results from the observations follows. This is complemented with student and teacher questionnaire data.

5.2.1 Timetabling

Currently, the DEAR period is held each day after recess from Monday to Thursday. It begins at 11:00 am and runs for 20 minutes. The four 20 minute periods per week fulfil the set guidelines as recommended in the 1988 school memo to staff. Twenty minutes was considered long enough to sustain silent reading. Fridays were problematic in that teachers could decide for themselves if they wanted to conduct a DEAR session or a WAG (Welfare Action Group) session. Students are allowed to talk and be

noisy during WAG. There was no clear policy in the school about WAG which resulted in confusion.

The DEAR groups are the same as the Roll Groups and are supervised by Roll teachers, and as such are vertically streamed. Each group is composed of participants from Year 7 to Year 12. DEAR is compulsory for students up to Year 12. However, some Year 12 students, who have a full day of lessons, including the lunch period, may be excused from attending DEAR. There are approximately 20 students in each Roll group. As well as providing a set time each day for silent reading, the DEAR period also has an administrative purpose. It fills a gap in the timetable and thus satisfies industrial requirements for a full-time teacher's hours of duty.

5.2.2 Late Students and Absenteeism

During the period of observations, an average of 4.7 students were absent from DEAR classes each day. This represented 23.5% of the average class group of 20 and was quite high. At the time of observations, rolls were not taken during DEAR so it was not possible to make an accurate count of those absent. The teacher tended to ignore this administrative problem and monitor absenteeism only if a pattern emerged. As the teacher needed to remember absentees from the morning roll, there was chance of error so that this data had limited value to the study.

Students are regularly absent from the school during the day on short excursions and this adds to the difficulties related to DEAR sessions. If teachers suspect truancy from DEAR, this is reported to the Deputy and investigated. At the time of observations, senior students were allowed to leave the school when they did not have classes. As DEAR followed recess, it was quite likely that the majority of absent students were seniors. In discussions with other teachers, this was certainly a concern. In the absence of DEAR rolls, it was not possible for the researcher to document

the Year groups of absent students.

There was only one bell to signal the end of recess and the beginning of DEAR. As the school is large, it takes students some time to come in from the playground and be seated. This could at least partially explain the number of late students. Observation data (see Appendix J) which only recorded those entering after the class was quiet (on average at 11.05 a.m.), showed that an average of 1.8 students were late per session. A cross-check with student questionnaire data (Q.17 see Appendix F7) revealed a high student perception of lateness. Forty-five percent of non-Aboriginal students and 63 percent of Aboriginal students said that they came late to DEAR. Clearly there was some confusion over the word 'late'.

When asked why they came late, students commented that they were at the other side of the school, at the lockers, toilets, getting a drink, talking or walking slowly (Q.17 see Appendix G4). The single bell appears to have been the problem here and the school will need to clarify to students the time when they should all be seated. At the time of observation, only 15 minutes reading time was possible because of the 5 minute delay at the start of each session. This constituted an erosion of the guidelines which specified that reading should be sustained for 20 minutes in each session. Interestingly, teachers did not seem too concerned with late students (Q.21 see Appendix H5). This was probably because they allow 5 minutes for settling in as normal practice, so the 'problem' has become systemic.

5.2.3 Noise and other Distractions

Outside noises were documented in 47% of the observations (see Appendix J). Such noise came from seniors in the Open Space, late students walking past the classroom, peer tutoring in the Library, other classes not quiet, the telephone ringing and students leaving DEAR early before the bell had rung. Two of the observations were conducted on

Fridays, when many classes conducted WAG, rather than DEAR. The noise level in the school on those days was high and would have affected any classes participating in DEAR.

On another occasion, there was some confusion about a timetable change. The staff photo was to be held during DEAR time and students were advised that DEAR would be cancelled. At the last minute, the photo session was postponed due to the weather and classes resumed as normal. Some students went straight to class while others stayed in the playground area.

Inside classrooms, most distractions were caused by students working in exercise books. They rummaged in bags, opened and closed pencil-cases, flicked through text-books and generally caused distractions for those students who were trying to read. Students leafed through magazines and created repetitive noises which were distracting. Some students ate and drank during DEAR and a well-known student variation for DEAR was 'Disguised Eating After Recess' (Q.15 see Appendix G3). It was also common for several students in each class to start packing at 11.15. This effectively cut the reading time down to 10 minutes, assuming that the room was quiet at 11.05 a.m.

All these noises and distractions prevented sustained silent reading, especially as classroom environments may not be the ideal situation for students to become involved in books. The less time available, the fewer possibilities for students to immerse themselves. Consequently, the purpose of the sessions was then not fulfilled.

Almost two students per session did schoolwork during DEAR (see Appendix J). This was a definite erosion of the guidelines which are concerned with silent reading only. The fact that almost all teachers allowed students to do schoolwork instead of silent reading, signalled a lack of understanding by teachers of the purpose of the DEAR session.

Doing schoolwork was not sustained silent reading and the study school needed to make a firm decision about this practice.

When teachers were asked on their questionnaire if they were distracted, 48 percent said they were distracted sometimes and a further 16 percent said YES (Q.20 see Appendix J2). Students who talked and whispered or who were off task and unsettled caused the most distractions (Q.21 see Appendix J5). These were more important reasons than noises outside. Students reinforced this data in their own responses. 72 percent of non Aboriginal students and 74 percent of Aboriginal students said they were distracted at least sometimes (Q.26 see Appendix F13) by other people or friends talking, laughing or whispering. Outside noises appeared to be a minor problem (Q.26 see Appendix G7). It seemed that a large number of students did not take the program seriously and used it for social interaction rather than for SSR.

When asked if they did other things in DEAR, 68 percent of non-Aboriginal students and 86 percent of Aboriginal students said YES. A large number of students said they talked, finished homework, did schoolwork or wrote notes and letters (Q. 24 see Appendix G6).

5.2.4 Seating Arrangements

In some of the classes observed, a number of students were seated in small groups on the floor. While, at first glance, this may appear to be more comfortable for the students, it tended to operate adversely, in that students on the floor interacted on almost every observed occasion and did not spend much time reading. Several ate and drank covertly. In most classrooms, these students, who were masked by desks, could not be easily observed by the teacher. These students did not appear to be interested in sustained silent reading.

5.2.5 Reading Materials

Although all students were required to bring a book to DEAR, there has been some erosion of this rule over time. An average of 1.1 students per observation session (see Appendix J) came without a book or brought a magazine along, even though these were not allowed in the original guidelines which stated that thumbing through magazines was not acceptable. From observation, teachers who provided reading material tended to give out textbooks which defeated the purpose of sustained silent reading. Textbooks are more suited to scanning and skimming for specific information, rather than receptive reading.

It was important for the teacher to encourage receptive reading. One way of doing this would have been to give students reading material which would interest them. Popular novelists such as Paul Jennings and R.L. Stine, both of whom were popular with students at the school (Q.9 see Appendix G2) were a good start. A small library of popular fiction should have been available for teachers to take to classes. Provision should also have been made for students to borrow these books outside of DEAR, so that they could finish the stories in their own time.

Barbe & Abbot (1975) suggested that classrooms be supplied with up to 100 titles for students to borrow for an SSR program to be successful. Although the study school guidelines required students to bring their own books, it was necessary to cater for the inevitable few who continually turned up without books for a variety of reasons.

According to the data, only 68 percent of students sustained themselves in reading during observation sessions (see Appendix J). The figure demonstrates that there may have been resistance to the scheme from students and that the purpose of the program may not have been clearly understood by either students or teachers.

Cross-checking with student questionnaires (Q.19 see Appendix F7) revealed that 60 percent of non-Aboriginal students and 63 percent of Aboriginal students reported that they always brought something to read. This was fewer than the result indicated in observations. It could be concluded that the presence of the researcher as observer did exert some influence during the period of observations.

When asked what they brought to read (Q.20 see Appendix F10), non-Aboriginal students favoured books and magazines, while Aboriginal students indicated an equal preference for magazines and comics as well as books. Students without books were a concern for 64 percent of teachers (see Appendix I2), although when asked what reading materials should be provided, more teachers indicated magazines rather than books (Q.18 see Appendix I4). The majority of students on the other hand voted for books (Q.25 see Appendix G6), although magazines were second on their list of preferences. Interestingly, only a small number of students mentioned comics.

5.2.6 Teacher Modelling

In all DEAR sessions, the teachers were observed to model reading (see Appendix J) although not always sustained silent reading, as required for the scheme to operate successfully. On 53 percent of the observations, the teacher read a novel, 24 percent of the time a textbook was read or perhaps scanned and on 12 percent of occasions teachers read the newspaper. On one occasion, the teacher left the room to answer the phone and on five occasions, the teacher intervened when students were interacting. This interrupted their modelling behaviour.

When teachers were asked if they always read during DEAR, 26 percent of teachers reported that they did not always do so. This did not compare with observations, where teachers may have been influenced by the presence of the researcher in the room. Students were also asked if their

teachers read during DEAR (Q.23 see Appendix F10). 68 percent of non-Aboriginal students and 69 percent of Aboriginal students responded YES.

Teachers in the study school seemed to be aware of the need to read along with the students, but there appeared to be a lack of knowledge of the rationale behind teacher modelling. Spiegel (1981) states that teachers need to show their own love of reading for pleasure, if they want students to enjoy reading. Hunt's (1970) SSR scheme had as a major tenet, the concept of teacher modelling.

When questioned as to what they read during DEAR, 74 percent of teachers said they read a book or a magazine from home (Q.10 see Appendix I1). The books may have been novels, textbooks or professional books. The question allowed for multiple choices and did not specify novels (see Appendix C2). A quarter of teachers specified textbooks and these data compare with observation data (see Appendix J). The practice of reading textbooks may have been difficult to prevent as teachers had little time to research lessons, although, technically, this was not receptive reading. Almost a quarter of teachers stated that they read school mail (Q.10 see Appendix I1) although this was not observed at any of the sessions. In the original school documents (SS 1988c), teachers were told they could choose what they considered to be valuable reading material. This could be interpreted in many ways, so there seems to be a problem with the original guidelines.

The telephone did create a real disturbance. When the researcher first began teaching at the school, phone calls were not encouraged during DEAR. Messages were taken by the switchboard operator and calls were not put through. The practice has quietly changed, so that the phone rang in staffrooms during DEAR sessions.

In the original guidelines, the Principal and Deputy were also assigned to Reading Groups to demonstrate the importance of DEAR as a

whole school activity. This practice was also changed, no doubt, due to the increasing administrative workload of senior executive members. The school now has two Deputies, only one of which supervises a DEAR group.

5.2.7 Alternative Programs

The second sub-question asked if any alternative programs have been introduced into the study school. Concurrently, with DEAR, there is a peer support group which aims to assist low-literacy Year 7 students to improve their reading skills. Students from Year 11 are matched with Year 7 students and work with them for several weeks during each term. The scheme is coordinated by the Support teacher in the school and the older support students are trained before the sessions start. The scheme uses oral reading techniques and literacy games rather than focusing on silent reading. In Year 8 and onwards, low-literacy students are expected to attend DEAR sessions with the rest of their Year group.

While the scheme works very well and, from the researcher's knowledge, is considered by the Support teacher to be of enormous benefit to those students with low literacy levels, it does depend on the Year 11 students missing their own opportunities for sustained silent reading. Students who volunteer for the scheme may not necessarily be the better readers in the year and it is possible that for some, they are missing out on a valuable reading opportunity.

Another alternative scheme which has been introduced to replace DEAR on Fridays is WAG (Welfare Action Group). Both teachers and students were confused over this program. The researcher made a point of asking students during two of the WAG sessions observed what the acronym stood for, with the result that no students in either session knew. Informal discussions with at least 10 teachers selected at random revealed that none of the teachers had any idea of the correct wording. The teachers

knew that the program had a welfare function but were vague as to its organisation.

Because of the lack of any clarity as to the organisation of WAG, some teachers preferred to conduct DEAR sessions during this time and required their students to read quietly. Others followed an unofficial trend and allowed cake or other food to be brought in to be shared around. Theoretically, during WAG, students were encouraged to interact across Year groups, discussing items of particular importance, relating to welfare of students. This created a high level of noise in the school and was a major disturbance for classes trying to read silently.

One observation of WAG was conducted when the normal teacher was absent and a casual had not been put on the class. This left the class unsupervised, except for the researcher. One student had brought a cake and shared this around the class. There seemed to be little interaction between junior students, who were seated quietly at their desks, and seniors, who milled around the doorway, waiting for the bell to ring. On another observation, the teacher had brought in donuts which were shared. The teacher talked to them about a school safety survey which needed to be filled in that day. After they handed in the survey, some interaction took place. There was little teacher direction and students tended to socialise in groups.

5.2.8 Conclusions of Current Practice

From the evidence presented above, some conclusions about the current practice of DEAR in the study school can be made, in terms of the research questions presented at the start of 5.2.

- a. Is the program being conducted according to the recommended guidelines or has there been an erosion of adherence to guidelines over time?

On the surface the program is being conducted according to the recommended guidelines. It is timetabled for 20 minutes per day, on four days per week. Students are encouraged to bring books to read silently and teachers are expected to model reading behaviour. However, there are no collections of interesting books to read in classrooms which is a departure from recommendations made by the originators of the scheme.

There has definitely been an erosion of guidelines over time and serious consideration should be given to instructing both staff and students at the beginning of each year as to the purpose of the DEAR scheme and the requirements for a successful program, if the school is serious about continuing it.

The lack of teacher modelling in some rooms, confusion about starting times which result in only 15 minutes as a maximum reading time, rather than the 20 minutes allowed for, and inadequate attendance checks influence whether or not students take the program seriously. Inadequate reading materials, the practice of giving students textbooks or old magazines to read and relaxation of the rules regarding sustained silent reading, by allowing some students to work in exercise books impact negatively on the aim of the program. Constant interruptions such as telephones ringing and students talking all lead to a poorer program.

Most teachers brought books to read and did model correct behaviour, but the temptation to read professional literature, mark assignments or prepare lessons resulted in at least a quarter of the teachers surveyed admitting to these activities (Q.17 see Appendix I2). Seating arrangements which allowed students to sit with their friends, out of sight of the teacher, were an invitation to interaction. These arrangements also defeated the purpose of DEAR, because these students were not reading. There were intrusions into DEAR such as variations to routine, as was the case with school photographs. This must have impacted on the attitudes of students towards the program and towards their leisure-time reading.

- b. Have there been any alternative programs introduced in the school being studied?

An alternative program, called WAG, was introduced on Fridays. The purpose of this program was very confusing and some teachers preferred to conduct a DEAR session instead. This has led to further confusion as many classes were noisy at this time, while other students were trying to read. There was also an expectation that food was provided for WAG. This was a confusing arrangement which needed examination and clarification.

Another alternative program which was conducted concurrently with DEAR, was the Peer Tutoring scheme. In this Program Year 11 students worked on a one-to-one basis with low literacy Year 7 students for approximately 8 weeks each term. The scheme was very successful and had been conducted for a number of years, despite the fact that many Year 11 students are denied the opportunity to participate in DEAR at that time.

There were several shortcomings with the DEAR scheme in the study school. The next section examines student and teacher attitudes expressed on the questionnaires as they relate to the second research question and sub-questions.

5.3 Student/Teacher Attitudes to DEAR

Research questions two and three and their sub-questions as outlined in Chapter One are:

2. Is the DEAR Program as carried out in one rural State High School perceived by students and teachers as beneficial?
 - a. Do the majority of students enjoy the DEAR session?

- b. Do they believe it leads to an improvement in reading achievement?
 - c. Do they believe it leads to a greater enjoyment of reading?
 - d. Is there a difference in attitudes between males and females?
 - e. Do attitudes change in the senior years?
 - f. What is the most popular reading matter?
 - g. What are the attitudes of teachers at the school to the DEAR program?
 - h. Do their attitudes differ significantly from those of the students?
3. What are the attitudes of Aboriginal students towards the DEAR program?
- a. Do these differ significantly from those of non-Aboriginal students?

Analysis of responses to items on the student and teacher questionnaires which address these research questions was carried out by means of a spreadsheet (see Appendix F). Automatic computations of the spreadsheets which round up percentages to the nearest whole number has led to some columns adding up to 99 or 101 percent. Bar Graphs, Charts and Chi Square computations support much of the discussion in this section. As Graphs excluded 'No Response' data, Yates Correction for continuity where the degree of freedom was 1 was applied to complement the graphs. The corrected Chi Square is included in the analysis.

Of the 40 Chi Square computations, there was little difference in significance between the two Chi Square computations, where 2 degrees of freedom (with No Response data included) were allowed and the Yates Correction where 1 degree of freedom was allowed. Changes in

significance occurred in 4 instances in Q. 9, Q. 15 and Q. 16. A summary of Chi Square is included in Appendix H.

As there was a wealth of data collected in the questionnaires, the researcher attempted to organise the data in a way that would simplify analysis. Two bar graphs for every closed question on the student questionnaire were drawn up, using percentages from questionnaire response summary sheets (see Appendices F, G and K). One bar graph set out responses for ethnicity and one for ethnicity and gender. When complemented with data from Appendices and Chi Squares, these graphs assisted the researcher to make a variety of analyses related to the research questions.

The Aboriginal sample had some limitations. The size of the sample (a total of 35 students) made it difficult to get much meaningful data, when reduced to smaller categories. The sample of Aboriginal students when broken into Year groups (see Appendix F2) was disproportionate to the proportions of non-Aboriginal students in Year groups (see Appendix F3). This may have affected results as the proportion of Aboriginal males (66 percent) was almost twice that of females (34 percent) (Figure 4.2), while the proportion of non-Aboriginal males (49 percent) was approximately equal to that of non-Aboriginal females (51 percent).

The researcher looked for consistency and trends when analysing questionnaire data. Percentages used in the discussion were from student questionnaire summary sheets (Appendices F, G and K). χ^2 analyses were determined to assess significant associations between variables (Cohen & Manion 1994) on the student questionnaire. The probability level of significance for this study was set at <0.05 . A table listing χ^2 values by ethnicity and by gender for the whole student sample was drawn up (see Appendix H). The corrected χ^2 values were used to compare results with

graph data.

5.3.1 Student Attitudes to DEAR

The research questions which address students' attitudes to DEAR include:

- 2 (a) Do the majority of students enjoy the DEAR session?
 - (d) Is there a difference in attitudes between males and females?
 - (e) Do attitudes change in the senior years?

- 3 (a) Do the attitudes of Aboriginal students differ significantly from those of non-Aboriginal students?

These questions relate to items 14-18, 22, 24-26 from the student questionnaire (see Appendix B2).

Figure 5.1 sets out responses to item 14 which asks students whether or not they like attending DEAR.

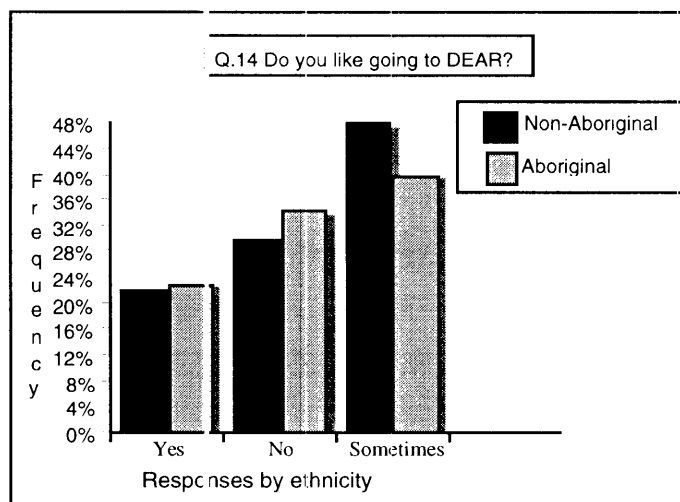


Figure 5. Responses to Student Q.14 by ethnicity

Figure 5.1 indicates that the majority of students held ambiguous views about attending DEAR - most students responded that they only sometimes liked attending DEAR sessions, while more students responded

negatively than positively towards the program (see Appendix K2).

Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal students were predominately negative or uncertain about whether they enjoyed the DEAR sessions (see Appendix F7). Application of χ^2 to these results indicate there were no significant differences ($p = 0.714$) (see Appendix H) between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Figure 5.2 illustrates responses of male and female Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students to item 14

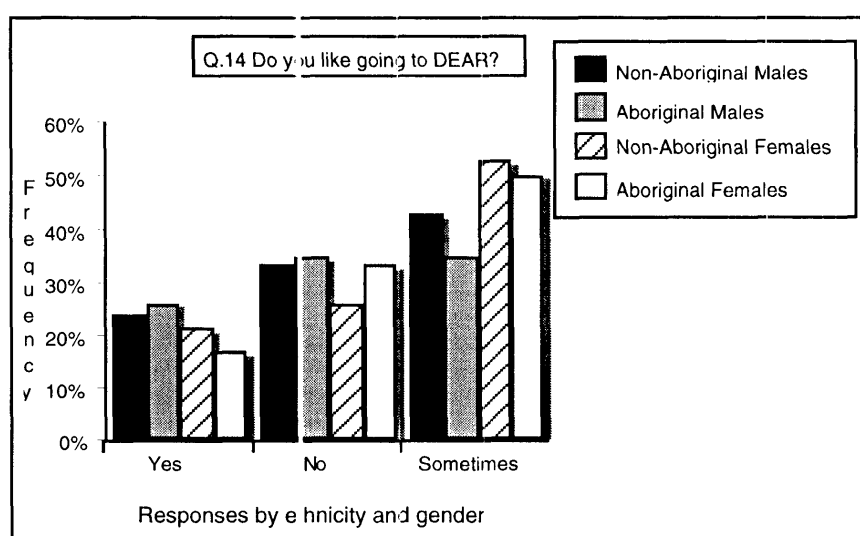


Figure 5.2 Responses to Student Q.14 by ethnicity and gender

Both male and female students were predominantly negative or uncertain about whether they enjoyed DEAR sessions (see Appendix K2). Application of χ^2 for gender ($p = 0.0062$) (see Appendix H) indicates that there was a significant difference in attitudes towards DEAR between males and females. Female students were less likely to have a firm opinion about going to DEAR than male students.

Yr 7 non-Aboriginal students were the most supportive of the program (see Appendix F8). There was a gradual decline in support from Yr 7 students to Yr 12 who were the least supportive. This trend was

repeated among Aboriginal students (see Appendix F9). The trend indicates that younger students enjoy the program more than older students.

Figure 5.3 shows student responses to item 15 which asked for the meaning of the acronym DEAR.

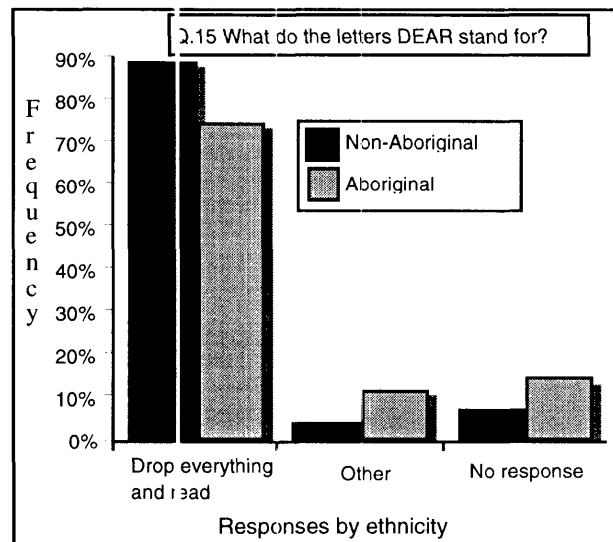


Figure 5.3. Responses to Student Q.15 by ethnicity

Figure 5.3 clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of students knew that the acronym DEAR meant ‘Drop Everything And Read’ (see Appendix K2) Non-Aboriginal students were more aware of the meaning than Aboriginal students (see Appendix F7). Application of corrected χ^2 for ethnicity ($p = 0.0551$) (see Appendix H) reveals an insignificant difference between the responses of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Five Aboriginal students (14 percent) did not respond to this answer. This compared with 7 percent of the non-Aboriginal student sample. It is possible that the Aboriginal students did not know the answer. When the No Response category is included, χ^2 for two degrees of freedom ($p = 0.0236$) shows some significance.

Some students responded with humorous suggestions for DEAR (see Appendix G3). For example, ‘Drop Everything And Run away’ may have been written by a student who knew what DEAR stood for.

Aboriginal students included comments such as 'Silent Reading', 'Don't Know', 'READ backwards or otherwise don't know' (see Appendix G3). 5 non-Aboriginal students suggested it meant 'Disguised Eating After Recess' which supports observation data of children eating unobserved by their teachers (see Appendix J3). Teacher data indicates that 100 percent of teachers were aware of the meaning of DEAR (Q.7 see Appendix I1).

Figure 5.4 further illustrates Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student responses to item 15 by gender.

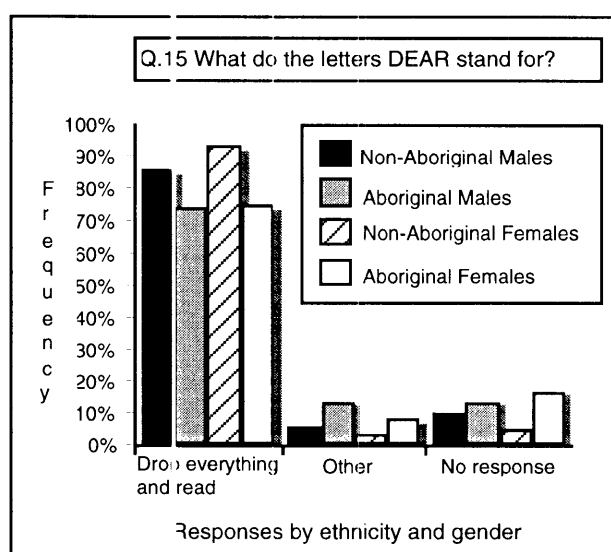


Figure 5.4 Responses to Student Q.15 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.4 reveals that more females were aware of the meaning of DEAR than males (see Appendix K2). Application of corrected χ^2 by gender ($p = 0.056$) (see Appendix H) indicates that there was an insignificant difference in awareness of the meaning of DEAR between males and females. When the No response category was included giving 2 degrees of freedom ($p = .0036$) the result showed some significance. Non-Aboriginal females were the most aware (92 percent) followed in order by non-Aboriginal males, Aboriginal females and Aboriginal males (see Appendix F7).

Fewer Yr 7 non-Aboriginal students (see Appendix F8) were aware

of the meaning of DEAR than those in Yr 12. This trend was not obvious among Aboriginal students (see Appendix F9) and could reflect the fact that these students may change schools more often. A student coming into Yr 9 from another district would be expected to know what DEAR meant, without being told. In the researcher's experience, assumptions of this type are commonplace with new students, who are expected to find out for themselves by asking other students. As DEAR is a word in itself, it may be possible that some children would not be aware of the fact that it is an acronym. This question is an example of 'cultural literacy' as suggested by Willmot (1981). An awareness of specific educational acronyms may also not be understood by families which have little contact with schools.

Figure 5.5 illustrates responses of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students towards a change of time for DEAR.

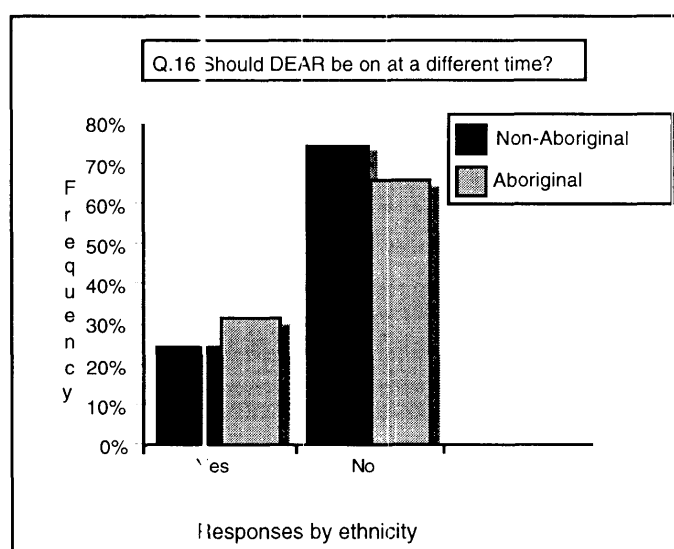


Figure 5.5 Responses to Student Q.16 by ethnicity

Figure 5.5 indicates that most students were happy with the current time slot and did not want a change. Three-quarters of all students were against a change (see Appendix K2). More non-Aboriginal students than Aboriginal students were happy to keep the current time-slot. Application of corrected χ^2 to these results ($p = 0.3956$) (see Appendix H) indicates that there was no significant difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. However, Aboriginal males were more in favour of a

change (see Appendix F7).

When asked to suggest an alternative time, the most popular response was 'After lunch' (see Appendix G4). Some students indicated 'Morning' (see Appendix G4) which is a part of day used in some Primary schools, the rationale being to calm students down for the day. Yr 11 students were the most keen on holding DEAR in the morning. 'Last period' was nominated by mostly Juniors. Opponents of the scheme wrote 'Never' on their questionnaire sheets.

Figure 5.6 sets out gender differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students for item 16.

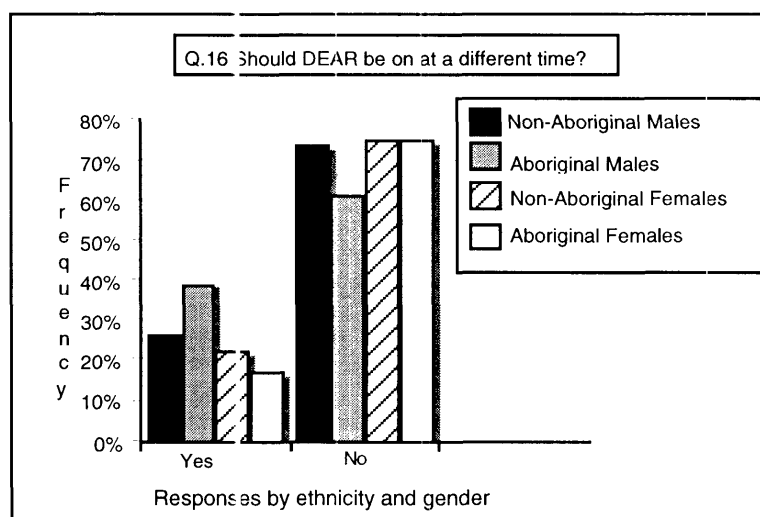


Figure 5.6 Responses to Student Q.16 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.6 clearly shows that overall both males and females wanted to maintain the current time for DEAR. Application of corrected χ^2 to results for gender ($p = 0.1348$) (see Appendix H) indicates an insignificant difference in attitude between male and female respondents. Without Yates correction, when No Response data were included allowing 2 degrees of freedom ($p = 0.0051$) (see Appendix H) χ^2 indicated some significance in attitudinal differences by gender. This difference showed up in the Aboriginal responses. Aboriginal female responses to maintaining the

current arrangements for DEAR were the same as non-Aboriginal females (see Appendix F7) but Aboriginal males responded differently. Only 61 percent were happy with DEAR after recess.

The question of punctuality to DEAR was discussed under 'Current Practice'. The discussion here centres around Aboriginal vs. non-Aboriginal and male vs. female perceptions of lateness. Figure 5.7 sets out the responses of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students when asked if they sometimes came late to DEAR.

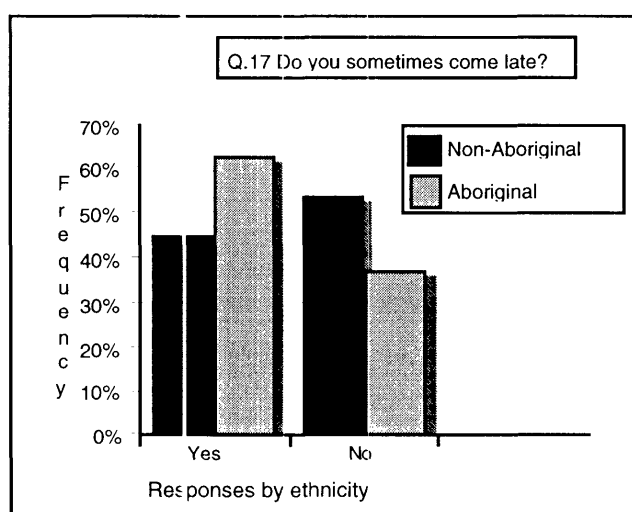


Figure 5.7 Responses to Student Q.17 by ethnicity

Figure 5.7 indicates that Aboriginal students appeared to have a higher perception of being late than non-Aboriginal students (see Appendix F7). This result does not support observation data which revealed an average of only 1.8 students being late per class (see Appendix J). The total student sample (see Appendix K2) shows that 46 percent of all students responded that they sometimes came late. Application of corrected χ^2 to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses ($p = 0.067$) (see Appendix H) indicates that there was an insignificant difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students relating to punctuality. The size of the sample may have affected this result as the graph reveals a clear difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students for this question.

The most popular excuse for being late by non-Aboriginal students was because they were at lockers or toilets (see Appendix G4). Other excuses were mentioned on the questionnaire. Some students said that they were at the other side of the school and that they had to get a drink. Some admitted that they walk slowly. Aboriginal students tended to comment that they did not like it, they hated it or it was boring. Some found that Recess was not long enough or they had to see a teacher. The teacher mentioned by these students could have been the AEA.

Figure 5.8 illustrates male and female Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses to the same question, Item 17.

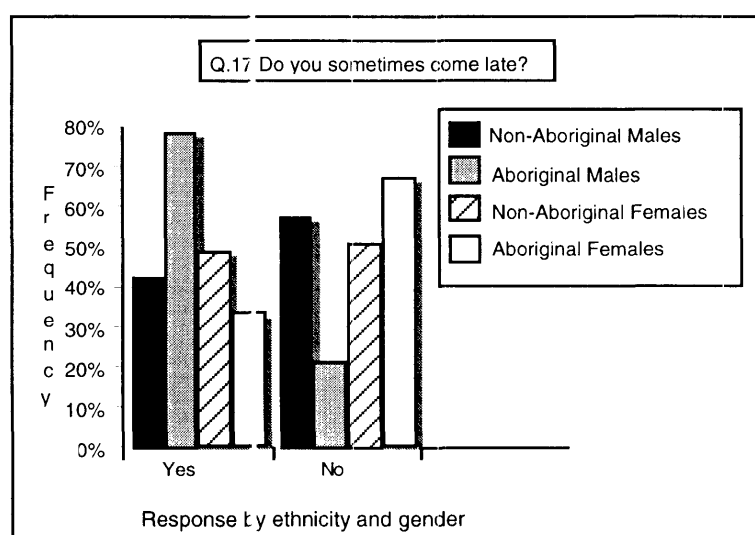


Figure 5.8 Responses to Student Q.17 by ethnicity and gender

Three quarters of Aboriginal males responded that they come late. Aboriginal females, on the other hand were least likely to admit that they came late. This may show some resistance on the part of the Aboriginal males to the program or the discrepancy may be due to differences in attitudes between Aboriginal males and females towards punctuality. In contrast, more non-Aboriginal females admitted that they come late than non-Aboriginal males but the difference was not great between them. Of the total number of males and females in the sample, 48 percent of female students admitted that they came late compared to 44 percent of the males (see Appendix K2). Corrected χ^2 applied to these results ($p = 0.2769$) (see

Appendix H) indicates an insignificant difference for gender.

Only a quarter of Yr 7 non-Aboriginal students responded that they sometimes came late. However, more than half of the number of Yr 12 students admitted that they came late (see Appendix F8) which indicated that older students do not take the program seriously. This result supports data for Q. 14. which related to whether students liked to go to DEAR. The trend was not so evident among Aboriginal students (see Appendix F9) but the most meaningful data indicated that all Yr 10 Aboriginal students said they came late, compared with only half the Yr. 7 students. One can conclude that older students have a more negative attitude to DEAR than younger students.

A general comparison of results from Q.14 with Q.17 reveals that more students admitted coming late than did not like going to DEAR in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups. The question may have more to do with general attitudes towards punctuality and the bell problem, as mentioned earlier, than a definite resistance to DEAR.

Figure 5.9 sets out responses between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students towards the concept of DEAR being taken out of the school timetable.

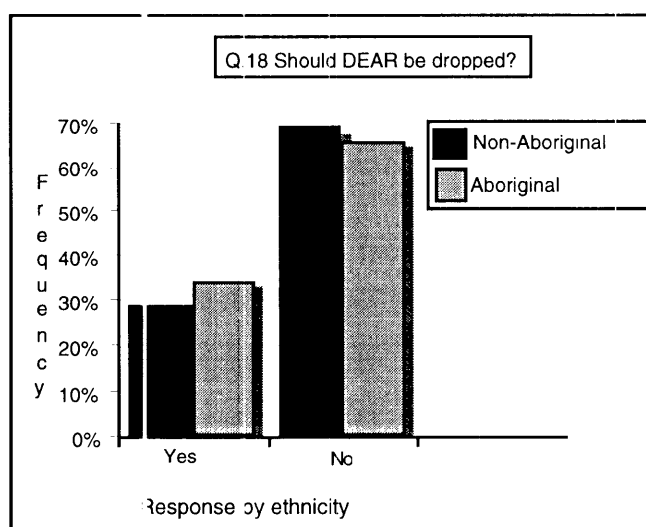


Figure 5.9 Responses to Student Q.18 by ethnicity

Although many students are ambivalent to the program, the majority of them do not want DEAR to be dropped. Overall 69 percent of students wanted DEAR to continue (see Appendix K2). Figure 5.9 illustrates that there was very little difference in response between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students (see Appendix F7). Both groups wanted DEAR to be a part of the timetable. Corrected χ^2 applied to these results ($p = 0.6419$) (See Appendix H) indicates that there was no significant difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in wanting DEAR to be dropped. Figure 5.10 looks at the same question, Item 18 in terms of male and female responses.

