

BULLYING

The Child's View

Jean La Fontaine

*An analysis of telephone calls
to ChildLine about bullying*

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This study has benefited from the help of many other people. Sally Morris has done so much of the work that her name should really be on the front cover with mine. Esther Rantzen, Valerie Howarth, Hereward Harrison, Barbara Lees of ChildLine and Simon Richey of the Gulbenkian Foundation have all read drafts and I have profited by their comments. I am very grateful to them all but the final responsibility for the study must be mine.

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ChildLine is the free national helpline for children in trouble or danger. It provides a telephone counselling service for any child with any problem, 24 hours a day, every day.

FOREWORD

The Gulbenkian Foundation's Education Programme has recently addressed the problem of bullying in schools. We did this for two reasons. There was evidence that bullying was still all too common in schools, even if this was seldom fully acknowledged; and evidence too that the majority of schools and local authorities had yet to adopt measures designed to reduce it systematically. Our policy was to produce, or help others to produce, a wide range of materials for teachers, governors, parents and young people that would help them deal constructively with the problem and, at the same time, to assist innovative projects 'on the ground'. Among the latter was a special Bullying Line for school pupils, set up by ChildLine in the Spring of 1990. The Foundation subsequently funded an analysis of the calls made to the Line. We also supported an analysis of the calls concerned with bullying made to a special Boarding School Line, established by ChildLine in the following year.

This report brings together the results of these two investigations and considers their significance. Because the Foundation had an early association with the initiatives that the report describes, it seemed appropriate it should eventually appear as one of our own publications. We believe that it will make an especially useful contribution to our understanding of the problem of bullying, not least because the voices most often heard in this report are children's voices.

Simon Richey

*Assistant Director, Education
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INTRODUCTION

There is a belief among adults that if bullies are ignored they will stop bullying; others think that bullying is an inevitable phase of childhood that will pass without their intervention. Still others think that all children must learn 'to stand up for themselves', so that adult intervention to protect victims of bullies would merely inhibit a valuable social lesson. The material presented here throws serious doubts on these beliefs. Adult intervention may be inept or inadequate, but it can be effective and children often need adult help. If help is offered early and with insight, it may involve little effort for the adult and much relief for the child.

Some bullying is very serious indeed. Theft, with or without the use of force, and violence represent major behavioural and social disorders that require swift action to stop. More than that, however, to ensure long-term settlement of the problem, the assessment and treatment of the bullies must be seen as equally necessary as the protection of the victims.

Boarding school children who talk about bullying make clear that problems are different in their closed environment: children may be more closely supervised and less often left to their own devices compared with children who must walk home from school through streets where they may be alone and vulnerable. There is also the inability to escape by going home, the absence of parental support, and vulnerability all day - and even at night.

ChildLine, in regularly listening to children talking about their problems, their anxieties and worries, has accumulated not merely a considerable expertise in helping children but a mass of material about how children see the difficulties they encounter. ChildLine has developed this unique position as the main direct source of information from children.

This study of bullying relies on information collected during the course of counselling children on the telephone. The stories the children told were offered spontaneously when describing their problems; they were not responses to adult questions, which cannot but reflect adult views and preoccupations. The value of the data provided here lies in the fact that it was collected directly from the child at the child's instigation, and therefore represents the child's view.

The problem of bullying is widespread, it causes much distress and may be difficult to deal with. While much adult writing on the topic is concerned with defining bullying, the following pages show that children may consider a much wider variety of situations as bullying. Thus there is no attempt in what follows to exclude anything reported by the children because it did not fit in with what adults might define as bullying.

In supporting these studies of bullying, the Gulbenkian Foundation has recognised the importance of research that takes account of children's views. Listening to children is not only significant in helping solve their problems; it may also help us to understand them better.

Valerie Howarth

*Executive Director
ChildLine*

1. BACKGROUND

ChildLine's aim is to offer comfort and protection to children suffering from a wide range of problems. This activity also generates information about children's worries and their problems. One of the most important of these is being bullied. During the first three and a half years of ChildLine's existence over 91,000 records of telephone calls and several thousand letters were accumulated. Over 3,000 of these were about bullying. While this was not a large proportion of the total, there was a strong impression that the calls received were only the tip of the iceberg.

ChildLine decided to open a special telephone line, the Bullying Line, and the Gulbenkian Foundation kindly agreed to fund it. The Bullying Line opened on 1 March and stayed open until 31 May 1990. Information and posters about the Line, giving its special number, were distributed to local education authorities to inform schools throughout Britain. A total of 8,000 posters were sent out from ChildLine. The Bullying Line was also publicised in the media and on the television programme *That's Life*. While this publicity was intended to reach all children, it seems to have been more successful in reaching children in day schools (probably because of the use of local education authorities to distribute posters to schools), rather than the sizeable minority who go to boarding schools.

In January 1991, following a TV programme about sexual abuse in one boarding school, the Department of Education and Science funded a special telephone line run by ChildLine for children in boarding schools. It ran from January to 31 July 1991. Publicity materials were sent to all heads of schools with boarding facilities. The calls on the Boarding School Line showed that bullying was the most common problem.

Counsellors at ChildLine use two forms for recording telephone calls: first, 'the call record', or 'log'; and second, the 'case-note'. All calls, including those that do not reach a counsellor are logged automatically. The records provide a tally of calls taken by counsellors, including brief and inconclusive calls, while the case-note records details of longer calls where the counsellor engaged the child in conversation. There were over 7,600 logged calls to the Bullying Line and 10,315 logged calls to the Boarding School Line but only 2,054 and 1,012 respectively gave sufficient information for case-notes to be written. The difference between the numbers of logs and of case-notes reflects the many silent and inconclusive calls which are a feature of ChildLine and other telephone helplines.

This study is based on the 2,054 case-notes generated by calls to the Bullying Line and 213 Boarding School Line case-notes about bullying. The latter formed 19% of the case-notes generated by the Boarding School Line. Case-notes on the Boarding School Line were classified as about bullying according to a wide definition established by the study of the Bullying Line. The material from the two lines is thus comparable, although there are many fewer case-notes from the second Line and, of course, some boarding school pupils may have called the Bullying Line. The number fully justifies ChildLine's concern: bullying is a problem for a large number of children.

This study analyses the information obtained over two periods: three months in 1990 and six months in 1991. The Boarding School Line number was the same as the one that had been used the year before for the Bullying Line, which may have encouraged a few day school children to use it to talk about bullying. It may also have encouraged boarders to use it to talk about bullying, *though there is not enough evidence to decide whether that was the case or not.* In addition, information collected by questionnaire from children in a representative sample of boarding schools provides some views of children who are not themselves necessarily involved in bullying. They confirm the impression given by the victims of bullying that the children see a telephone helpline as useful for providing help to those being bullied.

The study first describes the callers, their gender and ages, where they are bullied and who the bullies are. Information about who had been told about the bullying, what they did and the effect of their intervention, were also included in the case-notes; these accounts show that many adults do not intervene or that even where they are prepared to take action, they do not know what to do or cannot intervene effectively.

The main body of the report focuses on the meaning of 'bullying' implicit in the range of children's reports. Boarding schools present special problems, also some advantages, both of which are discussed. The conclusions suggest some hypotheses to be tested by research and implications for the schools themselves. These concern the social relationships of children and the pressure peers put on one another; kinds of bullying, including bullying by brothers and sisters; differences in bullying according to age as well as gender. While the various points that the report makes are illustrated by typical cases, in all of them the names of the children and other details have been changed to preserve their anonymity.

