

Adolescent feelings towards authority

Sir, – The recent paper by Williams *et al*¹ expressed reassurance regarding the feelings of adolescents towards those in authority. Whilst this may be true of the adolescents whom they were able to question, no information is available on eighteen (16%) of the pupils in the two years. Those who regularly truant and those who have been suspended are likely to be absent – in other words, the non-responders are unlikely to be typical of all the pupils these non-responders should have been followed up. It is possible that only half of those with negative feelings towards authority were in the school on the day of the survey. This, of course, may also have affected other findings.

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Authors' reply

Sir, – Mr. Smeeton makes a valid point when he draws attention to the potential influence of non-responders on the results of medical studies. With regard to the recent paper by Williams *et al*¹ it was found that the majority of respondents 83% (76/92) were pro-authority. If as Mr. Smeeton suggests, we accept that all those non-responders (N=18) were anti-authority (and this is very debatable) it still remains that most of the adolescents 69% (76/110) would be pro-authority in attitude.

Hugh Williams, MB, MRC, Psych.
Michael Fitzgerald, MB, MRC, Psych.
Anthony Kinsella, FIS.M.Sc.

Reference

1. Williams H, Fitzgerald M & Kinsella A. Psychological Distress & Attitudes to Authority in a Sample of Irish Adolescents. *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine* 1989; 6: 37-40.

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References

1. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals. *Br Med J* 1988; 296: 401-5.
2. Bailar JC, Mosteller F. Guidelines for statistical reporting in articles for medical journals. *Ann Intern Med* 1988; 108: 266-273.
3. Bourke GJ, Daly LE, McGilvray J. Interpretation and uses of medical statistics. 3rd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1985: 315-319.
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