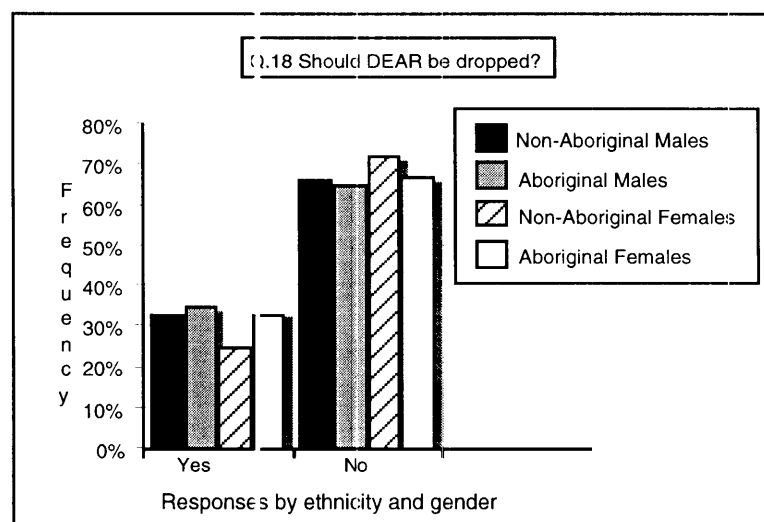


Figure 5.10 Responses to Student Q.18 by ethnicity and gender

According to Figure 5.10, more female students were in favour of the program continuing than male students (see Appendix K2). Corrected χ^2 applied to these results indicated a significant difference in attitude ($p = 0.0322$) (See Appendix H) towards DEAR between male and female students overall. The graph above shows that Aboriginal males responded similarly to non-Aboriginal males (see Appendix F7). However, Aboriginal females were slightly less positive about the program than non-Aboriginal females.

When asked for reasons why DEAR should be dropped (see

Appendix K5), both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students commented that the program was boring or that it wasted time. Some students felt that it was not effective because most people did not read. Others felt that it was not necessary because they read enough already in English and in other subjects. These comments demonstrate a lack of understanding of the rationale behind the DEAR scheme on the part of those students. Other students who supported the program, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, reported that DEAR gave students a chance to read and a chance to relax. Some students realised that DEAR was valuable in developing reading skills.

The next question, Item 22 focused on reading materials and asked students if they had trouble finding something interesting to read in DEAR. Figure 5.11 sets out Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student responses to this question.

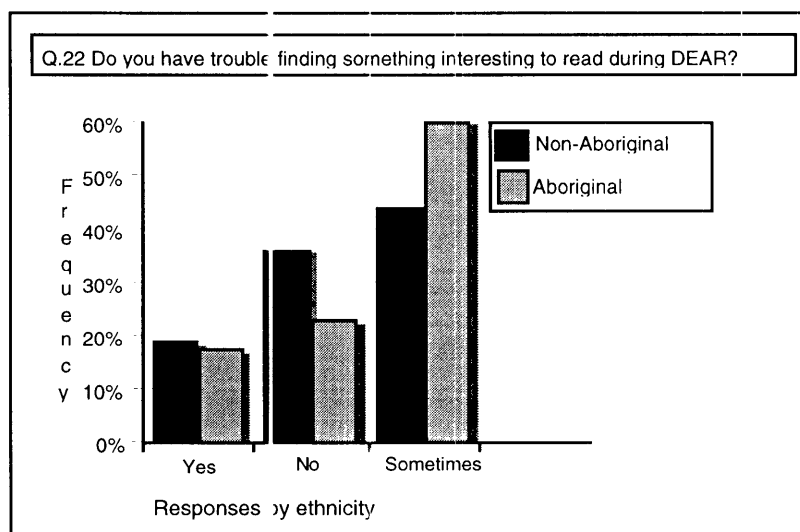


Figure 5.11 Responses to Student Q. 22 by ethnicity

The majority of students admitted that they did have trouble at least sometimes finding something interesting to read during DEAR. Forty-four percent of all students had this problem (see Appendix K3). Figure 5.11 shows that Aboriginal students tended to have more problems finding interesting reading material than non-Aboriginal students who appeared to be better able to access interesting reading material than Aboriginal

students. However, corrected χ^2 applied to these data indicates no significant difference ($p = 0.1574$) (see Appendix H) between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in finding something to read.

The next graph, Figure 5.12 sets out responses by males and females to Item 22 in a comparison of results by gender.

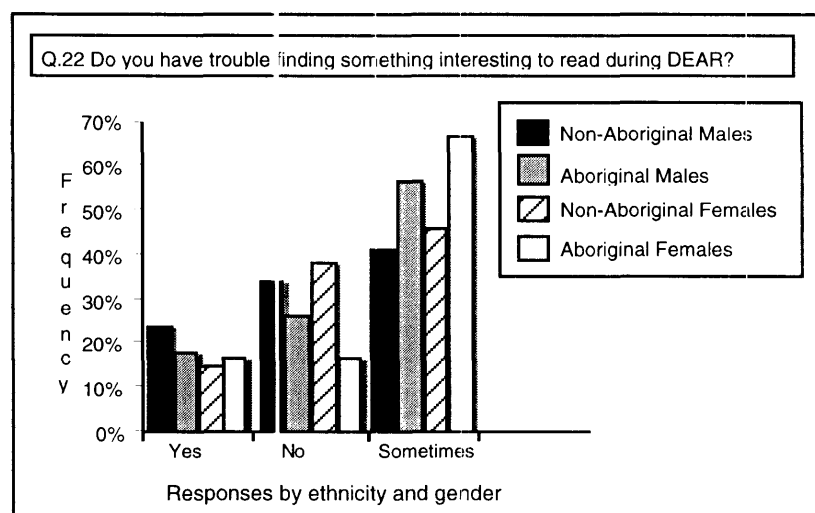


Figure 5.12 Responses to Student Q.22 by ethnicity and gender

Non-Aboriginal females had the least amount of trouble in finding something interesting to read. Male students tended to have more trouble finding interesting reading material than female students (see Appendix K3). Application of corrected χ^2 to students' gender data indicates that there were significant differences ($p = 0.0051$) (see Appendix H) between male and female students in the way they accessed reading materials for DEAR. Older non-Aboriginal students tended to have the least amount of trouble finding interesting reading material than younger students (see Appendix F11).

Figure 5.13 illustrates Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students' behaviour in DEAR.

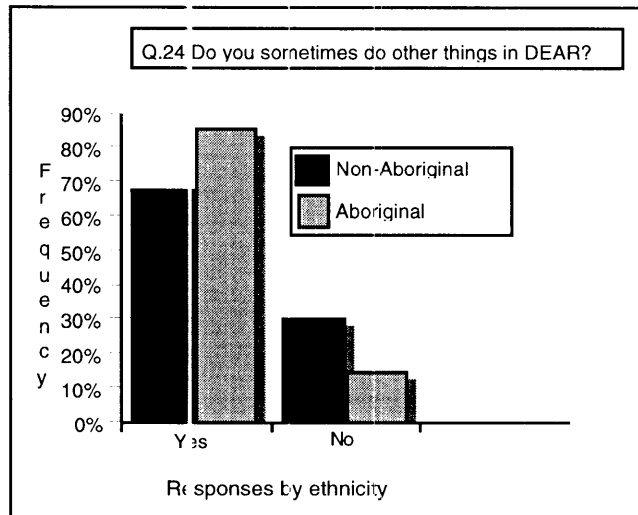


Figure 5.13 Responses to Student Q 24 by ethnicity

A majority of students (69 percent) reported that they did other things in DEAR (see Appendix K3). Eighty-six percent of Aboriginal students did other things in DEAR compared to 68 percent of non-Aboriginal students (see Appendix F10). Application of corrected χ^2 to responses between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students indicated some difference ($p = 0.0637$) (see appendix H) but it was not statistically significant. Figure 5.14 illustrates any differences between male and female students for Item 24.

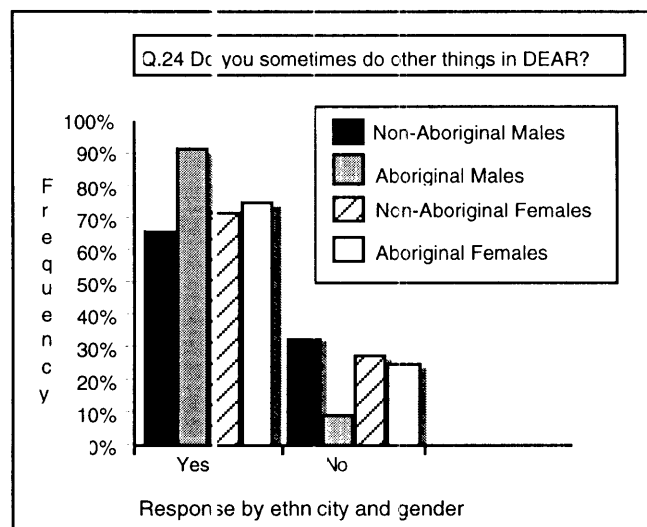


Figure 5.14 Responses to Student Q.24 by ethnicity and gender

Most of the Aboriginal male students (91 percent) did other things in DEAR. Aboriginal females and non-Aboriginal females gave similar responses and 65 percent of non-Aboriginal males admitted doing other things in DEAR. Corrected χ^2 applied to responses between male and female students indicates no significant difference ($p = 0.1958$) (see Appendix H) in behaviour in DEAR between males and females.

When questioned as to what they did (see Appendix G6), Aboriginal students said that they talked, drew, wrote notes, ate or generally did nothing. If these students had trouble finding something interesting to read, as results from Figure 5.11 indicate, then they were more likely to spend their time doing other things in DEAR. Almost a quarter of non-Aboriginal students mentioned WAG on Fridays as being something that they did apart from read (see Appendix G5). This was a clear indication of the confusion between WAG and DEAR. Non-Aboriginal students responded that they talked, finished homework or studied for tests, wrote notes or letters and ate. Only one Aboriginal student claimed to do homework or studied for tests. These results support observation data (see Appendix J) which recorded interaction between students on at least 52 percent of observations and showed that an average of two students did homework in each DEAR class.

If students had trouble finding something interesting to read during DEAR (Q.22), it follows that students would be favourable to the ready availability of reading materials in classrooms. Figure 5.15 sets out the responses to item 25 which asks students if they would like more reading material provided in DEAR classrooms.

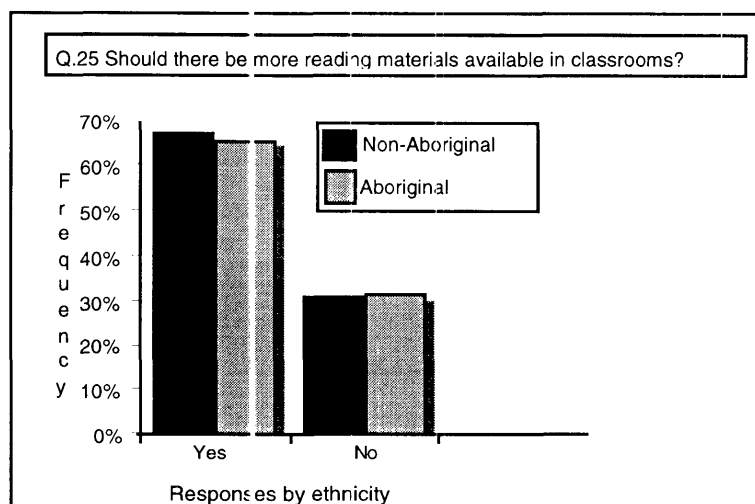


Figure 5.15 Responses to Student Q. 25 by ethnicity

Figure 5.15 indicates that approximately two thirds of all students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, are in favour of there being more reading materials available in classrooms. There is no discernible difference in attitude between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students for this question and the data is supported by the corrected χ^2 application ($p = 0.953$) (see Appendix H). Figure 5.16 compares male and female responses to the same question, Item 25, related to the provision of reading materials.

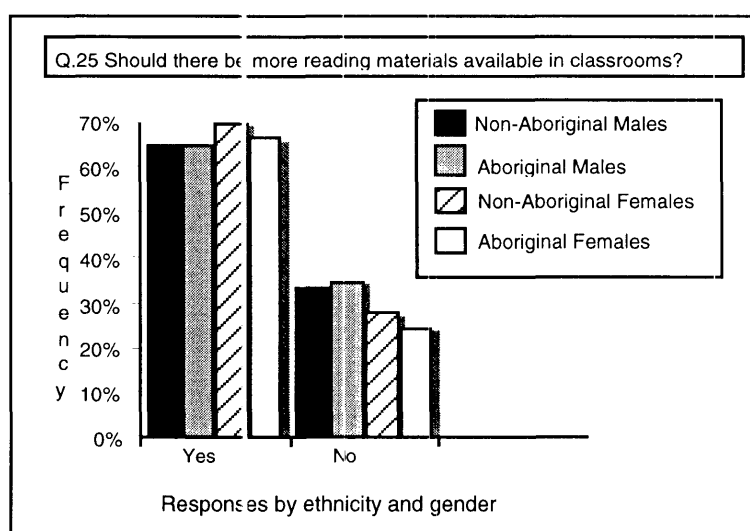


Figure 5.16 Responses to Student Q.25 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.16 confirms that the pattern of support for the provision of

reading materials is repeated among male and female students (see Appendix K3. Application of corrected χ^2 to gender data indicates no significant difference in attitude between male and female students ($p = 0.0885$) (see Appendix H).

When asked to suggest the kind of materials that they would like provided, over 300 students suggested books (see Appendix G6). The next popular suggestion was for magazines (200+). Approximately 50 students mentioned newspapers. It appears that most students would prefer to read books as long as they are modern and interesting. Aboriginal students nominated magazines first, closely followed by books, then newspapers. Younger students preferred books, magazines were popular in Years 8, 9 and 10, comics were read by junior students only and newspapers increased in popularity as students became older (see Appendix G6). More than half the teachers also admitted that there should be more reading materials available in classrooms (see Appendix I2). However, more teachers nominated magazines than books which differs from student preferences (see Appendix 14).

The problem of distractions was noted in observations (see Appendix J). Students were asked on the questionnaire if they became distracted and what distracted them. Figure 5.17 illustrates the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in their behaviour during DEAR. Students were asked if they became distracted during DEAR. This question is closely linked with Q. 24.

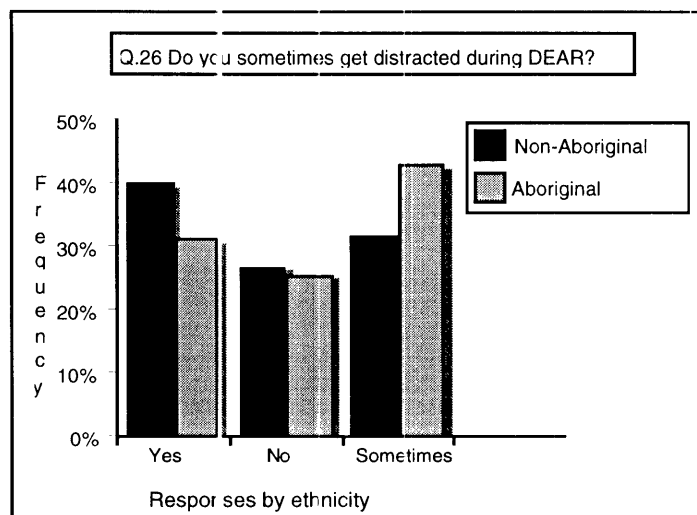


Figure 5.17 Responses to Student Q.26 by ethnicity

Figure 5.17 indicates that more than two-thirds of students get distracted during DEAR at least sometimes. This evidence supports data for Q. 24 which asked if students do other things in DEAR. More than two-thirds of all students admitted that they do other things in DEAR. There are small differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in terms of their being distracted but these are not significant as a corrected χ^2 application to ethnicity data indicates ($p = 0.3921$) (see Appendix H).

Comments made regarding distractions (see Appendix G7) included almost half of the students admitting that they were distracted by other students who talked, laughed or whispered in DEAR. These comments support results for Q.24 and observations. A small number of students were worried by noises, either outside or inside the room, people coming in and out, the teacher or the class next door. Aboriginal students admitted being distracted almost totally by other people or by outside noises and one Aboriginal student mentioned wanting to know the time. There are no clocks in classrooms, so students have to rely on personal watches. Figure 5.18 sets out male and female responses to the question of whether or not they get distracted in DEAR.

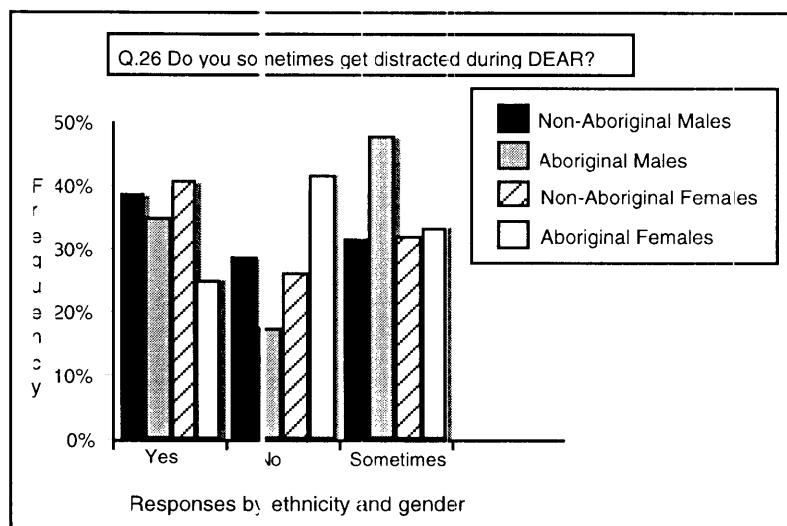


Figure 5.18 Responses to Student Q.26 by ethnicity and gender

Aboriginal females were the least distracted group (see Appendix F13). Non-Aboriginal males were more likely to be on task than non-Aboriginal females but Aboriginal males were most likely to be distracted. Total male and female data for Item 26 give a different picture to the graph above (see Appendix K4). Totals for males and females are very similar, which is why the corrected χ^2 application to gender data has a very high probability ($p = 0.8019$) (see Appendix H). This does not support the gender differences between Aboriginal males and females, clearly illustrated by the graph above. This is no doubt due to the small sample of Aboriginal students in this study.

5.3.2 Conclusions to Student Attitudes to DEAR

The majority of students did not mind going to DEAR, at least sometimes, although Aboriginal students were the least in favour. Younger students were more in favour of it than older students, so there was an attitudinal change in the senior years. Most students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knew what the letters DEAR stood for but Yr 7 students were more likely not to know than older students.

Most students were happy with the current time-slot, but Aboriginal

males were most in favour of a change. Junior students were more interested in moving DEAR to last period than seniors, who preferred the morning. Many students said they came late to DEAR, but Aboriginal males were most likely to come late. Aboriginal females said they were least likely to come late.

Two-thirds of students did not want DEAR to be dropped and there was little difference here between younger and older students. The gender difference was significant. Aboriginal males were most in favour of the program being dropped but the margin was very small. Approximately 20 percent of all students had trouble finding something interesting to read in DEAR and there were major differences between male and female results. Aboriginal students tended to have the most trouble finding interesting reading material, at least sometimes. A large majority of students said they did other things in DEAR and there was a significant difference in attitude between males and females. Aboriginal males were most likely to do other things rather than read.

Two-thirds of students also wanted more modern books available in classrooms and this suggestion was also favoured by teachers, although that was not school policy. Aboriginal students suggested magazines rather than books. A large number of students said they regularly became distracted by other students in DEAR and there was a large gender difference between Aboriginal male and female students.

Conclusions here show that attitudes to DEAR in the school were generally positive, although there was room for improvement. Negativity towards the program could have been due to low reader proficiency levels, a gradual erosion of the original guidelines and the lack of understanding of any benefits that the scheme should give to students. Aboriginal male students stood out as having the most negative attitudes, but Aboriginal female students had similar positive attitudes to the program as did non-Aboriginal females in the study school.

5.3.3 Reading achievement and self-perceptions

This section deals with how students see themselves as readers and whether or not students believe that DEAR helps them to improve their reading skills.