2. THE RESULTS FROM THE LINES

In three months the Bullying Line yielded over 2,000 records of calls, two thirds of the total number that had accumulated over the previous three and a half years. This evidence showed a greater need than had been possible to cater for on ChildLine's '1111' line, so the action in setting up the Line had plainly been justified.

The case-notes relating to bullying generated by the Boarding School Line calls were fewer since bullying was only one of the problems children telephoned to discuss. It also became clear that younger children might not have access to a telephone and that even in cases where there was a telephone for pupils' use, the lack of privacy and quiet might mean that children would hesitate to use them for discussing private problems: a boy who filled in one of the questionnaires which ChildLine distributed to evaluate the Line said so. Nevertheless over 10,000 calls were made to the Line, resulting in 1,000 case-notes.

The information on bullying contained in the case-notes from the Bullying and Boarding School Lines is rather different from that collected by previous research into the subject. The most obvious feature of ChildLine's information is that it is relatively uninfluenced by adult perceptions of the problem. When adults study bullying, they usually start by defining what they mean by bullying; their views on the problem determine how it is to be discussed and colour the questions asked of children. Even where there is more unstructured discussion, the adult will define the topic first. In this case, while the name of the Bullying Line indicated the problem it aimed to address, there was no definition of what bullying was or how the children were expected to talk about it. As a result, the behaviour they described covered a wider range of behaviour than is usual in studies of bullying.

The children could talk to ChildLine counsellors without saying who they were and could be sure of complete confidentiality about what they said. Some researchers have noted that anonymous questionnaires obtain more information about bullying than techniques in which the child is identified. The confidentiality of the two Lines may well have allowed children to reveal what direct questioning might not have discovered. Indeed children answering the survey questionnaire often gave the anonymity and confidentiality of the Boarding School Line as a reason why they thought it useful. Yet as the following pages will make clear, much of the information from the Bullying Line and Boarding School Lines confirms, rather than contradicts, current research.

The available research on bullying in Britain is based on particular schools and these have all been day schools. Bullying in boarding schools or schools of a very different type from those studied may not be the same. It is hard to apply conclusions from these studies to the nation's children as a whole. By contrast, this study is drawn from the national population and includes both day school and boarding school pupils. Although the callers on the Bullying and Boarding School Lines were not chosen as a representative sample of children and this study does not pretend to be a national survey of bullying, it is the nearest to a national survey in the literature of bullying so far. Such surveys are, in any case, rare; so far, only Norway has attempted to assess the problem nationally. Nevertheless the large number of cases in the Bullying Line's records ensures that there can be some confidence in the conclusions that are reached. The Boarding School Line was set up for a different purpose (to listen to any problems rather than just bullying), and for a different constituency (children in boarding schools rather than any children). The data it has provided on bullying confirm, in many respects, the conclusions already reached by the study of the Bullying Line material, as well as indicate certain differences in the problem that may relate to boarding schools in particular. Together, the material provides an unusually broad picture of what children call bullying.

Finally, the data differ from normal research data in that they have been collected as a byproduct of another activity: counselling. Listening to, and helping, the caller took precedence over getting answers to any questions. Where callers did not want to give their names and ages or indicate where they lived or which school they went to, there was no pressure on them to do so. Thus many of the records were incomplete, and all the tables and diagrams have a column showing 'no data'. The amounts of missing data are probably larger than would be normal for the results of 'pure' research. Any conclusions from this study must therefore be considered tentative.

3. THE CALLERS

By far the largest number of calls came from children; 85% of the records on the Bullying Line and 99% of those of the Boarding School Line were of children's calls about their own problems. A very small percentage, a mere 1% and 3% respectively, were from children who said they were telephoning on behalf of a friend who was being bullied. The adults who featured in the rest of the calls were: on the Bullying Line, mostly parents calling on behalf of their children, and on the Boarding School Line either adults recalling their own boarding school days or school staff wanting information or to express their opinions of the Line. A small number of adults also called the Bullying Line to recall having bullied or been bullied in childhood, and some teachers and other professionals telephoned for information about bullying or to ask advice about how to deal with it. Adults calling the Boarding School Line raised a wider range of issues than just bullying, but some of them were concerned with it, either that they had suffered or that children they knew were involved. Adult calls, except for the very first category which do reveal current cases of bullying, are not included.

3.1 THE GENDER OF CALLERS

Table I shows the proportions of boys and girls whose calls were recorded in case-notes from the two Lines.

Table I: *Children calling the Bullying and Boarding School Lines by gender*

	Bullying Line		Boarding School Line	
	no.	%	no.	%
Girls	1,335	65	152	71
Boys	575	28	61	29
No data	144	7	0	0
TOTAL	2,054	100	213	100

Almost two thirds (65%) of the children whose calls were recorded or who were mentioned in calls to the Bullying Line were girls; only 28% were boys; in a small proportion of cases, 7%, the child's sex was not recorded. On the Boarding School Line, despite the predominance of boys in boarding

schools, girls formed an even larger proportion of the callers about bullying. Nearly three-quarters of those who called about bullying were girls, less than a third were boys.

It is not possible to be sure of the reasons for this bias towards girls. Girls may actually suffer more from bullying than boys, despite evidence from other studies to the contrary. The fact that this uneven sex ratio is roughly consistent with the gender pattern of ChildLine's main helpline, where girls also outnumber boys, would seem to indicate that it is merely that girls are more likely to take advantage of an opportunity to talk to someone in confidence about a problem than boys are, and that this is also true for bullying. However, bullying accounts for 20% of the problems girls rang the Boarding School Line about but only 16% of the boys', which lends some support to the view that bullying (as defined by children) is a slightly greater problem for girls.

It is equally possible that some research defines bullying in such a way as to exclude from consideration much of the behaviour from which girls suffer and that they perceive as bullying. Thus, when children are allowed to define bullying, girls have something to talk about. For example, whether on the Bullying Line or the Boarding School Line, girls seem to be more involved in psychological bullying: excluding victims from a group of friends or picking on them for no apparent reason. Were one to use many of the definitions current in research, much of this behaviour would not be included as bullying. In other definitions bullying is defined as long-term; about twice as many girls as boys reported recent bullying (see p 17) so that if it is true that girls may suffer from short-term bullying, such a definition might also exclude more bullying problems suffered by girls than by boys.

3.2 THE AGE OF CALLERS

If bullying is a problem that 'sorts itself out' or disappears with age, then one would expect there to be fewer older children being bullied. The evidence from this study is inconclusive. Table II compares the ages of children calling the two Lines about bullying and shows that the great majority in both cases were between 11 and 13.

A higher proportion of children over 13 called the Boarding School Line about bullying (27% as opposed to 19% on the Bullying Line) but the difference is not great. It seems to be the result of the relatively large numbers of older boys who telephoned the Boarding School Line; among those who complained of being bullied there were nearly as many over 13 (25) as under 13 (26). In addition far fewer younger children telephoned the Boarding School Line. The proportion of older children who are bullied appears to be a distinctive feature of the Boarding School Line but the numbers of cases are small, so it may not be significant.

The predominance of children in the middle age-range does not necessarily imply that there is more bullying at this period of childhood. There is evidence in the case-notes that victims older than 13 were often reluctant to try to get help because they felt that they should deal with it themselves. They were afraid that if they told someone they would be laughed at for being unable to cope. One

example of this was provided by a 14 year-old boy who called the Bullying Line. James was being shouted at in the street by class mates who ran at him and grabbed his sandwiches, throwing them around and stamping on them. He said he would like to talk to his parents but he would be too embarrassed to tell them about it. If this attitude is general among older children, it would account for the very sharp fall in the numbers of calls from children over the age of 13.