- 2 (b) Do they believe it leads to an improvement in reading achievement?

The question relates to items 27, 28, 29 and 31 from the student questionnaire. Bar graphs were drawn up to illustrate differences between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students and between male and female students. Corrected χ^2 was applied to response data for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and to the whole sample for differences in gender (see Appendix H). Comparisons were made with teacher questionnaire data (see Appendix I) to support results where appropriate. Figure 5.19 sets out Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses to students' reading habits.

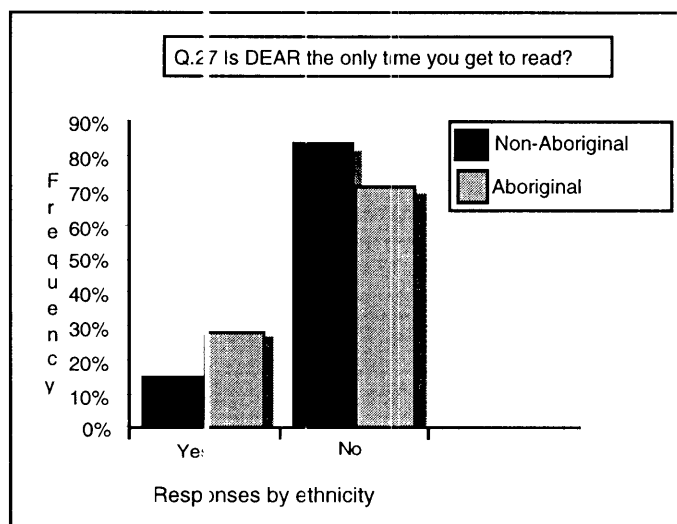


Figure 5.19 Responses to Student Q.27 by ethnicity

It is evident from Figure 5.19 that the majority of all students read outside of DEAR and that non-Aboriginal students read more often outside of DEAR than Aboriginal students. Corrected χ^2 applied to responses

between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students ($p = 0.0578$) (see Appendix H) indicated some difference but this was not considered significant. Figure 5.20 illustrates responses between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal male and female students to the same question.

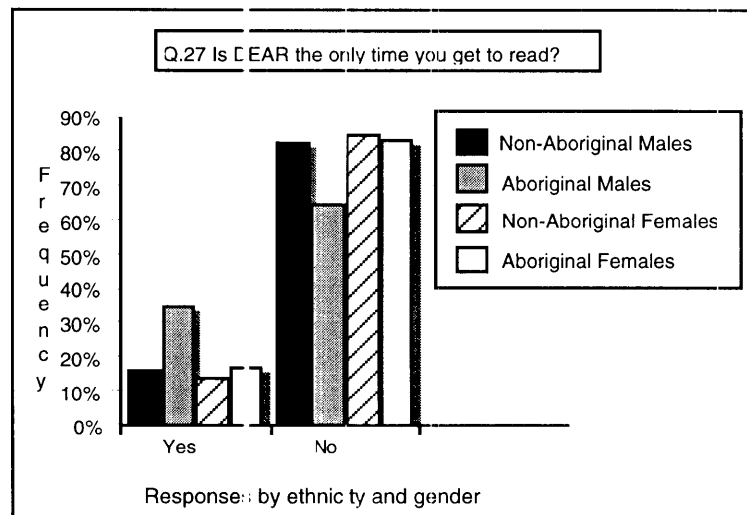


Figure 5.20 Responses to Student Q.27 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.20 indicates that over 80 percent of both male and female non-Aboriginal and female Aboriginal students read outside of DEAR (see Appendix F13). However, Aboriginal males stand out from the group on the above graph, indicating that they do not read as much outside of DEAR as any of the other students in the sample. Application of corrected χ^2 to male and female response data for the whole sample ($p = 0.2731$) (see Appendix H) indicates that there was no significant difference between male and female students in reading habits. This does not take into account the Aboriginal male difference shown on the graph. Approximately one-third of Aboriginal male students (35 percent) said that DEAR was the only time they read (see Appendix F13) and half of the Year 7 Aboriginal students read only during DEAR (see Appendix F15). For these students, DEAR was obviously an essential time for reading practice.

Students were asked in an open question when they read outside of school hours. Almost half the students responded that they read at night, in bed or just before going to sleep (see Appendix G7). Other popular times

noted were afternoons, or when there was nothing else to do, on weekends or on holidays. A few students wrote in 'Never' or 'Only when I have to'.

Figure 5.21 illustrates student responses for item 28 which asks how students perceive themselves as readers.

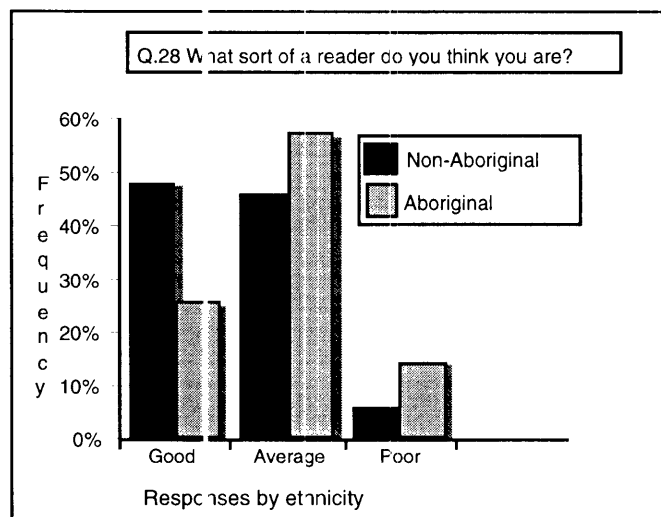


Figure 5.21 Responses to Student Q.28 by ethnicity

In Figure 5.21 non-Aboriginal students regarded themselves as either good or average readers and a small percentage (6 percent) said that they were poor readers. On the other hand fewer Aboriginal students thought they were good readers (26 percent) which was about half the non-Aboriginal percentage (see Appendix F16). Aboriginal students tended to rate themselves as average or poor (14 percent). Application of corrected χ^2 to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses ($p = 0.0134$) (see Appendix H) indicated a significant difference in students' perceptions of reading ability between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Fewer Year 7 students rated themselves as poor readers than older students (see Appendix F17). Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Year 10 students tended to rate themselves as poor readers (see Appendix F18). This result could have more to do with their general self-esteem than with reading performance. From the researcher's experience, this is a difficult age-group to deal with in the school system. Figure 5.22 sets out male and

female responses to item 28.

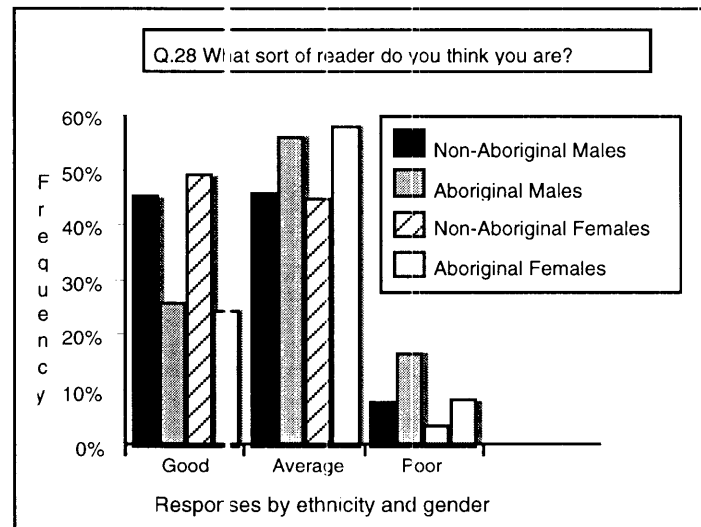


Figure 5.22 Responses to Student Q.28 by ethnicity and gender

Aboriginal males rated themselves the poorest readers (17 percent) (see Appendix F16). Twice as many Aboriginal males as females (8 percent) responded this way. Similarly, twice as many non-Aboriginal males (8 percent) than non-Aboriginal females (4 percent) ranked themselves in the poor category. One could conclude that males had lower self-esteem than females when it came to rating their reading performance and Aboriginal males had the lowest. Application of corrected χ^2 to male and female responses for the whole sample ($p = 0.0155$) (see Appendix H) indicated a significant difference between males and females for this question.

The next question, item 29 on the student questionnaire deals with student perceptions of how the DEAR scheme helps students to improve their reading skills. Figure 5.23 sets out Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student responses to this question.

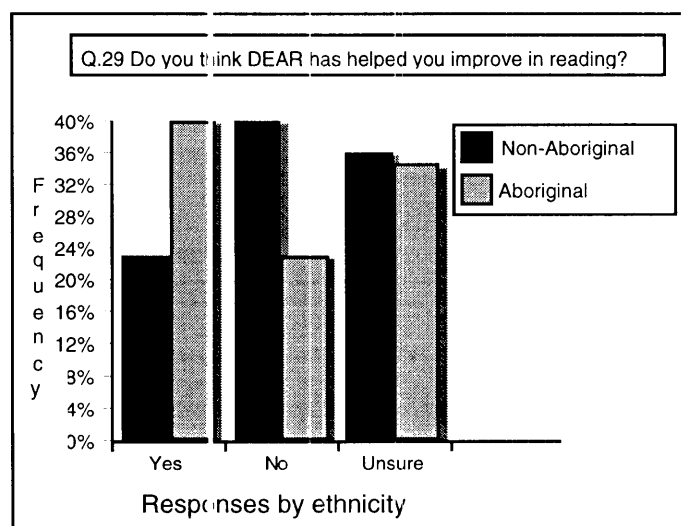


Figure 5.23 Responses to Student Q.29 by ethnicity

Twice the proportion of Aboriginal students (40 percent) than non-Aboriginal students (23 percent) said that DEAR had helped them to improve in reading (see Appendix F16). Similarly, half the proportion of Aboriginal students said it did not help them, compared with responses by non-Aboriginal students. Approximately a third of both groups of students were unsure, which confirms the ambiguity towards the scheme that was evident in item 14. Application of corrected χ^2 to response data ($p = 0.0396$) (see Appendix H) indicated that there was a significant difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in their belief that DEAR helps them to improve their reading skills.

The result also supports evidence in the literature that it is difficult to measure the direct influence of SSR on reading achievement Campbell et al. (1995). Junior students appeared more convinced of the benefits of DEAR than senior students (see Appendix F17) but that trend was not obvious among Aboriginal students (see Appendix F18). A third of teachers were also unsure as to whether DEAR helped reading improvement (see Appendix I2). 64 percent indicated that the program did help and only 3 percent said NO. Therefore, the majority of teachers feel that the scheme has positive benefits. They suggested that the extra practice must lead to an improvement in reading skills, that it encourages reading as part of a daily

routine, that it improves fluency and for some students this would be their only silent reading time (see Appendix I5). Figure 5.24 illustrates differences in male and female student responses to the same question.

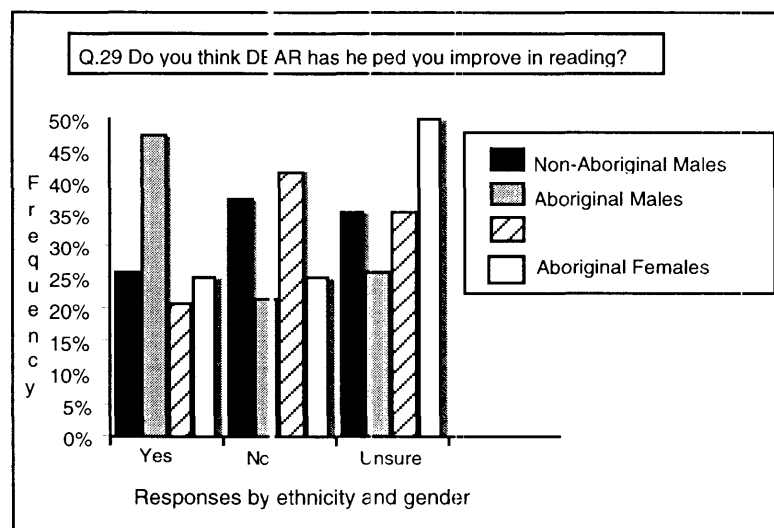


Figure 5.24 Responses to Student Q.29 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.24 reveals little difference between non-Aboriginal males and females. Almost half the non-Aboriginal sample felt that DEAR did not help them in reading and a third were unsure (see Appendix F16). However, twice as many Aboriginal males as females responded positively. This evidence supports results for Q.27 which showed that Aboriginal males tend not to read outside of DEAR. For Aboriginal male students the number of reading opportunities for them would be smaller, therefore these students would see DEAR as an important factor in their reading improvement. Twice as many Aboriginal females than males were unsure of the program's benefit. Application of corrected χ^2 to male and female responses in the whole student sample ($p = 0.0921$) (see Appendix H) indicated that differences between males and females were not significant.

When students were asked how it helped them improve (see Appendix G8), they responded that by reading more often, skills were improved. So, intuitively students do realise that extra practice helps.

Only 19 students (2 percent) stated that they learnt more words. This indicates that few of them connect reading practice with vocabulary acquisition as was claimed by Anderson & Freebody (1983), Shu, Anderson & Zhang (1995) and Adams (1990). Others responded that it helped them read faster or that they read more variety. Almost 3 percent of students claimed that they were already good readers and did not need the extra practice. 2 Aboriginal students stated that they never read until they came to DEAR, with one admitting that he/she had started reading books as a result.

If students are motivated to read, they will do so. An important motivating influence on high school students is the prospect of a future career. Item 31 explores student attitudes to the place of reading in adult life and in employment. Figure 5.25 sets out Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student responses to Item 31 which asks if students consider that being able to read well will help them when they leave school.

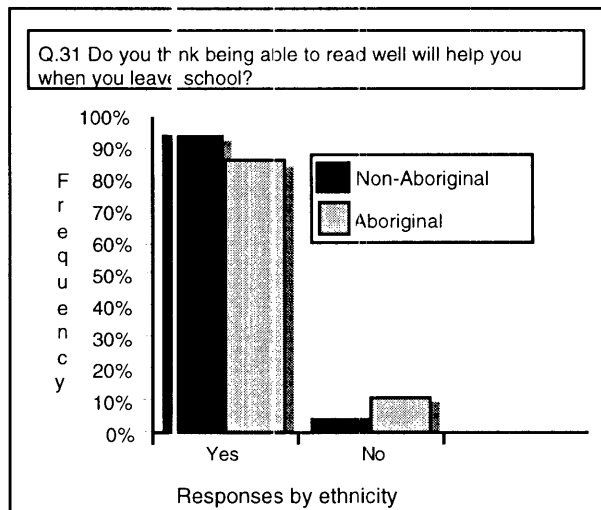


Figure 5.25 Responses to Student Q.31 by ethnicity

An overwhelming number of students realised that reading was important for future adult life (see Appendix F16). More Aboriginal students than non-Aboriginal students did not agree, but the figure was quite small. This possibly related to the perceptions of a small number of Aboriginal students to the type of employment that they could aspire to, based on family experience in the employment market. The unemployment

rate for indigenous Australians in NSW is more than five times the national rate (ABS 1997a), therefore the prospects for some Aboriginal students in this sample are possibly quite slim. Choo's (1990) comment that high unemployment coupled with few role models provide little incentive for Aboriginal students to succeed at school appears to be apt here for those few who responded negatively. Application of corrected χ^2 to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses ($p = 0.187$) (see Appendix H) indicated that there was an insignificant difference in perceptions of the importance of reading for future employment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students (see Appendix F). Figure 5.26 illustrates the differences in responses between male and female students to item 31.

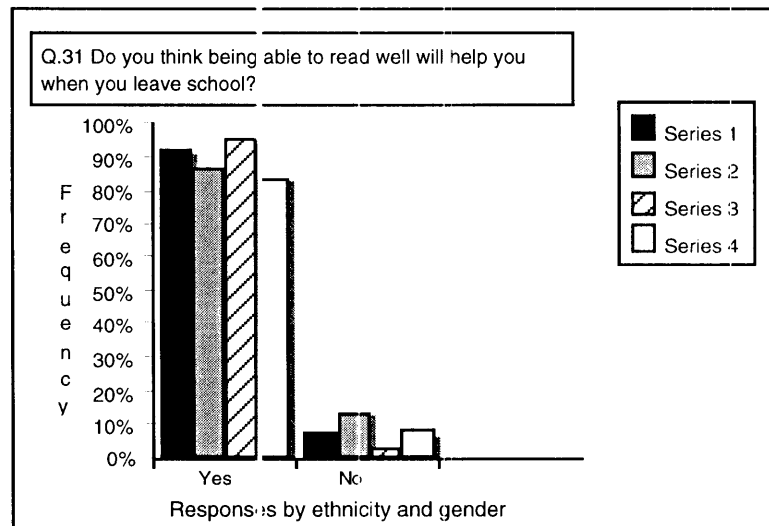


Figure 5.26 Responses to Student Q.31 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.26 indicates that a large majority of both male and female students felt that being able to read well would be a help in adult life. Males were slightly more negative than females. Corrected χ^2 applied to male and female responses for the whole sample ($p = 0.0082$) (see Appendix H) indicated some significance in the difference between male and female responses. Most senior students agreed that reading was important for adult life (see Appendices F17, F18). Junior Aboriginal students were more inclined to be negative than seniors.

5.3.4 Conclusions to Reading Achievement

As the majority of non-Aboriginal students thought they were good to average readers and as DEAR was not the only time they read, the majority felt that, either DEAR had not helped them to improve in reading, or that they were unsure about this. Only a few students linked practice and vocabulary acquisition with DEAR which meant that the reasons for DEAR were not clearly understood. Aboriginal male students were most likely to consider themselves poor readers, while Aboriginal females were most likely to rate themselves as average, possibly due to the fact that they read more than the males.

The fact that DEAR for many students was not the only time they read, made it difficult to judge whether DEAR, in fact, did play a major part in improving reading skill. One can only say that any practice in sustained silent reading should improve performance, so logically, DEAR must help, even if the amount of help for particular students is small. The more students read outside of DEAR, the less benefit the program would have been for them. For many Aboriginal males, who tended not to read outside of DEAR time, the benefit would have been greatest. However, according to the results in item 24, Aboriginal males were least likely to actually read during the DEAR sessions, so they did not reap much benefit from the program.

There was a difference in attitude between junior and senior students, in that juniors were more likely to say that DEAR helped them improve, while seniors were more negative. There was also a strong gender difference between Aboriginal male students and female students. Female Aboriginal students had similar attitudes towards reading as those of non-Aboriginal females. Many students read before going to sleep and some teachers claimed that silent reading had a calming effect. Most students were aware of the importance of reading well for their future careers, but Aboriginal males were most negative about the importance of

reading. This may have been due to a perception of poor employment prospects. Senior students were more aware of the value of reading to careers than juniors. However, they were not strongly in favour of DEAR, so one could conclude that they did not understand the rationale behind the scheme and the benefits that came from it.

5.3.5 Reading Enjoyment and Parent Modelling

The research question which addresses students' interest in reading is:

- 2(c) Do they believe it leads to a greater enjoyment of reading?

This question relates to items 6, 10, 11,12,13 and 30 from the student questionnaire (see appendix B2). Data were analysed to determine the level of reading enjoyment and the influence of parents on students' reading habits. Differences between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students and between male and female students were illustrated in bar graphs and corrected χ^2 was applied to data from closed questions for the whole student sample. Comparisons were made with teacher questionnaire data to support results where appropriate. Figure 5.27 sets out Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses to item 6 which related to leisure-time reading.