Table II: Callers by age-groups

	Bullying Line	Boarding School Line
	%	%
6 yrs & under	2	0
7-10	18	6
11-13	50	58
14 & over	19	27
No data	11	9

Children of ten and under who are at boarding school may not have access to a telephone for private calls, or must ask permission to use a telephone. Some heads of preparatory boarding schools discourage the use of the telephone by pupils, feeling that it may make them more homesick if they can talk to their parents. In fact, there are probably rather few preparatory schools where children under the age of ten may telephone at will and in complete privacy, so that the tiny proportion of the callers (6%) who were of that age is not surprising: it merely reflects this situation.

Children under ten who telephoned the Bullying Line about being bullied form about the same proportion of the total as the over-13s, but in their case the reason for the small number of calls is likely to be different. They may feel shy about speaking to a stranger even on the telephone or be unsure about how to use it. The very small number of very young children (aged six and under) calling the Bullying Line is much more certainly due to being unable to use a telephone. The fact that some mothers called the Bullying Line themselves to enable their children to speak to the counsellors, supports this general conclusion that a telephone helpline may be less useful to very young children.

4. WHAT BULLYING MEANS TO CHILDREN

Various adult definitions of bullying are current in the growing literature on bullying. One in common use is Roland's (1989), which defines bullying as long-standing violence. This implies that short-lived incidents victimising children are excluded. Yet many of the children who telephoned the Bullying Line or who complained to the Boarding School Line about being bullied were referring to quite recent incidents. Whether this behaviour would continue and become bullying in Roland's definition could not be known. The children quite clearly thought that it already qualified to be counted as bullying.

Tattum & Herbert, in their book of advice to parents, governors and staff in schools (1990), focus on the bully's intentions, defining bullying as '...the wilful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone'. In other definitions there seems to be a similar attempt at separating bullying from less serious forms of behaviour common among children. Some teasing may be dismissed by adults as insignificant and children are frequently told to ignore it, but it may cause considerable pain. Earlier work by Pearce relates bullying to teasing and fighting as forms of aggression, but still picks out bullying as involving 'the intention or threat to hurt'. By implication, behaviour that causes distress, but is not intended to do so, is not bullying. Yet, what is often referred to as teasing sometimes appears indifferent to the feelings of the victim; it seems aimed at exciting the admiration or laughter of other children who, by providing an audience for the bully, participate, albeit passively, in the bullying.

The children who called the two Lines emphasised the effects of bullying rather than the intentions of the bullies. What they were concerned about were the actions or words and the feelings they generated. Counsellors helped them to express their feelings of hurt and fear, which the children, particularly those in boarding schools, sometimes felt they should not have. In one incident reported to the Boarding School Line a child of nine told how other children in her dormitory threw her teddy bears out of the window. She said 'I know it's silly but I do mind'. Others who were the victims of longer-lasting or more cruel bullying, described the misery and fear that prevented them working or doing well in exams.

Children considered a wide range of behaviour to be bullying, ranging from teasing to serious physical harm. There is, however, a common thread. While in the literature on bullying it is common to find bullying linked with aggressiveness, that is with the bullies' expression of feelings, many of these children also seemed to perceive it as an act conveying a message: one of rejection and hostility. Bullying may serve to demonstrate to the victim that (s)he has no friends, while the instigator of the bullying can mobilise a group of supporters. The bullied child then feels isolated and lonely.

The victim of bullying also feels powerless. This may be because the bullies are in fact more powerful, being older, larger or more numerous, or because the victim has no allies and is isolated. The frequency with which children are bullied by more than one other child (see below, Section 7)

suggests that their feelings of weakness are often all too real. Bullying is a demonstration of superior power, whether it consists of the greater strength of one bully or the numbers of a group of allies (see W Dainton-Rogers in Elliott 1991). When a child is faced with a group of other children, particularly when these children are older, strategies to 'empower' the victim by building up his or her self-confidence may be inappropriate, because it does not change the balance of power in the situation.

Victims of bullying were prone to see the cause of bullying in themselves, to express the feeling that there is something the matter with them. In some cases children reported that they were called names and saw these names as indicating 'reasons' for the bullying. They reported that they were bullied 'because' they were fat, small for their age, had ginger hair and spots, were dyslexic, had started to menstruate earlier than peers, had shabby clothes, had new shoes or clothes that were too smart; the list was varied. It appears that any feature that makes one child different from the others may be used in bullying. It is not clear if these are the causes of the bullying.

In other cases there has been a quarrel or friends have fallen out with one another. (The relationship is recognised as hostile by both sides but one might guess that there would be differences of opinion among the children concerned about the origin of the enmity.) Sometimes the bullying is a punishment for a breach of loyalty, particularly for informing staff about another child. The fear of being a 'grass' seems stronger in boarding schools than among the children who called the Bullying Line, who were mostly afraid of the bullies knowing that they had told and taking revenge for it. One boy telephoned the Boarding School Line in great distress because his friend was to be expelled. Apart from the misery of losing a friend, he was suffering because the rest of the class thought that he had been the one who had 'told' about the misdemeanour and therefore were bullying him about it. The common feature of all these cases is that the victim is made to feel alone and vulnerable.

Both boys and girls suffer bullying resulting from problems in their relationships with school-mates, some of whom are, or have been, friends. This is much more common among girls, or perhaps girls find it easier to talk about. One girl, in a fairly typical incident, reported to the Bullying Line that *she had fallen out with a girl-friend, who then encouraged all their mutual friends to bully and tease her.*

Some forms of bullying seem to be demonstrations of the norms of children's social groups, the bullying outlaws and punishes those who do not conform. The bullying follows the victim's refusal to conform with his or her peers; this may be in dress or in behaviour. Pressure may be put on a child to smoke; if he or she refuses the group reacts with merciless teasing and exclusion of the nonconformist. An example is provided by a case-note from the Bullying Line:

Sue complained that she was being bullied by her friends. Her 'mates' were calling her 'slut' and 'cheap' because she had highlights in her hair and 'dressed up' too much.

There are other instances in the records of both Lines of children being bullied for wearing clothes that do not comply with what is expected by the others. Some children complained to the Bullying

Line that they were bullied when they refused to agree to proposed action they wanted no part of: usually truanting, but sometimes smoking. The bullying was then seen as a punishment for refusing to conform.

Some of the children who telephoned the Boarding School Line about bullying had clearly failed to fit into the school community. One child was in a very sports-minded school but was himself artistic and musical, talents which were not appreciated by his schoolmates. A small number telephoned because they were homesick; such calls were not confined to children who had recently gone to boarding school. There were also a few who had never settled into boarding school life; their existence was recognised by many of the children who responded to the Boarding School Line survey. These children frequently said that the Line would be useful for those who hated boarding school, although they did not see themselves as one of that category.

Children may be made more vulnerable to bullying by standing out from among the others. Bullying may also prevent new pupils establishing friendly relationships with the other children and integrating within the group. Even if children do not stand out to begin with, the effect of any bullying is to isolate them, making them a target for scorn and ridicule and causing them to suffer great loneliness. The characteristic demeanour of the bullied child which is sometimes seen as provoking bullying attacks may be a reaction to this exclusion. Where boarding school separates children from parents and, as often happens, also from siblings, this isolation becomes intolerable and may lead to their running away.

Ten percent of the incidents reported by girls to the Bullying Line and the same percentage of those recorded in Boarding School Line case-notes involved the behaviour of friends with whom they had quarrelled. They represent disturbances and difficulties that children experience in learning to participate in the society of their peers. They cannot be dismissed as trivial as they may cause intense suffering. Although the origin of the bullying may lie in a quarrel, its persistence as bullying must be a cause for concern. Studies of how children make and break relationships are needed to understand this aspect of bullying.

Boarding schools once had a reputation for virtually institutionalising the bullying of new pupils, but the schools appear to have changed significantly; very little of this traditional form of bullying was reported to the Boarding School Line. In a few boarding schools, individual monitors or prefects were misusing their positions to bully the younger children, to hit and hurt them in various ways; where the bullies were identified by age, 60% concerned older children bullying their juniors. There was a feeling among the children who telephoned the Boarding School Line that the staff would not believe them if they reported their seniors for bullying. In one or two instances children were recorded as saying that their complaints against senior pupils had been dismissed by staff. But in only one boarding school was it clearly a question of wholesale intimidation and bullying of the junior pupils by a group of seniors in what seemed to be a traditional school practice, although it was clear that it was not condoned by the school. In fact the headmaster was already aware of the problem and trying to deal with it.

Some forms of 'picking on' a child might be called xenophobic: children who are new to an area or to the school and have a different accent or vocabulary may be bullied. Robert reported to the Bullying Line that, having moved to Scotland quite recently, he was being mocked for his English accent. A girl aged 13 reported that she was bullied at boarding school because she came from Wales. Other bullying, where a child feels (s)he is bullied for being 'too posh' or not 'posh' enough, may be instances of class prejudice.

Where a difference in appearance is concerned, 'being picked on' may be racist. Counsellors were not able to record racist bullying unless the victim made it clear that the taunts referred directly to the child's ethnicity. There were a number of these incidents, some of them violent, reported on both Lines. For example, one counsellor on the Bullying Line noted of a girl under ten:

Zeena's father is Sri Lankan, her mother French. She is called 'stupid Paki' at school. One day her blouse and skirt were torn off. Her mother has complained to the teachers but nothing has been done.

The presence in boarding schools of children from overseas adds another category of children who may suffer racist taunts and bullying. One black 12 year-old from overseas told a counsellor on the Boarding School Line that he had been beaten up several times; he had two bruised, swollen eyes and gashes on his head. The other cases of racist bullying, involving an African girl, a Lebanese boy and a Turkish girl, involved verbal taunts rather than physical assaults but the victims were clearly very distressed by them. In one instance, in a boarding school, the case-note recorded that the child had told his class-teacher who had reacted very strongly. Unfortunately the intervention was not sufficient to stop the bullying, which continued, although clandestinely.

At the other end of the spectrum of behaviour labelled bullying by children, are incidents that are obviously very serious. The first type involves physical violence. Physical assaults by several children on a victim may do real damage. One case reported on the Bullying Line concerned a boy who came home from school and went straight to bed after having been kicked in the stomach and hit on the head, and in another, a younger boy complained: 'I'm not a child any longer, I'm a punch-ball'. A 14 year-old girl reported an attack by a large group of younger children that put her friend in hospital and left the caller too frightened to go to school. This is comparable to the boarding school case just quoted. Had the individuals in such cases been adults, charges of assault or grievous bodily harm might well have been brought. Clearly this is violence at a level which no school should tolerate.

The incidence of violent assault reported by boarding school children is similar to that in the case-records of the Bullying Line, where it amounts to nearly a quarter of the incidents reported (24%). Twenty-three percent of the children and young people who called the Boarding School Line about bullying reported physical assaults. Boys were more likely to report violent bullying than girls (see p 22). This difference between boys and girls was even more marked among boarding school pupils than it was among those who called the Bullying Line.

Serious assaults, with physical damage to the victim, may indicate sadistic attitudes that require

assessment of the aggressor for treatment. An example of this was provided by one child who reported that a group of his own age used to attack his younger brother 'to see how quickly they could make him cry'. Much of this violent behaviour seems to come from boys and to have its roots in a 'macho' image of masculinity; competition for a reputation for being tough or abusing authority among the boys may also be involved. Four children in boarding school reported being beaten or hit by monitors and prefects.

Bullying where the aim is to take money or possessions from the victim is theft (compare Jones in Elliott 1991, p 17). It may include threats and beatings, in which case it is extortion, but the bullying seems to be the means rather than the apparent end of the bullying. Whether this is true in all cases is not clear; it may be that in some cases the theft is merely a means of causing hurt to the victim. A minority of children, calling either the Bullying or the Boarding School Line, reported having their possessions or money stolen, often on a daily basis. One desperate child at day school had started to take money from his parents to give to the bullies to prevent them beating him up. There was much less theft and extortion reported to the Boarding School Line than to the Bullying Line, perhaps because boarding school children do not need to carry money to pay for their lunch, as day school children do, and they cannot hide stolen goods at home. Alternatively, it is possible that the majority of children in independent boarding schools come from relatively wealthy families and do not need to steal to obtain what they want.

The great variety of behaviour that children call bullying seems, to some adults doing research, to present problems of definition. While the acts of theft and assault have much in common with the other acts that children describe under the label 'bullying', they deserve to be considered separately as well. If 'bullying' is used only for this serious and violent behaviour, then much else which distresses children is dismissed as 'mere' teasing. Using the euphemism 'bullying' to refer to these more serious cases may also allow adults to ignore behaviour in children that they would perceive as criminal if the perpetrators were adults. Because they are perpetrated by children they may be seen as a transient problem or as 'childish' behaviour that will be outgrown. Neither of these comforting stereotypes may be true. There is some evidence of a link between being a bully at school and later criminal behaviour (see Besag, 1989 p 32 and David Lane in Tattum and Lane, 1989, p 102-3). Bullying may thus serve as an early warning system. Careful assessment of the bullies at that point would permit appropriate treatment to make it less likely that they will develop into adult delinquents.

5. WHERE CHILDREN ARE BULLIED

Over three-quarters of the bullying reported to the Bullying Line took place at school. Where children were having problems going to or from school (7%) or in their own neighbourhood (9%),

children from other schools might sometimes be involved. Some of the most violent cases reported to the Bullying Line happened on the way to or from school. This represents a period when children are not supervised by adults and opportunities for attacking other children may occur more easily. There were also 32 reports to the Bullying Line of bullying by siblings, usually older siblings; this took place at home or in its vicinity (See Section 7.3). But in general the great majority of children are bullied by school-mates and in school. The Bullying Line confirms the common view, built on by almost all studies of bullying, that most bullying does take place in school.

Children in boarding schools suffer from being unable to leave the bullies behind at the end of the school day. These children lack the safe haven that home may offer day school children who are bullied, since the bullies may form part of the same residential community and their victims cannot escape them at the end of the school day. Seventeen children (9% of those being bullied) reported bullying that happened in the dormitories at night or at weekends. In a few of these cases, boys and girls were subject to quite serious attacks by older children, often those acting as prefects or monitors. The children who reported being bullied in their dormitories found this particularly stressful. In such cases, it was clear, the victims felt that they had no safe place to go.

6. THE DURATION OF THE BULLYING

The evidence from the Bullying Line is that bullying need not last long to cause pain and distress in the victim. By contrast relatively mild teasing that persists may gradually build up stress, as it did for the boarding school boy who reported having nightmares and being unable to work because of the continuing teasing about his stutter. Some research has even ignored the whole question of duration. Arora and Thomson's study of bullying in a small comprehensive school (1987) asked children to record episodes during one week, without asking how long they had suffered from this sort of behaviour.