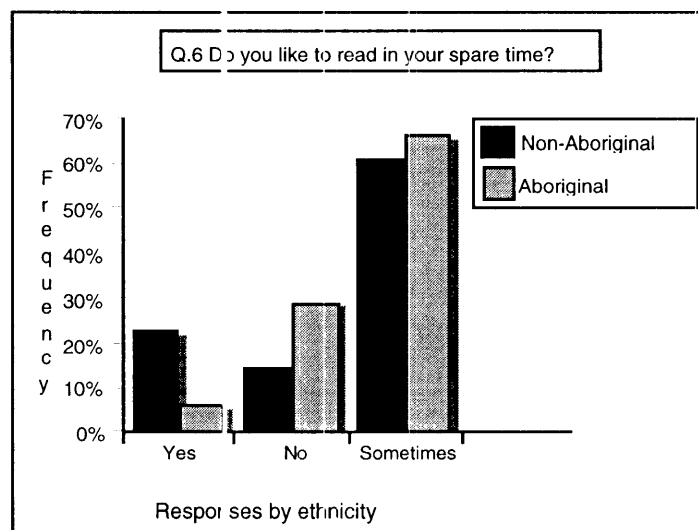


Figure 5.27 Responses to Student Q.6 by ethnicity

The majority of students responded that they do like to read in their spare time at least sometimes (see Appendix K1). Aboriginal students were less inclined to read in their spare time than non-Aboriginal students (see Appendix F1). Application of corrected χ^2 to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses ($p = 0.0178$) (see Appendix H) indicated a significant difference between the number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students who liked to read in their spare time. Figure 5.28 sets out male and female responses to item 6.

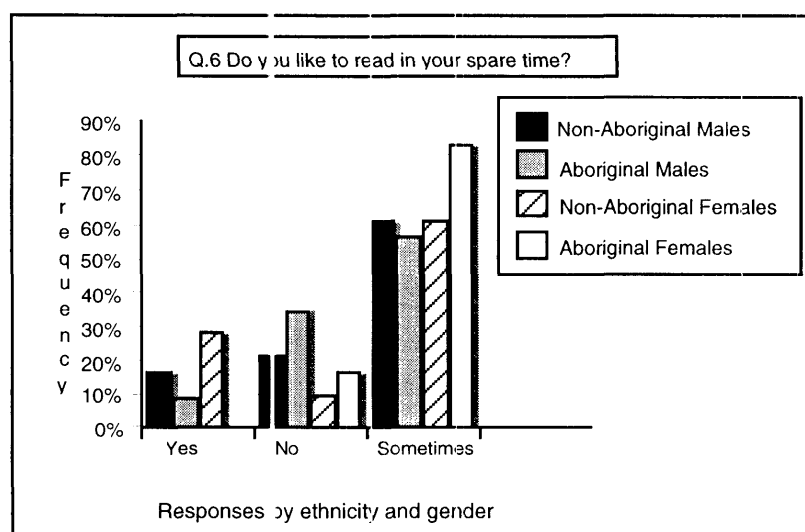


Figure 5.28 Responses to Student Q. 6 by ethnicity and gender

When male and female students were compared, more female students liked to read in their spare time than males (see Appendix K1). Aboriginal males were least likely to read in their spare time than Aboriginal females the majority of whom liked to read sometimes. Application of corrected χ^2 to male and female responses for the whole student sample ($p = 0.0001$) indicated a highly significant difference in reading interest between male and female students.

These results reflected the findings of Schultheis (1990) Campbell et al. (1995) Ciccone (1981) and Whittemore (1992), all of whom found that in general females like to read more than males. If students did not like to read in their spare time, the reason may have been that other leisure time

activities had a higher priority. Question 10 explored the options that students at the study school nominated as their preferred activities. This question allowed them to nominate several options. Figure 5.29 illustrates in two pie graphs the range of activities nominated by non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students.

Q.10 What do you mostly do in your spare time?

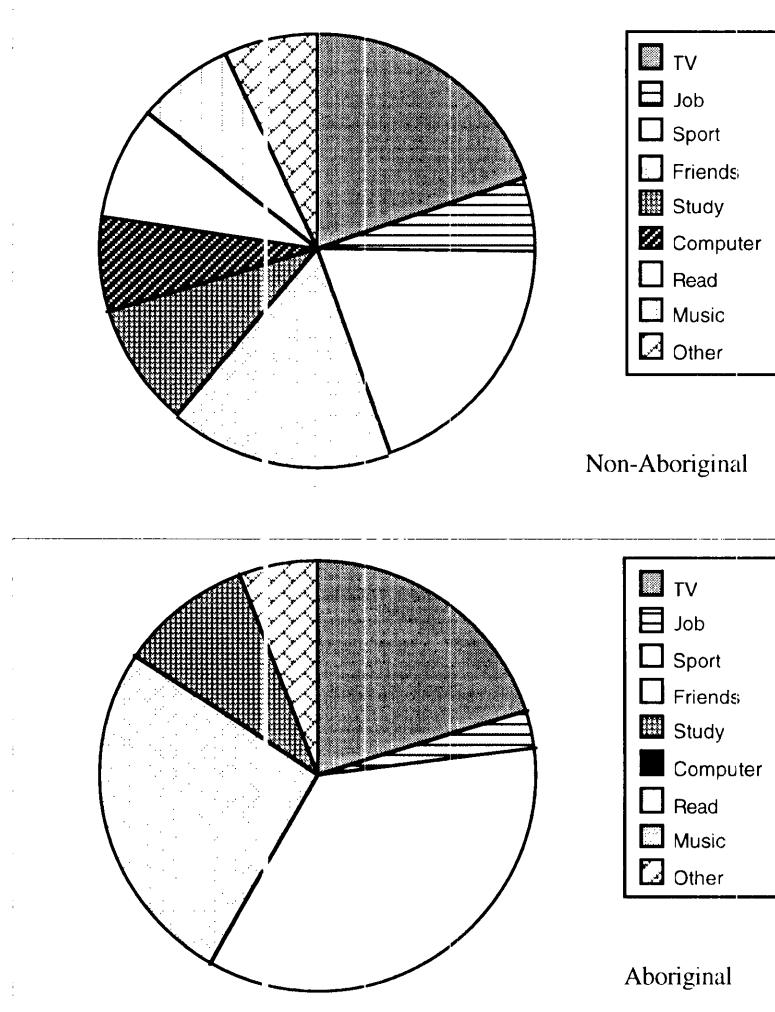


Figure 5.29 Responses to Student Q.10 by ethnicity

Figure 5.29 indicates that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students spent roughly an equivalent amount of time watching TV, but the number of activities listed by Aboriginal students was limited (see Appendix F4). Aboriginal students gave NIL responses to using a computer, reading and practising music. Over half the Aboriginal students nominated sport and meeting friends as their most important activities. Non-Aboriginal students were not as interested in sport or friends as Aboriginal students, possibly

because they had a wider range of options.

A comparison of the numbers of students who worked part-time revealed that only 6 percent of Aboriginal students said they worked (see Appendix F4), compared with twice that proportion of non-Aboriginal students. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures (1997a) show that Aboriginal people have a very high level of unemployment. It was possible that there were few employment opportunities for young Aboriginal students in the town.

Aboriginal females tended to study more than Aboriginal males, although the figures were too small to make any firm conclusions. Reading was definitely NOT a preferred activity for any Aboriginal student in their spare time. Playing sport had a very high priority for Aboriginal male students, higher than for non-Aboriginal males (see Appendix F4). These findings support Herbert's (1995) comments that many Aboriginal males have football stars as their role models, therefore they have a strong interest in sport. Aboriginal females also indicated a strong interest in sport far higher than non-Aboriginal females.

The most popular activities listed under OTHER for non-Aboriginal students (see Appendix G3) were: listening to the radio or music, playing with pets, sleeping/doing nothing and going out. Aboriginal students mentioned homework, training for sport and going out. One could conclude that there is a difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in relation to spare time activities.

Non-Aboriginal females were almost twice as likely to read in their spare time as non-Aboriginal males. This was a marked difference between males and females. There was a steady rise in numbers of non-Aboriginal students who worked from Yr 7 to Yr 12 which was to be expected. The number of students who played sport was consistent, with no clear trend (see Appendix G5). However, the number of students who studied was

higher in senior classes. Reading as a leisure time pursuit lost favour as students became older, a finding which was consistent with trends in reading interest noted by Pikulski (1984) and Russikoff & Pilgreen (1994).

It has been claimed that the home background plays an important part in the development of reading interest and literacy development. (Mork 1972, Beck 1990 and Campbell et al. 1995). If parents enjoy reading, children should also read for enjoyment. Auerbach (1995) warns that this concept may not always be fact, that children in low literacy households may become readers, because their parents encourage them to improve their literacy skills as a way to an improved lifestyle. Question 11 explores the role of parent modelling in the lives of students in the sample. Figure 5.30 illustrates Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses to item 11 which asked students if their parents read in their spare time.

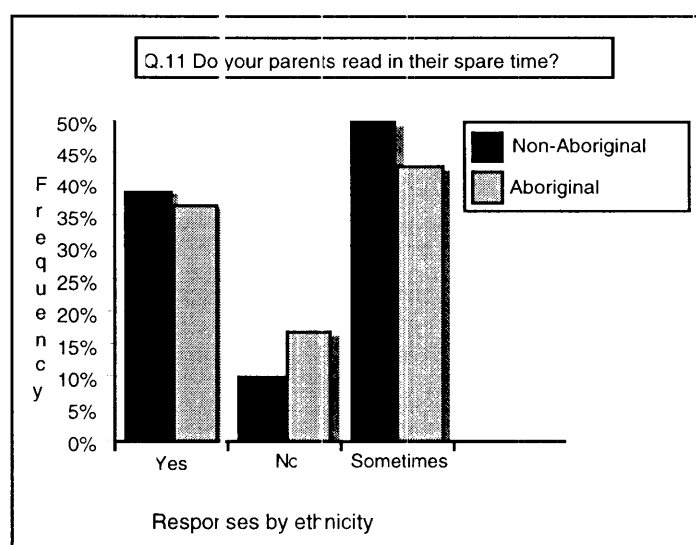


Figure 5.30 Responses to Student Q.11 by ethnicity

Figure 5.30 revealed that most students stated that their parents read at least sometimes. This result supports findings for item 6 which found that most students also like to read sometimes. There appeared to be no outstanding differences between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students who responded that their parents did read as a leisure-time activity (see Appendix F4). More Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students responded that their parents did not read. Therefore parent modelling for most student

households appeared strong with slightly less occurring in Aboriginal households. Application of corrected χ^2 to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses ($p = 0.3821$) indicates no significant difference in parent modelling behaviour between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students (see Appendix H). Figure 5.31 sets out male and female student responses to item 11.

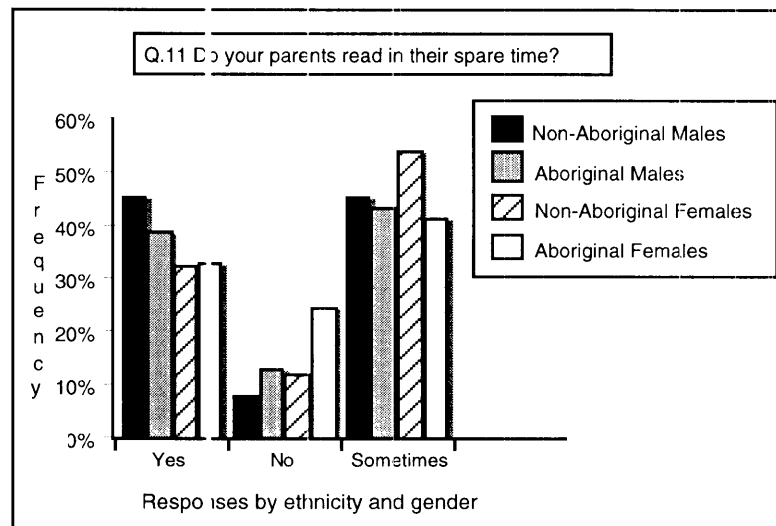


Figure 5.31 Responses to Student Q.11 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.31 reveals that both male and female students responded that their parents read in their spare time. More male students responded positively than female students, who tended to be more non-committal. A quarter of Aboriginal females responded that their parents did not read which was double the frequency for other categories. Yet Figure 5.28 (item 6) shows that only 10 percent of Aboriginal females do not like to read themselves compared with a third of Aboriginal males. There seems to be little relationship between a parent modelling and reading enjoyment in the results for Aboriginal students in this sample.

Similarly non-Aboriginal males responded with a higher level of parent modelling than non-Aboriginal females (see Appendix F4) which contrasts with responses to Q.6 which indicate that more non-Aboriginal females liked to read in their spare time than non-Aboriginal males. Female students responded that they experience the least frequency of parent

modelling. Application of corrected χ^2 to male and female student responses in the whole student sample ($p = 0.0005$) indicates a highly significant difference for parent modelling between male and female students. Thus it could be concluded that parent modelling plays some role but is not vital in determining the level of students' reading interest in this study. The evidence appears to contradict Mork (1972), Campbell et al. (1995) and Beck (1990). However, it is possible that parental influence is stronger at the early stages of reading acquisition and parental influence through modelling weakens as children grow older and become more independent in their choice of leisure-time pursuits. There is scope here for further research.

The concept of parent modelling goes one step further into the materials that parents read. If parents enjoy reading novels, the question arises as to whether a parents' enjoyment for books influences their children to also select books as preferred reading matter. Figure 5.32 illustrates responses to item 12 which asked what parents read.

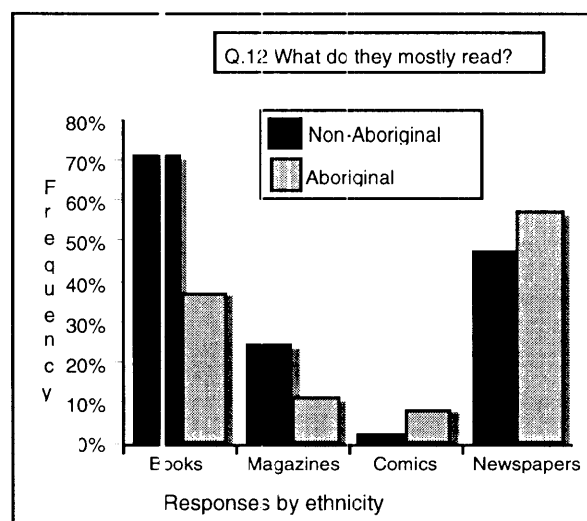


Figure 5.32 Responses to Student Q.12 by ethnicity

Figure 5.32 indicates a trend for parents of non-Aboriginal students to read books and then newspapers. The trend was reversed for Aboriginal parents, who favoured newspapers to book reading (see Appendix F4). Non-Aboriginal parents were more likely to read magazines than comics.

Aboriginal parents read less magazines but more comics. This result indicates a difference in reading preferences between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal parents. Figure 5.33 illustrates the differences in male and female responses for item 12.

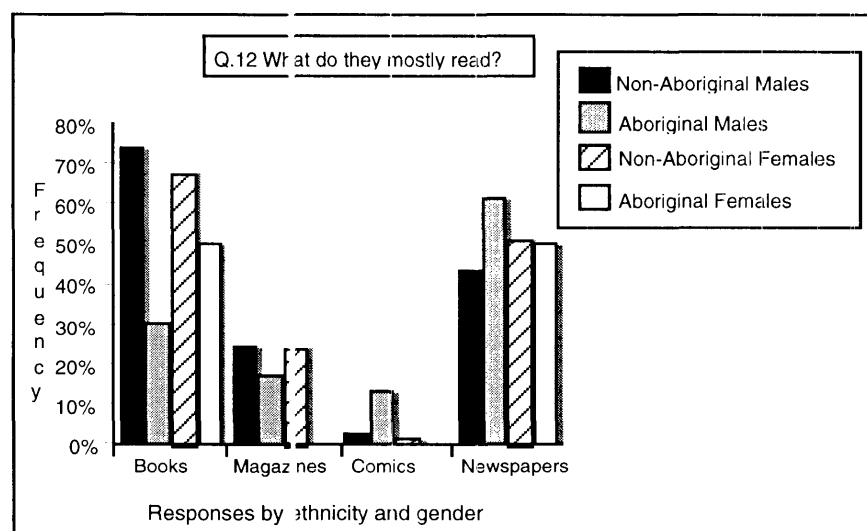


Figure 5.33 Responses to Student Q.12 by ethnicity and gender

Parents of Aboriginal males were twice as likely to read newspapers than books, whereas parents of Aboriginal females had an equal preference for newspapers and books (see Appendix F4), but did not appear to read either magazines or comics. Parents of non-Aboriginal males were stronger book readers than parents of non-Aboriginal females but parents of non-Aboriginal females read newspapers more often than parents of non-Aboriginal males.

This data does not support results from Q.6 which indicated that non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal males preferred to read magazines than books, while non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal females preferred to read books to magazines. Parent modelling does not seem to be as important in influencing what students in this study preferred to read.

A further criteria for parent modelling was the number of books in a household. It could be argued that the presence of large numbers of books in the home would have been an indicator for parent modelling of book-

reading. Figure 5.34 sets cut Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses to item 13 which asked if there were many books at home.

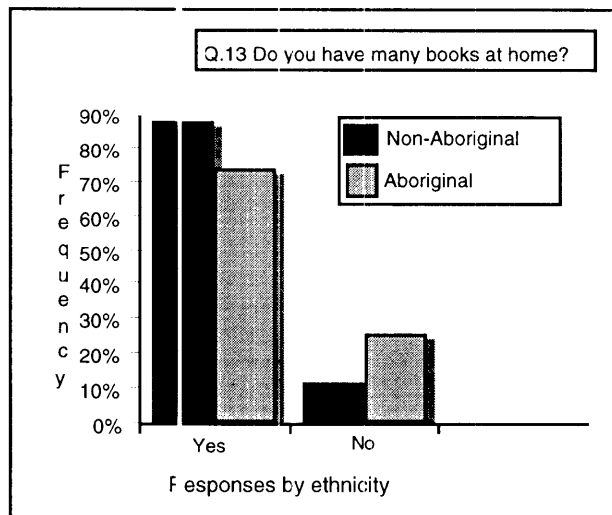


Figure 5.34 Responses to Student Q.13 by ethnicity

A majority of students claimed that they did have many books at home (see Appendix K2). 38 percent of non-Aboriginal students indicated that they had many books at home compared with 74 percent of Aboriginal students. Therefore there was a difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Application of corrected χ^2 to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses (0.0178) (see Appendix H) indicates a significant difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students for this question. Figure 5.35 illustrates male and female responses to item 13.