The research into bullying that does consider the question of duration may merely use it to define the problem. Roland, for example, defines bullying as 'long-standing', although he does not make clear the length of time that is needed to characterise it as such (1987). Some of the children who reported incidents to the Bullying Line had only recently begun to suffer; others had endured it for much longer periods. Some recent bullying was serious and some long-term bullying appeared less so. Moreover, the duration of bullying is also linked to the willingness of those who are bullied to tell someone about it; we do not know whether the recent bullying reported to the Bullying Line would have been reported as soon as it was if the Line had not offered the opportunity to do so. More research needs to address the assumption that the longer bullying is endured the more serious it becomes; there is evidence in these reports that this may not be so.

To exclude actions that have only just begun from consideration as bullying seems arbitrary, but the assumption that underlies a definition of bullying as long-standing may be related to an attitude

among teachers that is also noted in several studies: that minor problems 'sort themselves out'. It is only when they do not that it is taken to be bullying. Teachers who hold this view may decide not to intervene when a child complains. But 10% of case-notes from both Lines concerned children who had suffered for years, while an equal number had suffered for up to a year. Altogether, half the case-notes indicated bullying that had lasted months and years.

The reports to the Bullying Line indicate that there are several reasons why bullying may continue. The victims may be afraid to tell an adult, because the bullies have threatened retribution if they do tell; or the victims feel that confessing to being bullied is publicly admitting humiliation; finally the victims may come to feel they deserve it and therefore cannot complain. In some schools, particularly boarding schools, there is a clear moral code which stigmatises reporting other children's behaviour as 'grassing'. Children in these schools may find it very difficult to tell an adult that they are being bullied, even when they are suffering greatly.

Reticence about reporting bullying is commonly mentioned in the literature as a reason why the bullying continues, but it may not be the only one. Attempts to stop the bully by asking for adult help may fail, either because the adults cannot or will not deal with the situation. Later sections will deal with both these issues; here it is mentioned to make the point that it is rare for bullying to stop; it must be stopped.

Table III shows that many children may endure bullying for long periods; one adult who rang the Bullying Line claimed that he had been bullied all his school life. The proportion of callers on the Bullying Line who had been suffering for days and weeks (28%) was very similar to the proportion whose problem had been going on for months (30%). Boarding school children reported a lower proportion of more recent bullying (7%). The proportion of bullying that had lasted for months was similar for both sets of children (39% and 41%); in both cases too, this was the most common situation. Bullying that had lasted years was much less common but was more often reported by boarding school pupils than by children who called the Bullying Line. The children and young people who reported long-standing bullying to the Boarding School Line often referred to having been bullied ever since they came to the school, often for a year or two.

Table III: Duration of Bullying

	Bullying Line	Boarding School Line
	%	%
Up to a month	28	7
Up to a year	41	39
Years	10	18
no data	22	36
TOTAL	101	100

7. BULLIES

Most of the children who called the Bullying Line were being bullied; only 12 said they were bullying other children, all but one of whom telephoned the Bullying Line. A similar number of adults telephoned to report that they had bullied other children when young. This preponderance of the bullied is not surprising, since it is widely assumed that it is only the victims who have problems with bullying and a helpline is assumed to be for those with problems. One study shows that children are far less likely to reveal that they are bullying others than that they are bullied. Such small numbers of records of calls from bullies do not allow for satisfactory conclusions. This report, therefore, deals mainly with the victims of bullying and their views: the bullies described in this section are those whom the callers being bullied identified.

Most victims reported being bullied by more than one child. Nearly two thirds of victims (65%) calling the Bullying Line and 62% of those telephoning the Boarding School Line about bullying reported being bullied by a group. The implication of these figures is that more children are involved in bullying than in being bullied. This does not mean that a large number of children 'are' bullies in the sense that this behaviour reflects a permanent part of their characters. These figures show that a large number of children bully others at one time or another. Moreover it suggests that bullying may be a group activity as much as an individual one.

The Norwegian, Heinemann, who was responsible for some early work on bullying, referred to group bullying as 'mobbing', but this was later rejected as a general term because it did not cover all types of bullying. If the preponderance of multiple bullies is confirmed, then the use of the term 'mobbing' for much of this sort of behaviour seems more justified. There is not enough information to be able to say whether all members of the group participate actively in the bullying or if they merely stand by or support the bullies, perhaps for fear of being bullied themselves. In some of the case-notes there was an indication that it was the presence of the group of onlookers and more passive participants that encouraged the bullying.

The clear preponderance of group hostility over individual aggression suggests that more attention should be paid to the dynamics of children's social life, the exercise of power and the pressures to conform, rather than to searching for a cause in the individual characteristics of either bullies or victims.

7.1 THE GENDER OF BULLIES

Boys and girls were identified in almost identical proportions as bullies. On the Bullying Line, just over half of the bullies (51%) were reported to be girls, while 46% were said to be boys, with a small percentage (3%) of bullies described as a group of boys and girls. This information appears to contradict Tatum and Herbert's finding that three times as many boys are bullies as girls (1990 p 8).

The difference is more apparent than real, however. Twice as many girls as boys appeared in the reports, so that if boys and girls were equally likely to be bullied, there would be twice as many girls reported as bullies than boys. But girls represented only 51% of bullies, while boys figured as 46% of bullies. This result also derives from the fact that while girls rarely bully boys, the opposite is not uncommon. Boys form less than one third of victims (28%), the rest being girls. One must conclude then that boys are more likely to be bullies and that they bully girls as well as boys.

Assessing the data from the Boarding School Line is a more complex matter. Some schools are single sex schools and their pupils who telephoned about being bullied were unlikely to have been bullied except by members of their own sex. Where the schools could be identified as mixed-sex schools, children were also more likely to be bullied by their own sex than the opposite sex. There were 39 cases involving mixed schools: in a third of them (13 cases) girls accused girls of bullying them; most of the boys said they were being bullied by other boys (seven out of eleven cases). There were four cases where the bullies were a mixed group of boys and girls; two girls were being bullied by boys but no boys said they were bullied by girls. In a number of cases the gender of the bullies or the type of school was not recorded but the overall impression confirms that given by the Bullying Line.

The reports of mixed groups of boys and girls being involved in bullying others is a feature not often discussed in the bullying literature. There are only a few cases in this study but they are distributed fairly evenly across the age groups; both boys and girls are the victims. Some of the reports from the Boarding School Line refer to the bullies as a group of school children, without specifying whether they were girls or boys. There is too little evidence from the two Lines for further analysis but there is clearly a need for further research.

7.2 THE AGE OF BULLIES

There is a common stereotype that bullies are older than their victims. This study suggests that this is only partly true. Where the relative ages of bullies and victims had been recorded in the case-notes, the information showed large proportions of bullying by age-mates of the victims. The Bullying Line data showed that 44% of bullies were indeed older than their victims, a larger proportion, over half the total (52%), were the same age and likely to be class-mates. One percent of bullies (a small number of cases) were actually younger than their victims. Among boarding school children, the pattern was rather closer to the stereotype: in the cases where this information had been recorded, 60% of callers were being bullied by older children, in 38% bullies and bullied were in the same class or described as the same age and in no case was a younger child doing the bullying.

One of the effects of the wide definition of bullying used by children may be to show up bullying behaviour between children of the same age. Class-mates may be engaged in teasing or in punishing the non-conformists among them or be bullying those isolated by quarrels with friends;

while older children are the bullies in more abusive incidents. Troubles with friendships and bullying that develops between former friends and between rivals are also most likely to concern classmates and children close in age. In all, the material suggests that attention must also be paid to the relationships within age groups in order to understand certain forms of bullying.

7.3 BULLYING BY SIBLINGS

Although there are relatively few cases of bullying by siblings, it shows a rather different pattern from general bullying. All of these came from the Bullying Line. Where brothers and sisters are at boarding school together they seem more often to offer each other support rather than bullying each other. While one girl telephoned the Boarding School Line after a serious quarrel with a sister, no child reported a sibling to the Boarding School Line for bullying. One boy reported that he tried to protect a younger brother from bullies but without success.

Where bullying by siblings was reported to the Bullying Line, brothers and sisters figure as bullies in nearly the same number of cases: 16 brothers and 15 sisters. Boys mostly accused their brothers (four cases to one, with one boy saying a group of his siblings bullied him). Girls accused their sisters and brothers almost equally; 14 girls said they were bullied by sisters and 12 by brothers. There are many more cases of boys being accused of bullying by their sisters (12) than by their brothers. One cannot draw firm conclusions about bullying by siblings from so few cases but at the least they indicate that one should not assume that bullying is a problem that children face only outside their homes.

8. KINDS OF BULLYING

8.1 GENDER DIFFERENCES

The differences in bullying behaviour between girls and boys have already received attention in research. The Bullying Line data confirms the conclusions that have already been reached. In Table IV, all the incidents mentioned by callers have been included and as each child could have mentioned more than one type of bullying, the proportions of each type of bullying refer to incidents not children. There is little difference in the proportion of boys and girls who report being teased and picked on, whether to the Bullying or Boarding School Line. In the more serious categories of bullying, more boys report being assaulted and more girls report theft. Almost all boys, and nearly three fifths of girls (58% of all Bullying Line cases) accuse boys of the violent acts of bullying they have suffered from. Over 20% of the incidents reported to the Bullying Line were violent ones and, where the bullies are identified by gender, in 70% of the cases they were boys. On the Boarding School Line as well, boys were far more likely than girls to be involved in violent incidents (37% and

Table IV: Types of Bullying reported by gender of victim

Behaviour	Girls affected		Boys affected		Total affected*	
	%		%		%	
	BL	BSL	BL	BSL	BL	BSL
	(n=1156) (n=152)		(n=483) (n=61)		(n=1639) (n=213)	
1. Teasing:						
picked on for no reason	19	10	20	8		
called names/unspecific	6	8	5	7		
called names/phys.diff.	14	18	19	20		
personal problems	7	4	5	5		
Total teasing	46	40	49	40	40	40
2. Disturbances in relat's:						
ex-friends calling names	10	2	3	2		
rivalry for friends	8	1	3	0		
pressure to conform	3	8	3	3		
Total peer problems	21	11	9	5	25	8
3. Physical assault						
	22	14	31	39	24	39
4. Extortion/theft						
	12	6	9	7	11	9

* includes reports where the child's sex is not recorded

BL = Bullying Line

BSL = Boarding School Line

n = number

14% respectively) and their assailants were always boys. This is an indication that problems of male violence are already beginning when individuals are still children (see Askew in Tattum & Lane 1989).

It is in the category of problems with their peers that many more girls figure as complainants. A far higher proportion of girls than boys report bullying that has resulted from troubles with friends. The following problems, all reported by 13 year-old girls, are examples of the sorts of difficult relationships that may lead to bullying:

Ann is part of a group of eight girls in her class; four of them try and get her to join them truanting. When she will not agree they cold shoulder her.

Tracey is being picked on by other girls. She thinks it is because of her friendship with Sharon, which they are trying to break up.

Cathy is bothered by a group of girls who are sometimes friendly and sometimes tease and pick on her. She doesn't know how to deal with them.

Girls who recount stories like these may refer to the children who bully them as 'friends' even though their behaviour seems far from friendly. Similar stories come from both sets of data. It is noticeable that a higher proportion of girls than boys are concerned with these problems but the information is often not detailed enough to allow one to decide why this is. It is plausible that girls learn to be concerned with and discuss social relationships in a way that boys do not; the gender images to which they must conform encourage them to do this while masculine ideals positively discourage such concern.

It is also possible that boys' problems with their friends are more likely to end in fights or physical violence. It is noticeable that so much bullying in which boys are victimised involve physical violence (nearly a third of the cases on the Bullying Line), but it is not possible to discover which, if any, are cases involving former friends. Cases of violent bullying among the Boarding School cases are more likely to involve older bullies.

8.2 AGE DIFFERENCES IN BULLYING

If the four main types of bullying are divided according to the age of the children who have reported the incidents, some interesting patterns emerge; they suggest that future research on bullying might profitably focus on age differences. Children of all ages report much the same amount of teasing and being picked on. The proportion of incidents of physical assault decreases steadily as the children get older. Whereas nearly a third of the incidents reported to the Bullying Line by the very youngest children (aged six and under) are physical attacks, the proportion has dropped to 19% of incidents reported by the older children. One might expect younger children to be more vulnerable to attacks by stronger peers and older children, and for younger children to express their animosity in physical rather than verbal attacks, but whether the declining proportion of reports of physical attacks does actually represent a decreasing incidence, or whether it merely reflects an increasing

reluctance to talk about it, cannot be decided on the evidence available.

The smaller number of Boarding School cases do not have such a wide age-range, since they lack data on the under-sevens and there are few cases of children under ten. Nevertheless, the pattern there seems rather different. The more violent bullying is a lesser proportion of the total but the incidence of violent attacks is highest among the 11-13 year-olds. Many of these are likely to be the newest recruits to a boarding school for older children.

The youngest and oldest victims report far less extortion and theft than those in the two middle categories. There were very few children of six and under among the reports of calls but only a tiny percentage of them reported having their possessions stolen, perhaps because they are more closely supervised and do not often handle money (the commonest item stolen). Among the older children the incidence is higher than among the youngest but not as high as it is among the middle range of children. Why this should be so is not clear; one hypothesis might be that children of this age are less closely supervised than the younger group and are also beginning to carry money to pay for meals or snacks at school; as the younger ones in a secondary school, they are vulnerable to attack.

Table V: Differences in types of bullying according to age

Bullying Type	up to 6		7-10		11-13		14+	
	%		%		%		%	
	BL	BSL	BL	BSL	BL	BSL	BL	BSL
Being picked on	43	0	44	62	40	54	36	48
Peer relations	23	0	17	13	27	13	38	14
Physical assault	30	0	28	19	22	26	19	30
Extortion/theft	3	0	11	6	12	7	7	8
TOTAL	99	0	100	100	101	100	100	100

BL = Bullying Line BSL = Boarding School Line

The incidence of 'being picked on' in all three age-categories represented is a very much higher proportion of the Boarding School cases than the Bullying Line. This might be interpreted as showing that bullying is less of a problem in boarding schools, because the milder forms of it are more common. On the other hand, it might also be interpreted as confirming the fears of children who rang the Boarding School Line, not because they were at Boarding School, but because their

parents were going to send them to boarding school and they were afraid of being picked on because they would be newcomers.

Distinguishing the incidents of bullying by both gender and age of those reporting them shows that differences between age-groups may be accentuated by gender differences. Table VI shows Bullying Line cases involving boys and girls in three broad age categories. (There are too few cases of children under seven and too few from the Boarding School Line to make their analysis by both factors worthwhile, so they have not been included.)

The Table shows that much of the change in the nature of bullying as children get older is due to changes in the kind of bullying reported by girls. The decline in assaults among older children is due to the rapidly decreasing proportions of girls over the age of 10 who are physically attacked by bullies. In the 7-10 age-group, such attacks form roughly the same proportion of the type of bullying suffered by boys or girls. Thereafter, while the proportion of assault stays the same for boys, it declines sharply for girls. Similarly, while boys' reporting of problems with their peers remains at much the same low level, its importance for girls increases with age. In contrast, 'being picked on' shows little change, according to either age or gender, staying consistently at about the 40% level. It is among children and young people of 14 and over that one sees most clearly the distinction between the types of bullying associated with boys (physical attacks) and girls (verbal aggression) in the literature.