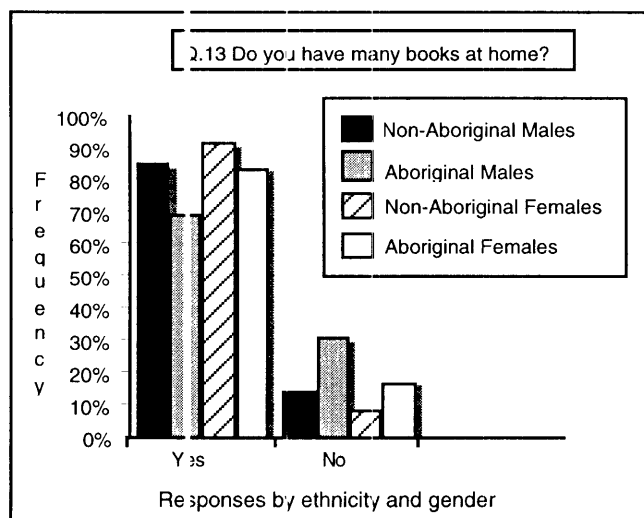


Figure 5.35 Responses to Student Q.13 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.5 indicates that more female students responded that they had more books at home than male students. Similarly more Aboriginal female students responded positively than Aboriginal males (see Appendix F4). Corrected χ^2 applied to male and female responses for the whole student sample ($p = 0.0019$) (see Appendix H) indicates that there was a significant difference between male and female responses. These results support the concept of parent modelling indirectly through the availability of books at home as being a factor in whether or not students like to read in their spare time.

Figure 5.36 illustrates differences in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses to item 30 which asked if DEAR has had a positive effect on students' reading interest.

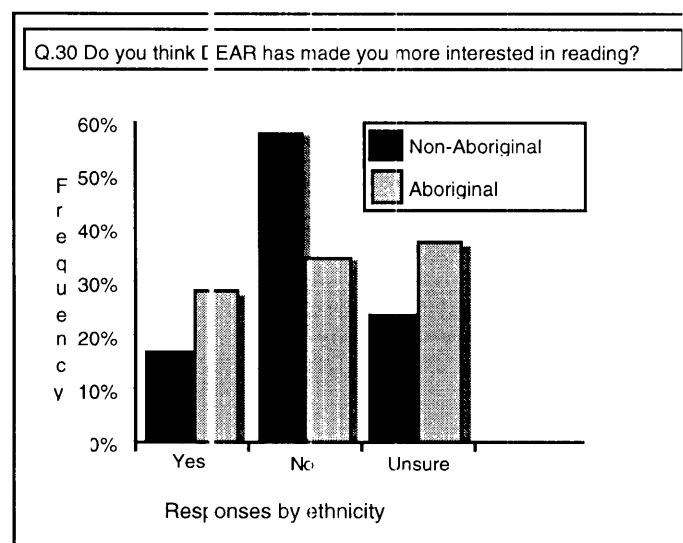


Figure 5.36 Responses to Student Q.30 by ethnicity

Figure 5.36 indicates that the majority of students felt that DEAR did not make them more interested in reading (see Appendix K4). These findings support results for items 27 and 29. The graph indicates that there was a difference in attitude between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Twice as many Aboriginal students responded that DEAR had made them more interested in reading (see Appendix F16) than non-Aboriginal students. These findings also support results for item 27 and

item 29. A third of Aboriginal students were unsure. Application of corrected χ^2 to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses (0.0142) (see Appendix H) indicated a significant difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in their perceptions of the benefits of DEAR. Figure 5.37 sets out male and female student responses to item 30.

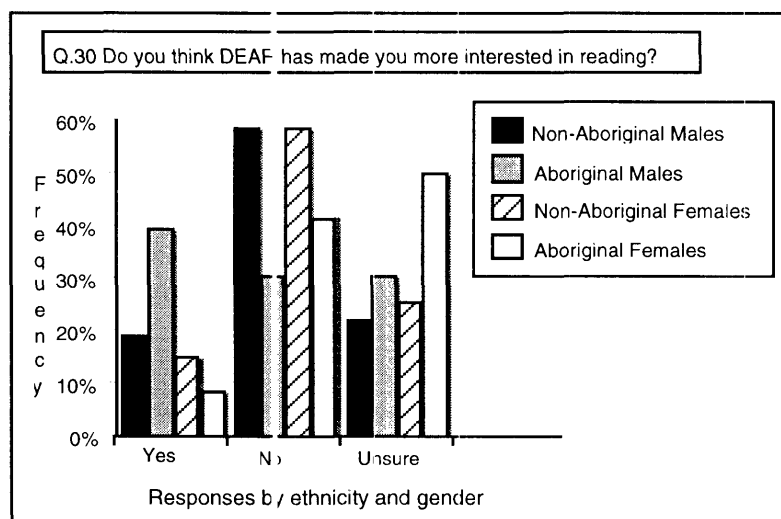


Figure 5.37 Responses to Student Q.30 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.37 indicates that more Aboriginal males than Aboriginal females thought that DEAF had made them more interested in reading (see Appendix F16). There did not appear to be much difference in response between non-Aboriginal males and females. Application of corrected χ^2 to male and female responses for the whole student sample (0.1025) (see Appendix H) indicates that the difference was not statistically significant. The graph reveals differences with between Aboriginal males and females that were masked in the overall figures.

More juniors than seniors felt that DEAR made them more interested in reading (see Appendices F17, F18). These results also support those for item 29. When asked how DEAR made them more interested in reading (see Appendix G8), most students said that it was because they were reading more often. Some students said that they found out that there were lots of good books and they like to read now, whereas they never bothered

trying to read before. Negative reasons included comments such as 'I always read' and 'I'm already interested', but there were several protests such as, 'People shouldn't be forced to read'. Some students are not happy with the compulsory nature of DEAR.

Half the teachers indicated that DEAR increased reading interest but many were unsure (see Appendix I2). When asked how DEAR helped improve reading interest, comments given were: 'Once they get interested in a book, they find out about the joy of escaping into a story', 'Exposure to material' and 'Some would never read on their own initiative'.

5.3.6 Conclusions to Reading Enjoyment

The majority of students indicated that they liked to read in their spare time, at least sometimes, and females were significantly more likely to read than males. Aboriginal male students were the least likely to read for leisure which was a significant finding. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups spent a similar amount of time watching TV, but Aboriginal students spent much of their spare time playing sport and meeting friends. They did not share the leisure pursuits of non-Aboriginal students who learnt music, used computers or read. These could be said to have been cultural differences, but they are more likely to reflect discrepancies in socio-economic backgrounds. Few Aboriginal students had part-time jobs, compared with non-Aboriginal students and Aboriginal females tended to study more than Aboriginal males. Far more senior students worked and studied than juniors which was to be expected, but there was little difference in the numbers who played sport. This figure remained consistent through all the years of high school.

Parent modelling was evident in this study although there was evidence for a weakening influence parents had as models in the selection of reading matter, once students became teenagers. The majority of students said they had many books at home, although there was a

significant difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and between male and female responses. Aboriginal males were least likely to respond that they have many books at home. This evidence supported parent modelling through the provision of books in the home environment.

The majority of students said that DEAR had not made them more interested in reading. Perhaps they felt that reading interest was gained by other means. Perhaps the compulsory nature of the program resulted in an equivalent negative response when it came to reading interest. On the other hand, Aboriginal males appeared to benefit the most from DEAR. This finding reflected the need Aboriginal male students had for a compulsory SSR period, as they did not seem to spend much time outside of school engaged in reading activities. These findings were confirmed by teachers in their comments. Teachers on the whole felt the DEAR program did help students to gain a greater interest in reading although many remained unsure. The difficulty in pinpointing a clear relationship between DEAR and reading interest or achievement has been a common theme in this study.

5.3.7 Students' Reading Preferences

The research question which addresses what students like to read is:

- (f) What is the most popular reading matter?

This question relates to items 7, 8, 9, 19, 20, 21 and 7 from the student questionnaire. Discussion was supported with χ^2 applications to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses and to male and female responses for the whole student sample (see Appendix H). Bar graphs illustrating differences between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students and between male and female students. Comparisons were made with teacher questionnaire data to support results where appropriate.

Figure 5.38 sets out the responses to item 7 which asked what students liked to read and gave four options, books, magazines, comics and newspapers. These were the options also given in student questionnaire items 12 and 20.

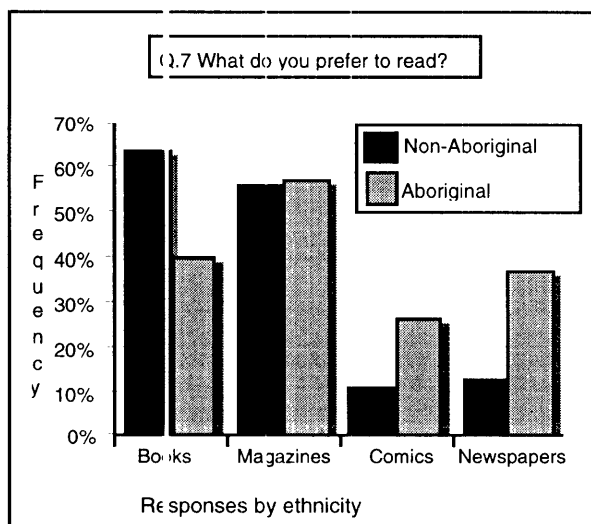


Figure 5.38 Responses to Student Q.7 by ethnicity

Figure 5.38 clearly shows that the majority of non-Aboriginal students brought books to DEAR. These findings are supported by observation data which found that 68 percent of all students brought books to read (see Appendix J). More than half the students in the sample responded that they brought magazines (see Appendix K1). More Aboriginal students brought magazines to DEAR than books and Aboriginal students brought more comics and newspapers to DEAR than non-Aboriginal students. A comparison with results for parental reading preferences illustrated in Fig. 5.32 indicates that non-Aboriginal parents also preferred to read books, followed by newspapers and magazines. Aboriginal parents preferred to read newspapers, followed by books and magazines. Therefore the strong student preference for magazines is not reflected in parental preferences.

Non-Aboriginal students developed an interest in newspapers as they grew older (see Appendix F2). This would reflect the increasing maturity of older students and perhaps requirements in several courses to

read articles related to their schoolwork. Teachers preferred novels to newspapers. Three-quarters of the teachers surveyed nominated novels as their first preference (see Appendix I1). Half the teachers read non-fiction and almost half read magazines. Teacher modelling is therefore strong for books and magazines. Figure 5.39 sets out male and female responses to item 7.

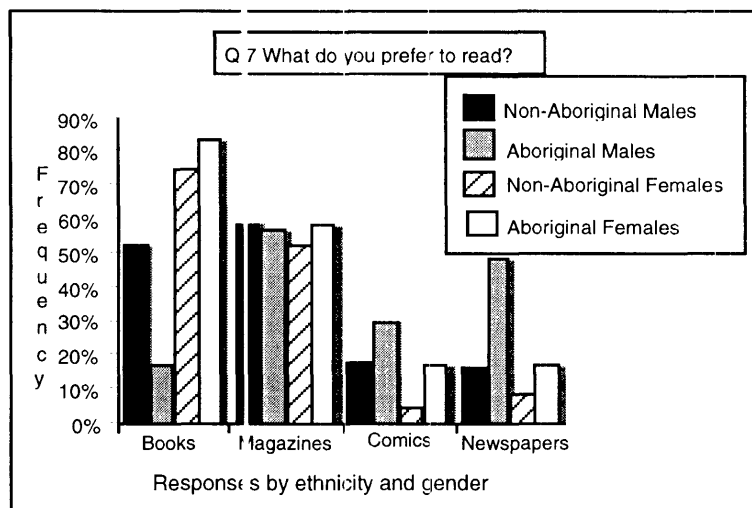


Figure 5.39 Responses to Student Q.7 by ethnicity and gender

More than half the male students surveyed preferred to bring magazines rather than books to DEAR (see Appendix F1). However, more than three-quarters of female students preferred bringing books rather than magazines. This indicates a difference in reading preferences between male and female students. This difference supports evidence of significant differences between male and female students as indicated in items 6 and 14 which relate to reading enjoyment.

Aboriginal females appeared to have similar reading interests to non-Aboriginal females but Aboriginal males diverged from their non-Aboriginal counterparts (see Appendix F1). Three times as many Aboriginal males as non-Aboriginal males read newspapers which may have reflected their strong interest in sport rather than an interest in reading (see Figure 5.29). They also preferred comics to books and Aboriginal males appeared to have a limited interest in books. This finding contrasted

with that for Aboriginal females who responded with a strong interest in books.

Having ascertained what form of reading material students preferred to read, the next question (Q.8) asked about subject matter and what stories interested students most. Ten genres were included in the student questionnaire. Students could select one or more genre. There was an open section called OTHER which allowed students to write in other genres not listed. Lists for each group in order of preference are given below.

<u>Non-Aboriginal</u>		<u>Aboriginal</u>	
Males	Females	Males	Females
Adventure	Mystery	Sports	Mystery
Sports	Adventure	Adventure	Adventure
Jokes/Hum.	Fantasy	Film/TV	Sports
Science-Fict.	Jokes/Hum.	Jokes/Hum.	Film/TV
Mystery	Romance	Fantasy	Romance
Fantasy	Science-Fict.	Romance	Jokes/Hum.
History	Film/TV	Mystery	Fantasy
Film/TV	History	History	Science-Fict.
Science	Sports	Science-Fict.	History
Romance	Science	Science	Science

Horror Stories and Crime/Action were popular genres not included in the above list (see Appendix G1). Adventure was top preference for a third of non-Aboriginal males while three-quarters of Aboriginal males nominated Sports (see Appendix F1). This result supports the conclusion that Aboriginal males' preference for newspapers may have been related to sport. It also supports findings in Figure 5.29 that Aboriginal males preferred to play sport in their spare time.

Half the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal females surveyed selected Mystery and a third preferred Adventure. These stories would have been read in books, rather than in any other form of reading material and the

result here supports the findings for Q.7 which indicated that female students preferred to read books. These findings also reveal that Aboriginal males had different reading preferences to non-Aboriginal males. Aboriginal females appeared to have similar preferences to non-Aboriginal females although Aboriginal females were more interested in reading about Sports than non-Aboriginal females. Aboriginal males also ranked Film/TV stars and Romance higher than non-Aboriginal males, who ranked Romance last.

If students were keen readers, they would have been more likely to have a favourite author. Figure 5.40 illustrates Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses to item 9 which relates to favourite authors and book titles.

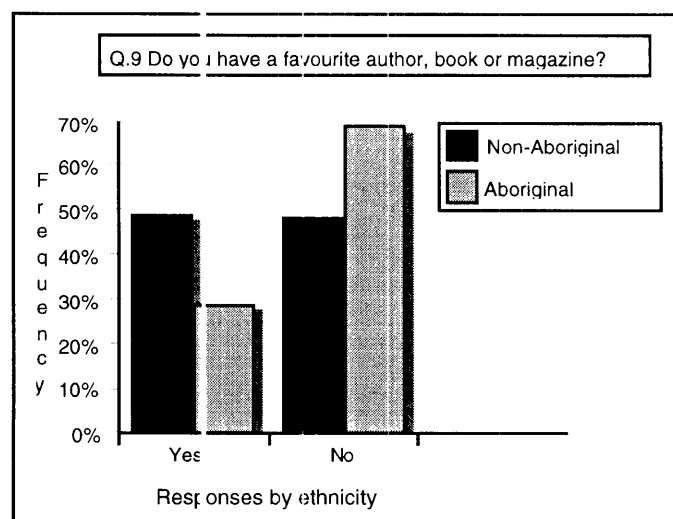


Figure 5.40 Responses to Student Q.9 by ethnicity

Non-Aboriginal students were equivocal about this question. Half of them had a favourite author, book or magazine, while the other half did not. However, only a quarter of Aboriginal students had a favourite author, book or magazine (see Appendix F1). Application of corrected χ^2 to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses ($p = 0.0291$) (see Appendix H) indicates that there was a significant difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. When No Response data are included giving two

degrees of freedom, the χ^2 result ($p = 0.0614$) is not significant (see Appendix H). The corrected χ^2 supports the graph which reveals that Aboriginal students were not as likely to have a favourite author, book or magazine than non-Aboriginal students. Figure 5.41 sets out the male and female responses for item 9.

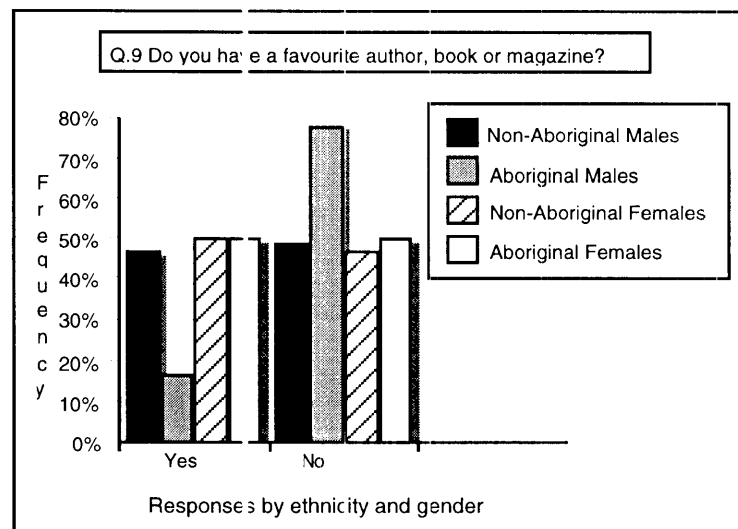


Figure 5.41 Responses to Student Q.9 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.41 indicates that Aboriginal females responded in a similar manner to non-Aboriginal females and non-Aboriginal males (see Appendix F1). However, three quarters of Aboriginal male students responded that they did not have a favourite book or author. Corrected χ^2 applied to male and female responses for the whole student sample ($p = 0.3416$) indicated that there was no significant difference between males and females. The major difference was with Aboriginal males as is evident on the graph. These findings support those of items 27 and 28 (Figs. 5.20, 5.22) which indicated that more Aboriginal male students rated themselves as poor readers than any other group of students and did not read as a leisure time activity. If they considered themselves to be poor readers and did not read in their spare time, it was unlikely that they would have had favourite authors.

Students who responded to the open question added the names of

their favourite books or authors. The list which resulted was very long with 204 authors or titles. This list has been condensed to those nominated by 5 or more students. All of the choices listed by Aboriginal students were included (see Appendix G2). The list indicated that High school students read a wide variety of material, with only 20 of the 204 authors or titles being listed by 5 or more students. The most popular authors were R.L. Stine and Stephen King, followed by Paul Jennings, Roald Dahl, Gillian Rubinstein and Virginia Andrews. Stephen King continued to be popular with adolescents, as Whittemore (1992) and Isaacs (1992) found in their studies. Snellman (1993) mentioned Roald Dahl but also stated that the popularity of magazines was dependent on cultural differences. Many magazine titles listed were dedicated to specific sports, for example, *Cycle Sport*. These specific titles were nominated by only one or two students. The most popular magazine selected was *Dolly*, read only by females and almost exclusively by junior students, particularly those in Year 8. *TV Hits* was also popular with juniors.

Aboriginal students mentioned R.L. Stine but not Stephen King. They also named Paul Jennings and Gillian Rubinstein, but not Roald Dahl or Virginia Andrews. Magazines mentioned by Aboriginal students included *Cleo*, *Cosmo*, *Dolly* and *TV Hits*.

Figure 5.42 illustrates differences in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student responses to item 19 which asked students if they always brought something to read to DEAR. This question was also discussed earlier under 'Current Practice'. The discussion here centres around differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses.