Table VI: Reports to Bullying Line by age and gender of victim

Type of Incident	7 - 10		11 - 13		14+	
	% Boys	% Girls	% Boys	% Girls	% Boys	% Girls
Being picked on	46	37	39	40	40	40
Peer problems	5	2	8	17	5	24
Assault	23	22	23	16	24	14
Theft	5	10	10	10	4	7
No details	22	19	20	17	26	15
n TOTAL	101	100	100	100	99	100
n=number	(n=105)	(n=260)	(n=283)	(n=127)	(n=127)	(n=243)

9. 'REASONS FOR' AND 'CAUSES OF' BULLYING

Some studies of bullying have focused on the individual characteristics of the children involved: on bullies or on their victims. The material collected here suggests that this approach alone is inadequate to understand the situation. For example, there are suggestions in some of the literature

on bullying that particular children invite bullying, perhaps by being over-sensitive to teasing which more confident individuals take in their stride. Unless they are tested before they are bullied, it is impossible to tell whether the characteristic demeanour of bullied children is independent of the bullying they have suffered or not. Bullying, it has been well-established, causes loss of self-esteem and nervousness. Restoring the children's self-confidence so that they can do something about their situation, as ChildLine counsellors try to do, may be necessary to end the bullying but that does not necessarily mean that lack of self-confidence caused the bullying.

It has also been remarked that those who are bullied may differ from their peers in some way, as if the difference attracted the bullying. Children themselves often told the counsellors that they were being bullied 'because' of the various differences that singled them out from others. In the bullying, these personal characteristics are made fun of or scorned. The victims have to endure this and feel that the bullying results from their having those characteristics. However, the references to personal features are the means by which the bully causes distress and not necessarily the cause of the bullying itself. More than one study of bullying has pointed out that there may be other children with the same 'differences' as those that the victim feels are the cause of the bullying. If this is so, then it may not be useful to explain bullying by finding a cause for it in the victim's appearance or nature.

A very common complaint made by children on both Lines, was that they were being 'picked on for no reason'. By this they usually meant that no 'reason', in the sense given it above, could be found for the bullying. This type of bullying, that seems to constitute a relatively invariant core to the varied range of behaviour included under this term, remaining a more or less constant proportion regardless of age and gender, supports the suggestion that it is unprofitable to explain bullying entirely by triggering qualities in the victim. In practical terms, to try to solve problems of bullying by encouraging children to take no notice of the differences among them or to value difference itself, may be addressing symptoms rather than causes.

It may be more useful to consider the social context of the school in which bullying takes place. There are formal and informal groups, hierarchies of authority and of power and informal networks of friendships. Relationships between individual bullies and victims are established within these frameworks, which may either facilitate or inhibit the bullying.

Attacking outsiders may serve to reinforce a group's identity. An outsider is defined by group norms, by the leaders or a combination of both. Newcomers are particularly likely to be defined in this way. A strong sense of group identity may make it more likely that those who do not conform to it are bullied. Groups may be quite small and informal, or large and more formal. A strong group identity is characteristic of boarding schools and may explain the high level of being picked on that characterises the boarding school cases.

Bullying may be a way of impressing friends and allies, demonstrating superior power or establishing leadership. The high proportion of children who reported being bullied by older children suggests that a hierarchy of age and strength may be involved. A common pattern among girls is to mobilise a group of supporters to persecute an erstwhile friend. Another is for a group of friends to isolate and reject members who will not conform to their values or will not participate in group

activities. Bullying may thus either punish deviance or enforce compliance.

Children recognise a wide variety of behaviour as bullying. The variant forms all represent problems children experience in relationships with other children (and sometimes with adults). These should not be dismissed as 'an inevitable part of growing up'. As Wendy Titman writes: '...the ability to 'get on with others' is not just a natural talent which some have and others do not...' Such skills may be learned. Titman continues: 'Dealing with the problems which manifest themselves during childhood is not sufficient. Ideally they [children] should learn how to get on with each other before they learn not to' (in Tattum and Lane 1989).

10. DOING SOMETHING ABOUT BULLYING

As Andrew Mellor points out, being bullied is not a disease that can be treated (Mellor in Elliott 1991). Some adults, including parents and teachers, feel that it is better not to intervene between children over bullying. They may think that the problem will 'sort itself out in time', like one mother who told her 14 year-old daughter at boarding school that if the bullying continued after the next school holidays she would do something about it. Some adults fear that intervention will single out the child who is bullied and encourage further bullying and there is evidence that clumsy or ineffective action can have those results. Stephenson and Smith found that 25% of the teachers they interviewed for a survey (1984) felt that it is sometimes helpful to ignore bullying problems.

It has been argued by more than one expert that adult intervention is necessary and, if properly handled, can be effective (Lane 1989, p 101). This view receives support from the callers to the *Bullying Line*; nearly three-quarters of the children who reported adult intervention (72%) said that it had had positive effects. By contrast, however, few of the boarders recorded a positive outcome to getting adult help. Four times as many reported a negative result. Children on both Lines were clear what they meant by positive action: stopping the bullying without implicating them as the cause of what was done.

Intervention by adults depends on their being told when a child is bullied. Most studies of bullying emphasise the fact that children find it hard to tell anyone about being bullied. Caroline St John Brooks wrote in 1984 that, because of the secrecy with which it is surrounded, the true incidence of bullying would probably never be revealed. Hammond calls victims of bullying 'reluctant communicators' in Roland and Munthe 1989, p142. There are many apparent reasons for this to be found in the bullying literature; they all receive confirmation from the material discussed in this study.

Much of their reluctance to tell derives from the ethic of mutual loyalty which is common among children, particularly in the closed community of school. 'Telling' adults, with the implication that another child will suffer as a result, is a major offence of which children who talked to counsellors on

both the Bullying and the Boarding School Lines are all too conscious. Children are afraid of retribution from the bullies; since they have already caused distress, there is the possibility of the victims suffering more hurt if it became known that they have 'told'. Their lack of confidence in adults' ability to ensure their anonymity is not always unrealistic either. In one case recounted to the Bullying Line, the headmaster made an announcement about bullying in assembly in such a way that the bullies were able to identify the caller as the source of his information and the bullying then intensified. If the bullying persists for long enough and attempts to stop it fail, the victims may even come to believe that they deserve it.

Children were not always sure what help with bullying they might expect from an adult, without being thought 'babies' or 'tell-tales'. There is some evidence in the material from these two helplines to suggest that the age of the child may determine the adult's response to being told about bullying and/or the amount of help that the adult may be prepared to give. Boys particularly might be told that they should stand up for themselves. One 12 year-old boy told the Bullying Line, 'Dad told me I should punch him [the bully] back, but I'm not a fighter, that's not how I do things'. There seems to be a general view among adults that as children get older they should be able to deal with bullying without help. The reluctance of older children to reveal that they are being bullied seems to indicate that they are aware of this view and even share it.

Some children do not feel that telling an adult will help anyway; often an unwillingness to confide in an adult represents a lack of trust in their ability to handle the matter. This lack of trust is not unrealistic. Some parents who telephoned the Bullying Line were not sure what they should do to help a child who was being bullied. Other children reported to both the Bullying Line and the Boarding School Line that they had told their parents about being bullied and that nothing had been done to help them. In one case a teacher's intervention stopped the bullying for a few weeks but it then started again. A few of the parents who telephoned the Bullying Line did so because they were angry and frustrated at the failure of their efforts to get a response from their child's school. One mother was reported as saying that

Her family were at their wits' end. Jon, aged 14, had been bullied at school for the last four years. Seven boys had been involved, of whom three were the ringleaders. The incidents had been consistently reported to the school, who said they were dealing with it, and had, at times, suspended the boys concerned. They said they would expel the boys but this had not happened and Jon was still being bullied.

Not all outcomes are as unsuccessful as this, but in many cases adult help has clearly been ineffectual. If adult action were more effective and seen to be so, perhaps more children would ask adults for help.

The case material from the Bullying and Boarding School Lines provides evidence that large numbers of children are prepared to talk about being bullied. Yet telling a counsellor on these Lines was rather different from telling a parent or teacher. On these helplines (and on ChildLine) a child can get advice and help without setting in train action which they may not be sure will be helpful. A

helpline that is both confidential and anonymous saves the callers the embarrassment of telling someone they know and allows them to keep control of what is happening. These advantages are clearly recognised by children and were explicit in the answers given to a survey of schools to elicit views on the Boarding School Line. One in eight of the replies referred to the advantages of *anonymity and confidentiality of the helplines*.

It is possible that children who call a helpline are children who are more disposed to talk about bullying anyway, so that the children who spoke to the Bullying or Boarding School Lines are a distorted sample of children; moreover it might be said that telling a helpline counsellor is not like telling a known adult in order to get their help. Talking to a helpline would then not be evidence of children's willingness to talk about bullying. More than half (52%) of the children who called the Bullying Line had already told an adult before they telephoned and only a third said that they had told no one about it (see Table VII).

The Boarding School Line children were even more likely to have told someone about being bullied; in 58% of the cases where there was information about telling, some adult had been told about the problem. Another 27% had talked to their friends about it and only 16% said that they had told no one at all. Stephenson and Smith (1984) in their study of four classes of children, found that, in three of the four classes, most children said they would tell someone if they were bullied.

The problem appears to be less the reluctance of children to tell as the absence of effective methods of dealing with bullying that are widely known and used. The need for multiple strategies is stressed in articles written to give advice on coping with bullying. ChildLine counsellors employed a number of strategies so as to take account of the different situations the children described. Children who had not told an adult were helped to think of one they might trust to talk to; others were encouraged to enlist the help of their parents, if they had not already done so. In general counsellors encouraged children and parents to take their problems to the school, to teachers or school counsellors and, if these people could not or would not help, to the head or to the governors.

The counsellors also tried to address the feelings of the children who called, to suggest that they were not at fault for being bullied and to strengthen their self-esteem. Where conflict with former friends was the problem, they might discuss whether talking to one of them alone might help, or consider whether another group of friends might offer support.

The callers to these two helplines made clear that doing nothing is the worst reaction to being told about bullying that an adult can have; it causes the victims more pain, without solving their problems. There are now a variety of methods for dealing with bullying generally, from the whole-school approach to the counselling of individual children. The effectiveness of strategies has been tested in schools. Different approaches can be tried in different situations, given the variety of behaviour that children label bullying. An entrenched problem may well need several approaches to produce an effect.

Table VII: Had the victim told anyone before calling the Bullying Line?

	6 and Under		7 - 10		11 - 13		14 and Over		No Age Data		n.d.	Total
	%		%		%		%		%		%	% Both Sexes
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M		
Yes	75	84	53	64	54	58	52	58	57	74	28	57
No	13	6	33	28	36	29	33	28	30	15	28	31
n.d.	13	10	13	8	10	14	15	13	13	10	43	12
Total	101	100	99	100	100	101	100	99	100	99	99	100
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
	16	31	272	112	729	298	263	142	223	91	7	2,184
	n.d.= no data		n = number				F = female		M = male			

11. CONCLUSIONS

This study is derived from the calls made by children about what they perceived as bullying. In many respects their views differed from those of adults. The children's implicit definition of bullying is broad and inclusive; it does not attempt to distinguish between 'real' bullying and any other kind of bullying. They most emphatically do not regard bullying as an inevitable 'part of growing up' but want it to be stopped. Children frequently doubt adults' ability to stop the bullying, and with good reason; many adults do not know what to do when faced with a child being bullied. Many do not wish to hear what the children have suffered from bullies and the more serious acts of assault and extortion may be trivialised as 'mere' bullying. It is therefore not surprising that children lack confidence in adults to help them and do not tell when they are being bullied. Children may be perceived by adults as reluctant to talk when often their silence may be a manifestation of their despair at the absence of any solution to their problems.

APPENDIX I: METHODS

1. THE BULLYING LINE

The research was undertaken after the Bullying Line had closed. Most of the case-notes that had been made concerned the cases of:

- Children who were being bullied	1,688
- Parents or other relatives who called, either to enable their child to discuss a bullying problem or to talk about it themselves	304
- Friends of children who were victims of bullying	30
- Children being bullied by siblings	32

Other cases, where the caller was an adult, have been treated separately from the main body of data. Most of these adult calls could be grouped into the following categories:

- Adults reporting bullying that happened when they were children;
- Calls referring to cases of bullying that had been resolved;
- Social workers, parents or teachers asking for more information.

One hundred records and case-notes were selected at random to study the type of information they contained. A pro forma was then prepared as a means of codifying the available data and all the case-notes were read and codified. The main categories were as follows:

- a. Geographical location of caller
- b. Caller: victims, bully, victim's relative, victim's friend
- c. Gender and age (in four bands) of victim
- d. Gender and age (in four bands) of bully
- e. Whether victim bullied by one child or group
- f. Where bullying took place: at home/in the neighbourhood, at school, on the way to and from school
- g. Nature of incidents: three types of bullying could be recorded in each case. They were entered on the pro forma in the order in which the counsellor had recorded them.

h. Anyone been told about the bullying? If so, whom?

i. The effect of adult intervention, if any

j. Further action recommended by the Bullying Line counsellor if recorded.

The coded data was analysed, using SPSS-X. The programme and facilities for the analysis were kindly donated by MVA Consultancy, Woking, Surrey.

2. THE BOARDING SCHOOL LINE

The Department of Education and Science and the Independent Schools Joint Council funded a special helpline for children in Boarding Schools, which was operated by ChildLine from January to July 1991. The research, funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation, was agreed at the outset and case-notes were read and analysed during the period of the Line's operation. This enabled the researchers to clean the data and codify it more accurately than had been possible for the earlier research. The 1,012 case-notes included 188 cases where bullying was the boarder's main problem and another 25 where bullying was an additional problem. These 213 case-records were analysed in-house.

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Further copies of this book are available from
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Bullying: The Child's View looks at the telephone calls received on a special Bullying Line which ChildLine ran for three months in 1990, and contains information on bullying from another special line run in 1991, the Boarding School Line. In the course of its work ChildLine counsels hundreds of children about bullying every year, but the Bullying Line was a unique initiative aimed at assessing the nature and extent of bullying whilst offering children help and support.

Jean La Fontaine's analysis of calls to ChildLine about bullying is essential reading for teachers, parents, policy-makers and all concerned adults as it provides an invaluable insight into children's experience of bullying in day and residential schools.

Children's descriptions of bullying challenges the definitions of bullying put forward by adults - parents, teachers, educationalists. Children, La Fontaine claims, understand bullying in terms of the effects it has on them, and consequently they class a far wider range of behaviour as bullying.

The report sums up children's experience of bullying as a message of rejection and hostility, causing feelings of isolation and powerlessness. It concludes that

"...children do not feel that bullying is an inevitable 'part of growing up'. They want it to be stopped".

"This research should be used by every school in the country, primary and secondary: it is a realistic, sympathetic and constructive curriculum-planning tool." Michael Marland, Headteacher of North Westminster Community School, writing in *The Guardian*.



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