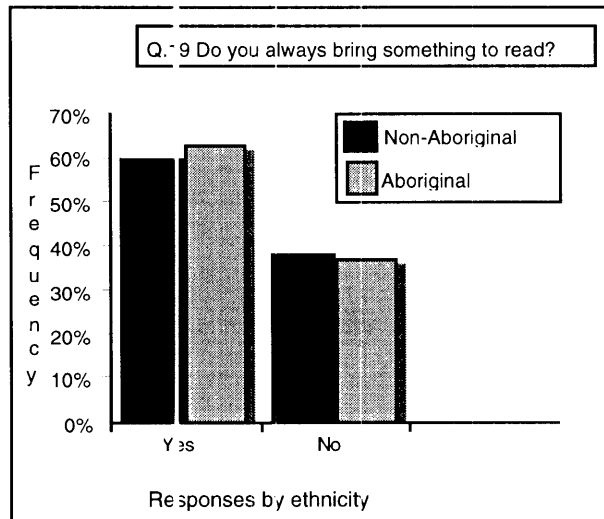


Figure 5.42 Responses to Student Q.19 by ethnicity

More than half the non-Aboriginal student sample responded that they always brought something to read in DEAR. There was very little difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students evident in the graph for this question. Corrected χ^2 applied to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student responses ($p = 0.9693$) (see Appendix H) indicates that there was no significant difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students relating to whether or not they brought something to read in DEAR. Figure 5.43 illustrates differences in responses for item 19 between male and female students.

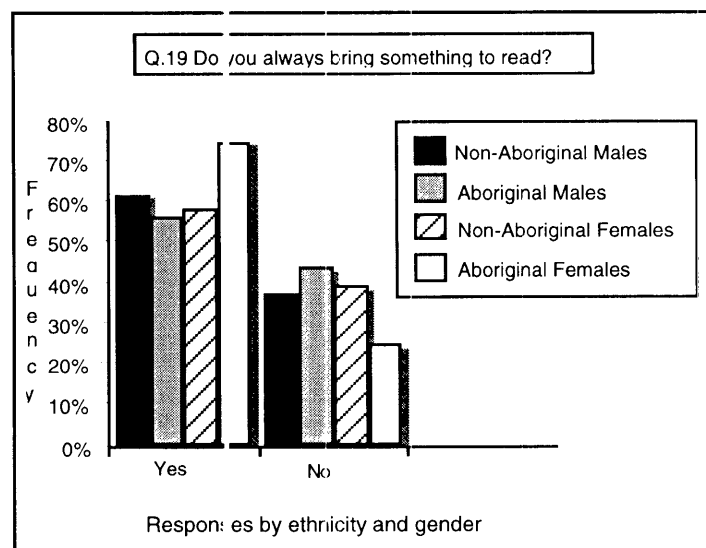


Figure 5.43 Responses to Student Q.19 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.43 clearly shows that there was little difference evident

between male and female students, except for female Aboriginal students, who were more likely to bring something to read in DEAR than any other student group. Aboriginal females obviously had little trouble finding something to read and complying with the school rules for DEAR. This does not support the earlier findings in item 22 (Fig. 5.11) which indicated that more Aboriginal females said that they had trouble finding something to read than Aboriginal males. Aboriginal male students were the least prepared for DEAR. This supports earlier evidence in Q.22 that Aboriginal males had trouble finding something interesting to read in DEAR.

Year 11 Aboriginal students seemed to be the least prepared. Almost three-quarters of them regularly came without books to DEAR (see Appendix F9). Almost half of Year 11 non-Aboriginal males (see Appendix F8) also said that they did not always bring something to read.

Figure 5.44 sets out Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses to item 20 which asked students to nominate what reading materials they usually brought to read in DEAR. Options given were similar to those given in items 7 and 12. They were: book, magazine, comic and newspaper.

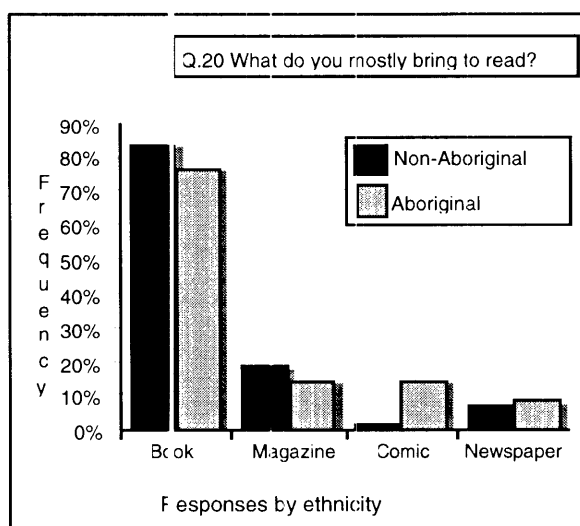


Figure 5.44 Responses to Student Q. 20 by ethnicity

Figure 5.44 indicates that the majority of students were most likely

to bring a book to DEAR. Slightly more non-Aboriginal students brought books to read than did Aboriginal students (see Appendix F10). Similarly non-Aboriginal students brought more magazines than did Aboriginal students. Comics were largely brought to DEAR by Aboriginal students who also brought in more newspapers. The differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in what they brought to read in DEAR did not appear to be marked. Figure 5.45 sets out male and female responses to item 20.

There was a clear trend away from books and towards newspapers from Year 7 to Year 12 among non-Aboriginal students (see Appendix F11). The older they were, the more they were likely to read the paper. Such a trend was not evident among Aboriginal students, although this could have been due to sample size. Junior Aboriginal students in Years 7 to 9 were the comic readers. Newspapers were read by senior Aboriginal students in Yrs 10 and 11. Newspapers read by Aboriginal students were likely to be 'Koori News' and other Aboriginal broadsheets, copies of which were kept by the AEA. Newspapers could have been scanned for sports news which would explain their popularity among males rather than females in both groups. Figure 5.45 illustrates difference in responses between male and female students.

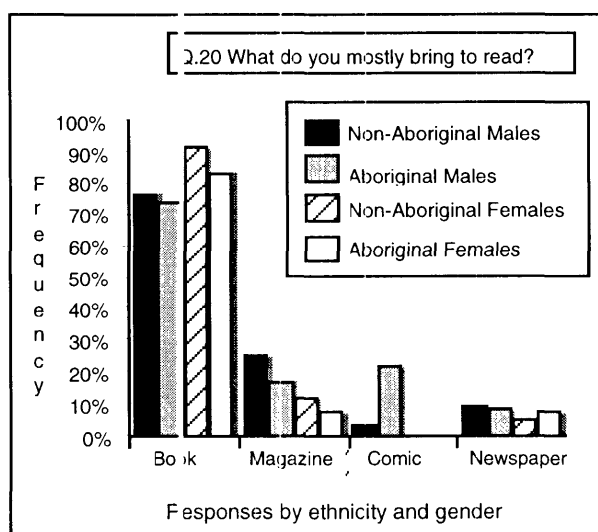


Figure 5.45 Responses to Student Q.20 by ethnicity and gender

It is evident in figure 5.45 that the majority of males and females brought books to read in DEAR. There seemed to be no clear difference in results between males and females apart from a small difference among Aboriginal males and females. Non-Aboriginal males tended to bring more magazines than non-Aboriginal females (see Appendix F10) and Aboriginal males brought comics while Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal females did not. These findings support those of item 7 which found that female students in the sample preferred to read books. Three-quarters of all male students responded that they brought books to read. This finding conflicts with those of item 7 which examined personal reading preferences and found that male students preferred reading magazines to books.

What students prefer to read may be different to what they bring to DEAR. The reason for this rested with teachers, who encouraged students to bring books to DEAR, in line with school guidelines. Their persistence was obviously working, as the number of magazines brought to DEAR was fairly low on observation data.(see Appendix J).

Figure 5.46 sets out Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses to item 21 which asked where students obtained their reading material. There were several named options in this question. These were: the teacher, the school library, the town library, home, a friend and the classroom.

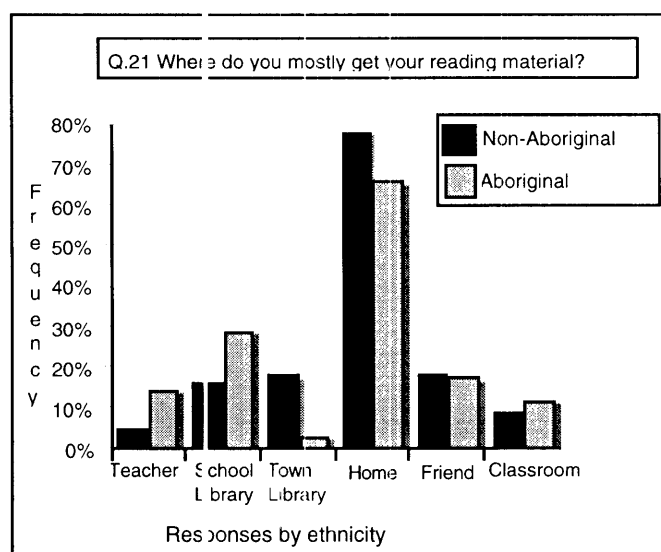


Figure 5.46 Responses to Student Q.21 by ethnicity

Figure 5.46 reveals that the majority of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students bring books from home. Aboriginal students were more reliant on the teacher and school library for reading materials than non-Aboriginal students. Few Aboriginal students use the town library. Survey results support these findings (see Appendix F10). 14 percent of Aboriginal students used the teacher (AEA) compared with 5 percent of non-Aboriginal students. The sample size here may influence conclusions.

Figure 5.47 illustrates differences between male and female students for item 21.

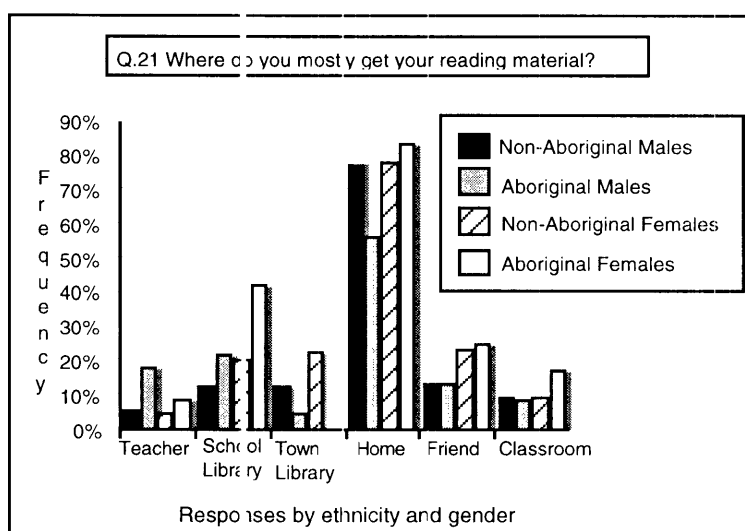


Figure 5.47 Responses to Student Q. 21 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.47 indicated that the town library was most strongly used by a quarter of non-Aboriginal females but not at all by Aboriginal females and by only one Aboriginal male. The school library was used by almost half the Aboriginal females (42 percent) but non-Aboriginal males were least likely to use the school library (12 percent). In the survey results, there was a decline in school library borrowings among non-Aboriginal students from Year 7 to Year 12 (see Appendix G11). There was a general decline from Year 7 to Year 12 in school library borrowings among Aboriginal students as well (see Appendix G12). These results could indicate a decline in reading interest as students become older and support the findings of Pikulski (1984), Russikoff & Pilgreen (1994) and McCoy,

Larson & Higginson (1991) that reading interest declined between the ages of 13 and 17 for adolescents. It could also reflect that the libraries do not stock the new titles that adolescent students are interested in. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal females rated friends fairly highly (higher than the males in item 10) and were more likely to bring books from home. It is possible that books coming from home may also have been borrowed from friends. There may have been a problem in this question with subjective interpretations of the word 'home'.

The classroom was not a popular option, although Aboriginal females relied on the classroom more than any other group. This result was not consistent with that of item 19 which stated that Aboriginal females were more likely than males to bring something to read. It could be that there was a problem with the questionnaire. Aboriginal female students may have circled many options, while Aboriginal males were less forthcoming.

5.3.8 Conclusions to 'Students' Reading Preferences

The most popular reading matter for female students was books. Both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal male students preferred magazines to books. Aboriginal males also had a strong preference for newspapers. Comics were popular with younger Aboriginal males but these were replaced with newspapers as Aboriginal male students became older.

Adventure stories were popular with both males and females. Female students selected mystery stories as their favourite genre while Sports were high on the list for Aboriginal males. Aboriginal females were also keen on reading about sport but non-Aboriginal females were not. Similarly, female students enjoyed reading about Romance but male students did not. None of the student groups enjoyed reading about Science.

Popular authors included R.L.Stine, Stephen King, Paul Jennings, Raold Dahl, Gillian Rubir stein and Virginia Andrews. *Dolly* magazine was popular with junior female students. While the above authors were nominated by a number of students, there was a very large list of titles and authors, indicating that students read very widely and had individual tastes, not being influenced in this respect by their peers. Aboriginal males tended not to have favourite authors, probably due to their lack of interest in reading overall. This contrasted with Aboriginal females whose reading interests were similar to those of non-Aboriginal females.

Most students brought a book to read from home, although this may have been borrowed from either the school or town library or a friend. There was a difference between Aboriginal male and female responses. A number of male Aboriginal students brought comics which were not favoured by female Aboriginal students.

As male students became older, they started reading newspapers which was to be expected. Town library usage was almost exclusively the preserve of non-Aboriginal students. The school library was used strongly by Aboriginal female students but by fewer Aboriginal male students. Aboriginal males appeared to make the least use of available resources, either because they were not interested or because they did not feel comfortable borrowing books from libraries. Perhaps they had problems keeping track of the books they borrowed and as a result had negative experiences. There is scope here for further research.

5.3.9 Gender Differences

There was a definite difference in attitudes between male and female students in the whole student sample for a number of questions and these differences were considered significant when χ^2 was applied to responses. Significant differences between male and female responses were recorded

for items 6, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 22, 28, and 31. These items totalled half the questions to which χ^2 was applied. Therefore one can conclude that there were differences in attitudes to DEAR and to reading interest between male and female students in this sample.

Female students read more outside of DEAR than males and they tended to read books. They preferred mystery stories to other genres and tended to bring books to DEAR rather than other forms of reading materials. They were more aware of the meaning of the acronym DEAR than male students. Female students were also more uncertain of the benefits of DEAR. They rated themselves as better readers and did not feel that DEAR contributed greatly to their interest or improvement in reading, although they felt that reading was important for future careers. Although they were ambivalent about DEAR, they did not want the program to be dropped or to have a time change. They also had less trouble finding something interesting to read during DEAR and made use of the school library.

Male students tended to be more negative towards the DEAR program and they did not read as much in their spare time. They brought more magazines to DEAR than female students and had more trouble finding something interesting to read during DEAR, no doubt due to the fact that they were less inclined to use the school library to borrow books. Male students preferred Adventure stories to Mysteries but tended to rate themselves as poorer readers than female students. They were less sure than females of the value of reading in adult life.

5.3.10 Age Differences

Trends were obvious in several questions showing that attitudes do change in the senior years. Junior students preferred DEAR to seniors, even if more of them did not know what the letters DEAR stood for.

Seniors were more likely to come late and some of them read newspapers rather than books, while none of the juniors read newspapers. School library borrowings also declined with age. Self perception of reading ability showed that Year 10 students have a lower sense of reading ability than other students. This could have something to do with the age-group and their attitudes towards themselves and schooling at that stage of their lives. More juniors than seniors thought that DEAR helped improve their reading skills and made them more interested in reading, while seniors, particularly Year 11 students, were aware of the importance of reading well after leaving school.

5.4 Teacher Attitudes

The research questions which relate to teacher attitudes towards sustained silent reading and the DEAR program are:

- 2 (g) What are the attitudes of teachers at the school to the DEAR program?
- (h) Do their attitudes differ significantly from those of the students?

As the rationale for surveying teachers was to gauge whether the staff were positive or negative towards the DEAR program, it was felt that the responses of the entire body of teachers should be analysed, in making any evaluations, rather than separating their responses into male and female categories. Although teachers were asked which faculties they worked in, this question was included in order to locate staff, should a follow-up be necessary, or to add more information to the analysis where it may have been of interest.

5.4.1 Teacher Attitudes to DEAR

The first block of questions relating to teacher attitudes to the DEAR

program included items 7, 11, 13 and 14 from the teacher questionnaire.

One hundred percent of teachers knew what the acronym DEAR stood for and the majority responded that they liked to supervise the session (see Appendix II) . A quarter of teachers thought that another time could be trialled such as after lunch, but more than two thirds of teachers were happy with the current timeslot. An overwhelming 98 percent of teachers thought that DEAR should not be dropped. Only one teacher, a male member of the Executive, was not sure and would not commit himself without a justification. Reasons given for keeping DEAR were very positive but focused on the fact that DEAR is a profitable time for both students and staff. Students received a chance to read silently at least once a day and teachers felt that reading was fundamental to all subjects. It also offered a peaceful time during the day and one teacher felt that it was good for students from all Year groups to be together for this activity. Only one teacher suggested that the session be changed to DEAL to allow students to study or work in books during the SSR period.

5.4.2 Teacher Attitudes to Reading

The second block of questions relating to teacher attitudes towards reading used items 8 and 9 from the teacher questionnaire.

Ninety-three percent of teachers said that they liked to read in their spare time (see Appendix I). Of the 4 teachers who did not like to read for leisure 3 were males. Although the sample is small, this finding complements student data, which found that females tended to enjoy reading more than males. More than three-quarters of the teacher sample preferred to read novels and there was a fairly even spread of interest in non-fiction, magazines and newspapers. A small number of teachers added subject texts, plays, science-fiction, poetry, catalogues, travel books, journals and basically anything.

5.4.3 Teacher Modelling

The third block of questions relating to teacher modelling during DEAR included items 10, 15, 16 and 17 in the teacher questionnaire and item 23 in the student questionnaire.

Item 10 asked teachers what they usually brought to DEAR and allowed respondents to circle more than one option. Three-quarters of teachers responded that they usually brought a book or a magazine from home (see Appendix I1). Only 12 percent read the newspaper. One quarter read textbooks or school mail while almost half of all teachers read professional books or magazines in some sessions. A small number of teachers read school handouts. An ESL teacher commented that she listened to NESB students read at this time and did not read herself.

Three-quarters of teachers said that they always read during DEAR. This result conflicted with results from item 16 (see Appendix I2), where 41 percent of teachers admitted that they did other things in DEAR. When questioned as to what they did, a quarter said that they talked to students, 14 percent prepared lessons, 7 percent marked books or assignments and 14 percent added other activities. These included supervising peer tutoring, administration, library work and making phone calls, activities which were carried out by teachers without DEAR groups. Six teachers added WAG on Fridays and one teacher organised WAG at the start of DEAR sessions on other days. The filling in of report cover sheets was a common activity just before reports were due and DEAR was the designated time to do this. A small number of teachers admitted that they talked to Practice Teachers during DEAR. These findings were cross-matched with answers given by students to a similar question. Figure 5.48 sets out male and female student responses to item 23 which relate to whether or not teachers read during DEAR, thereby providing modelling for reading behaviour.

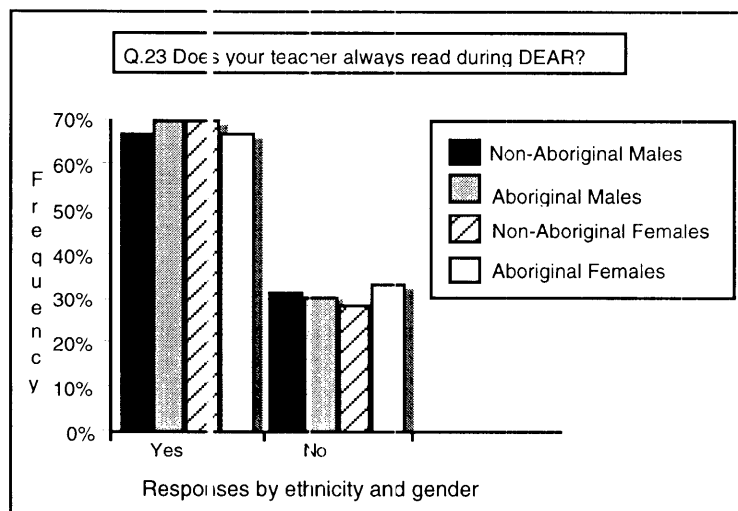


Figure 5.48 Responses to Student Q.23 by ethnicity and gender

Figure 5.48 indicates that three-quarters of all students responded consistently that their teachers read during DEAR (see Appendix F10). These figures validate teacher questionnaire results, where 72 percent of teachers said they always read during DEAR (see Appendix I2). This result was confirmed in student data by year groups (see Appendix F11). Teacher modelling of reading for students occurred at least three-quarters of the time during DEAR sessions. Therefore it cannot be claimed that students lacked suitable role models at school.

5.4.4 Conduct of DEAR

The fourth block of questions related to practical matters in the conduct of DEAR and included items 18, 19 and 20 from the teacher questionnaire.

More than half the teachers said there should be more reading materials available in classrooms (see Appendix I2). When asked what type of materials should be provided, they responded with a number of suggestions (see Appendix I4). Almost half the number of teachers surveyed specifically suggested magazines that could be read quickly. Many teachers recommended novels or other books and a small number

suggested newspapers, comics and poetry. One teacher suggested the bible. Some teachers commented that the provision of reading materials should not be encouraged and that students need to be reminded to bring their own reading materials, as that rule was included in the guidelines for the DEAR program in this particular school.

Two-thirds of teachers claimed that there were problems when students did not bring books (see Appendix I2). When asked how, teachers noted that students sat mindlessly or read bits without interest or continuity, they disturbed others because they were not reading themselves and preferred to socialise. Some teachers said that they kept a supply of books or magazines handy but attempts by teachers to provide reading material was sometimes not successful. They felt that students wasted time making selections from the bookcase and were often not interested in reading other people's material. A minority of teachers admitted that it upset them when students did not bring anything to read during DEAR.

About half the teachers found themselves being distracted (see Appendix I2) during DEAR. They were mostly distracted by students talking or whispering, unsettled students not reading, students eating or writing or coming in late and students mindlessly flipping pages. Outside distractions included noise in the corridor, people going past the room, the telephone and unsupervised DEAR classes making a lot of noise.

5.4.5 Purpose of DEAR

The fifth block of questions related to the purpose of DEAR and included items 12, 22, 24, 26 and 27 from the teacher questionnaire.

The overwhelming majority of teachers stated that the purpose of DEAR was to encourage reading (see Appendix I3), to show that it was an enjoyable activity and to assist in improving literacy. Some respondents suggested that it also allowed for a quiet time which calmed students down

for periods 3 and 4. The opportunity to build rapport between student and teacher and the peer group was also mentioned.

When asked whether it improved reading skills (see Appendix I2), the majority of answers pointed to practise being the key to reading improvement and DEAR provided the opportunity to practise. Some teachers felt that the whole school basis of DEAR gave a positive reinforcement. This was helped by the teacher or other students modelling reading behaviour. Teachers felt that the classroom was an acceptable environment for reading. One teacher suggested that peer tutoring had been very beneficial and another noted that most students were keen to read but there was a problem with Year 11. The intangible nature of DEAR was a problem for one teacher who felt that without testing, s/he was unsure whether DEAR improved skills or not.

Overall, most teachers felt that reading interest increased as reading skills improved and that giving students the opportunity to read should have led to a heightened interest in reading. Once they developed the habit of silent reading, students then began to enjoy the escapism that reading brought and were more likely to continue reading outside of DEAR sessions. One teacher suggested that if students started with magazines or comics, they would then move on to short stories and eventually books.

The best thing about DEAR (see Appendix I6) was the peace and the chance to read during a busy day at school, as time was allocated for it on a whole-school basis and one was almost forced to sit and relax, due to the high profile that DEAR was given in the study school. Some teachers enjoyed the quiet and responded that the school tone improved when students were calmer. Some respondents focused on the educational benefits of DEAR, such as extra knowledge and literacy skills and the socialisation aspects of being in vertical roll groups (groups with students from each year represented). Individual teachers, who did not take DEAR groups, commented that it was a good time to get a phone line out or to get

some valuable preparation done.

The worst thing about DEAR (see Appendix I7), as noted by several respondents was the inconsistent attitude shown by some teachers. This resulted in noisy rooms which distracted classes who were trying to read. Teachers mentioned that they were upset by students who did not read, who distracted others or who treated DEAR as a time for confrontation with the teacher. On the whole teachers would have liked the program to run smoothly. They did not enjoy disciplining reluctant readers and students who interacted and did the wrong thing when unobserved. One teacher commented that having DEAR in a practical workshop was uncomfortable and another teacher complained that WAG was a waste of time as it was poorly organised.

5.4.6 Conclusions to Teacher Attitudes

From the results one could conclude that teachers at the study school were in favour of DEAR continuing as a normal part of the school routine. Most of them were happy with the current timeslot and some felt that DEAR had a calming effect on the students and helped them settle down to their lessons in periods 3 and 4. This was not the reason for DEAR, however, and the overwhelming majority of teachers were aware of the benefits associated with a silent reading period.

Teachers as a profession are expected to enjoy reading, as this is a required skill and necessary in order to fulfil the demands of their jobs. It was not surprising, therefore, to see a large majority say that they enjoyed reading novels. However, the results for what teachers brought to read in DEAR tended to include professional reading matter which most people would not have classified as reading for enjoyment.

There could have been a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the school workplace was sometimes very hectic and it was difficult to find

time to scan the huge amount of professional material that often landed on a teacher's desk. Secondly, the DEAR session was held immediately after recess, when teachers collected mail from their pigeon holes. The temptation to read mail or professional magazines and catalogues was great, especially when there was little awareness of the need to be seen to be reading for enjoyment. Most teachers would have regarded any material as appropriate reading matter but this may not have been correct modelling behaviour.

The confusion between WAG and DEAR spilled over into the student and teacher questionnaires, with some teachers saying that they took WAG on Fridays. This was an issue that needed clarifying and some consistency was required across the school. The problem of organising food for WAG was also mentioned and this was done during DEAR sessions. It would have been better if this organisation were done at Roll time.

The practice in the school has been for students to bring their own books and problems occurred when students failed to do so. There was a dilemma here. Many teachers felt that there should have been a supply of books (or magazines) available for students as a back-up. On the other hand some teachers were worried that this would have created a dependency on teachers and students would have habitually turned up without their own books.

Suggestions for conducting successful SSR programs mentioned in the literature include the ready availability in classrooms of a supply of books which are rotated regularly (Barbe & Abbott 1975). The researcher is of the opinion that this was necessary to ensure that students were being introduced to literature which they might otherwise not know about. All that was available for students to read in some classes were textbooks and very old magazines. It was no wonder that these students showed little interest in reading during DEAR.

While the vast majority of teachers understood why the school had a DEAR session and that there were educational benefits, there was some inconsistency in the practice. This was largely due to the fact that teachers at the study school were, on the whole, unaware of the need for correct teacher modelling of reading behaviour and the need to encourage receptive reading.

In summary, attitudes of teachers to the DEAR program were very positive. They liked the current time-slot and felt that the program benefited both students and staff. Since the vast majority of teachers liked reading novels, they tended to bring a book along to read. On occasions, they would do other things such as read mail or professional books and magazines or prepare lessons. The majority wanted more reading materials to be available in classrooms, to alleviate the problem of students turning up empty-handed which caused friction between teachers and students. Many teachers claimed to be distracted by students doing the wrong thing and outside noises.

The teachers were aware of the purpose of DEAR in encouraging interest and improvement in reading skills through practice. As well as the benefits of extra reading practice, they were happy themselves to have a quiet time in the day to relax with a book. The only drawback to the program was an inconsistent attitude shown by some teachers which resulted in noisy classrooms and very little reading. This often disrupted readers in other rooms nearby. Teachers preferred to avoid conflicts with reluctant readers and were keen to see the program operate consistently across the whole school.

5.4.7 Comparison with Student Attitudes

The research question relating to the difference between student and teacher attitudes to DEAR is:

- (h) Do teacher attitudes differ significantly from those of the students?

Teacher attitudes did not differ significantly from those of the majority of students, who were also happy to see the DEAR program continue. The only major differences were with a minority of individual students, who chose to have a negative attitude and created problems. Such students needed to be informed of the benefits of extra practice in sustained silent reading and they needed to be introduced to a wider range of reading material, so that they would find something interesting to read and begin to enjoy the extra reading time provided by the school.

5.5 Aboriginal Students' Attitudes to DEAR

The research question relating to the difference in attitudes towards DEAR between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students is:

- 3 (a) Do these attitudes differ significantly from those of non-Aboriginal students?

5.5.1 Comparison with non-Aboriginal Students

Aboriginal male students liked going to DEAR more than either non-Aboriginal students or Aboriginal females. A profile of Aboriginal males in the survey showed that they rated themselves as the poorest readers, poorer than Aboriginal females, who tend to rate themselves more in the average category. This differed from the non-Aboriginal group which rated themselves much higher in item 28 (Fig. 5.21). The Aboriginal males also gave the strongest response to wanting a change in time for DEAR, mostly to an after-lunch time slot, while most non-Aboriginal students were happy with the current time.

They were more likely to come late than non-Aboriginal students or

Aboriginal females. The tendency to come late increased with age, with older students being the worst offenders. Lateness appeared to have more to do with a lack of punctuality and organisation, rather than a negative attitude to DEAR.

They were also least inclined to bring something to read, especially the older males, who were most dependent on the teacher for supplying reading material. This differed markedly from non-Aboriginal students and Aboriginal females, who nearly always brought something to read and utilised the school library. Interestingly, the school library was used least by non-Aboriginal males. One worrying finding is the low use of the town library by Aboriginal students compared with non-Aboriginal students. Many Aboriginal students said they brought books from home. There is an ambiguity here as it is possible that the material may have been borrowed but kept at home at the time of the survey. There is scope here to do a further survey on the buying/borrowing habits of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Younger Aboriginal males liked reading comics and Aboriginal males also favoured reading newspapers like 'Koori News'. The male preference for newspapers possibly had more to do with sporting results, than with an interest in news. Aboriginal students tended to have more trouble than non-Aboriginal students in finding something interesting to read. Obviously, if they did not use the town library, this would have limited their resources.

Aboriginal males were also more inclined to do other things in DEAR such as talk, draw, write notes or eat, rather than read. This was a logical outcome, if they were turning up without reading material. However, they were least inclined to do homework or study for tests, an option mentioned by non-Aboriginal students. Although Barbe & Abbott (1975) recommended 100+ books being available for DEAR, it was school policy to encourage self-reliance in students by not having many books

available in classrooms. This policy may change as teachers also feel that more books should be provided, in order to avoid the frictions that arose when students did not bring books. More Aboriginal students suggested that they preferred the provision of magazines to books which differed from responses by non-Aboriginal students and teachers, who preferred books. Magazines were probably perceived as being easier to read and would therefore have been more popular with poor or average readers.

Aboriginal males were most likely to be distracted, in contrast to Aboriginal females, who appeared to be able to 'tune out' of the noises around them. The Aboriginal males were mostly distracted by other students. This was an undesirable situation as about a third of the Aboriginal males did not read outside of DEAR, far more than either non-Aboriginal students or Aboriginal females. Aboriginal males did realise that DEAR was important to them and that it helped them to improve their reading skills and their interest in reading. They were more likely to admit these benefits than either non-Aboriginal students or Aboriginal females. However, their motivation to succeed was hampered by their limited view of reading as a vocational skill. They were least inclined to regard good reading skills as being a help to them when they left school, no doubt due to pessimistic employment aspirations and perhaps a lack of positive male role-modelling in their families.

On the other hand Aboriginal females responded similarly to non-Aboriginal females in many questions. They appeared to be aware of the benefits of a good education and also appeared to fit in with the mainstream of secondary students in this study.

In summary, the attitudes of female Aboriginal students were similar to the attitudes of non-Aboriginal students, but the attitudes of male Aboriginal students were different.

5.5.2 Comparison with NESB Students

The rationale for identifying NESB students in the survey was to determine if the NESB students at this rural High School identified in attitudes towards reading with the Aboriginal students in the sample. It must be stated that the NESB students are possibly atypical of most NESB groups in that many are the children of post-graduate university students or overseas students attending an Australian school. Results of the survey showed that overall, the NESB student results were more consistent with those of the non-Aboriginal sample and were therefore included in the non-Aboriginal sample rather than being singled out for comparison. An examination of the survey results which led to this course of action is outlined below.

The research question which related to whether or not Non English Speaking Background students had similar attitudes to the DEAR program to Aboriginal students is:

- 3 (b) Do these attitudes differ significantly from those of Non English Speaking Background (NESB) students?

A comparison of results between the Aboriginal and NESB groups (Appendices F, G) indicated that Aboriginal students in this school do not identify with NESB students. In fact the NESB students responded in a similar manner to non-Aboriginal students in almost every question.

If one examines the data for the various responses (Appendices F1-16), the NESB figures showed that most liked to read in their spare time, and they preferred books to magazines. They were less likely to have favourite authors than non-Aboriginal students but more likely than Aboriginal students. A comparison of preferred genres showed that both non-Aboriginal and NESB males liked Adventure most and Romance least, while females favoured Mystery most and Science least. In contrast

Aboriginal males selected Sports first, while NESB males gave it third priority. Aboriginal females, also rated Sports third, but non-Aboriginal females NESB females rated Sports second last on the list (item 8). Biographies and non-fiction were mentioned by non-Aboriginal and NESB students but not by Aboriginal students. Paul Jennings, but not R.L. Stine, was popular with NESB students, along with Raold Dahl, Stephen King and Virginia Andrews. Aboriginal students did not mention the last three authors.

Computers, Music and Reading were listed as leisure time pursuits by NESB students, but left out totally by Aboriginal students. Fewer NESB students had a job than non-Aboriginal students but they read slightly more. Their parents also tended to read more than the parents of non-Aboriginal students and books figured strongly in their parents' preferences. NESB parents, particularly those of females, were strong newspaper readers also. None of the NESB parents read comics unlike Aboriginal parents. Their children also claimed to have many books at home although NESB females responded that they did not. There could have been a difference in their interpretation of the word 'many'. NESB students preferred going to DEAR more than either of the Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal students.

They were generally happy to maintain the current time slot for DEAR, rarely came late and were strongly against DEAR being dropped which was closer to the non-Aboriginal response than the Aboriginal. They were more likely to bring something to read to DEAR than Aboriginal students, preferring to bring books and showing no interest in comics, one of the preferences made by Aboriginal students. They were also more likely to use the town library than Aboriginal students, who hardly used the library at all. NESB students also had less trouble finding something interesting to read during DEAR than Aboriginal students.

NESB students were less likely to do other things in DEAR, in

marked contrast to Aboriginal students. They were also less likely to be distracted and were more likely to read outside of DEAR. Their self-perceptions of personal reading ability were higher than those of the Aboriginal group but were slightly lower than those of non-Aboriginal students. They believed that DEAR helped them to improve their reading and that it made them more interested in reading. They also have similar attitudes to non-Aboriginal students towards the importance of reading in adult life.

In summary, the Aboriginal students surveyed did not identify closely with the NESB students surveyed, who themselves identified more with non-Aboriginal students. NESB students liked to read in their spare time and they read books rather than magazines. They preferred similar authors and had similar leisure pursuits to non-Aboriginal students. They rarely came late to DEAR, nearly always brought books, used the town library and didn't have much trouble finding something interesting to read. They were least likely to be distracted during DEAR and rarely did other things. They rated themselves as better readers than Aboriginal students and were most likely to admit the benefits of DEAR in helping them to improve their reading and to gain a higher interest in reading. They also believed that good reading skills would be of help to them when they left school.

5.5.3 Aboriginal Students' Attitudes to Reading

The research question relating to the attitudes of Aboriginal students towards sustained silent reading is:

- 3 (c) What are their attitudes towards reading in general?
 Do they read similar material?

Aboriginal males were least likely to read in their spare time and those that did read outside of school overwhelmingly preferred magazines

to books. Aboriginal females, as was the case for their non-Aboriginal counterparts, preferred books. Aboriginal males showed a strong preference for reading about Sports, rating that above everything else. Aboriginal females were interested in Mystery stories, the same as non-Aboriginal females.

Aboriginal males were least likely to have a favourite author, unlike Aboriginal females. Stephen King, a favourite with non-Aboriginal students was not mentioned at all by Aboriginal students. However, Aboriginal students did mention R.L.Stine and Paul Jennings who are both popular mainstream authors. Cleo, Cosmo, Dolly and TV Hits were magazine titles mentioned by Aboriginal students. The range of authors and titles nominated by Aboriginal students was quite small compared with the list nominated by other students.

Aboriginal students also had a more limited range of outside interests, compared with non-Aboriginal students and none of the Aboriginal students mentioned reading as a leisure-time activity. The parents of Aboriginal males preferred reading newspapers to books, while the parents of Aboriginal females read an equal mix of books and newspapers. In comparison, non-Aboriginal parents were much stronger book readers. Aboriginal males also had the least number of books at home, while Aboriginal females responded that they had a similar number of books to non-Aboriginal households. The home backgrounds may have an influence on the reading attitudes of male and female Aboriginal students in this study or perhaps the question may have been interpreted differently with female Aboriginal students being more likely to say they have books at home. There is scope here for further research.

5.5.4 Conclusions to Aboriginal Students' Attitudes

The results of this survey show that the DEAR program was perceived to be beneficial by most of the students in this study. While there

had been some erosion of the rules since it was first implemented, the program was accepted by both students and staff.

The study demonstrates that there was a difference in attitudes towards the DEAR program and reading in general, between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. While that difference was not marked for Aboriginal females, who demonstrated similar attitudes to mainstream non-Aboriginal females, the attitudes of Aboriginal males were consistently divergent from mainstream non-Aboriginal males. They did not identify with NESB students either, and appeared to form a distinct ethnic group, with shared attitudes.

Aboriginal males did show some resistance to the DEAR program, but at the same time, they appreciated the benefits that silent reading time did give them and would have been unhappy for the program to be dropped. Since for many of them, this was the only time they practised silent reading, it was an essential program in their education. Their problems would have seemed to stem from a lack of organisation and knowing how to access resources.

Outside of school, the home environment and expectations in their community may be more encouraging for Aboriginal males to succeed on the sporting field rather than academically. Such attitudes will only change when personal role-models change. One factor, highlighted in this study, was the limited access Aboriginal students had to social groupings, often frequented by middle-class students, who shared an interest in music. A second factor leading to vocational disadvantage was their limited access to computers outside of school. A third factor was their lack of access to the public library.

If Aboriginal male students are to compete in the workplace, they need to be equipped with those skills which will allow them to cope with technological change and to present themselves as confident and competent.

The ability to read well is an essential skill in the post-industrial society.

The next chapter summarises conclusions drawn from the research about the DEAR program in the study school and the attitudes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students towards sustained silent reading. Several recommendations are made for an improvement in the conduct of the program in the study school and a postscript notes what steps the school has already taken in implementing those recommendations. The chapter concludes with a list of ideas for further research in this topic area which have arisen as a result of this study.