Student aggression against peers, school staff, and property is a popular topic in the media and a great concern of the public. However, analysis of crime statistics suggests the problem of school violence is vastly overstated. This results in reliance on inappropriate or inadequate policies aimed at preventing and remediating problems. Further, there is a side of school violence that receives relatively little attention. Victimization of students by teachers, administrators, and other school staff, most often in the name of discipline, is seldom recognized for its potential to contribute to student misbehavior, alienation, and aggression. Included in this type of victimization are recently introduced, intrusive, and sometimes abusive, law enforcement procedures, such as strip searches and the use of undercover agents; and historically accepted or tolerated disciplinary procedures, such as corporal punishment, still allowed in 23 states, and teachers’ verbalizations that constitute psychological maltreatment. How these practices may contribute to school violence is documented in survey data, anecdotal evidence, and clinical studies. School psychologists should become more involved in prevention programs and in the implementation of a suggested research agenda. 

Keywords: Police procedures, School discipline, School violence, Student maltreatment.

Student aggression against peers, school staff, and property is a popular topic in the media and of great concern to the public (Elam & Rose, 1995). While peer and teacher victimization are well-publicized aspects of school violence, there is another side of the school violence problem that receives relatively little attention. Victimization of students by school staff, most often in the name of discipline, is seldom recognized as a problem that may contribute to student alienation and aggression (Hart, 1987; Hyman, Dahbany, Blum, Weiler, Brooks-Klein, & Pokalo, 1997; Hyman, Weiler, Perone, Romano, Britton, & Shanock, 1997).

For instance, data suggest that the majority of students witness or experience verbal maltreatment at some time (Hyman, Zelikoff, & Clarke, 1988; Hyman & Weiler, 1994). Case studies of student’s worst experiences in
school reveal respondents’ feelings of frustration, anger, and thoughts about revenge against the offending school personnel (Hyman, 1990; Hyman, Weiler et al., 1997; Hyman, Zelikoff, & Clarke, 1988). Legally and socially sanctioned disciplinary practices such as corporal punishment (Hyman, 1990; Richardson & Evans, 1993), abusive “motivational” and disciplinary statements to and about students (Hart, 1987), and the overzealous use of other punishment procedures, such as time-out, have the potential to cause serious, and sometimes long-lasting, emotional harm (Hyman, 1990, 1995). Moreover, these practices may lead to increased student hostility, anger, and aggression against school property, peers, and authorities (Dornan, 1978; Lewin, 1997a, 1997b).

While school psychologists should be concerned with verbal and physical maltreatment by educators, this topic receives little mention and almost no research attention in the school psychology literature. Further, there is a paucity of research on the relation between victimization of students by educators and the causation, prevention, and remediation of school violence. The explication of these issues is crucial because each new wave of public fear and outrage over youth violence, fueled by misleading, sensational news stories, and “law and order,” “get tough” political rhetoric, leads to the rejection of proven models of prevention and treatment (Adelman & Taylor, 1996; Larson, 1994; Morrison, Furlong, & Morrison, 1994; National Institute of Education, 1978a, 1978b; Poland, 1994) and to the creation of a climate of increased funding and support for punitiveness (Dwyer, 1997; Futrell, 1996; Lewin, 1997a).

The purpose of this article is to offer a synthesis of admittedly sparse data to support the contention that student victimization by school staff should receive more attention in relation to student misbehavior and violence. We begin with a brief overview of data that demonstrate that, while school crime certainly exists, inaccurate perceptions can lead to bad policy decisions about how to deal with it. These may include the inadvisable use of intrusive, police-oriented procedures, such as strip searches and undercover agents in schools, which are discussed next. School psychologists should consider policy research implications of these practices. They should also consider the impact of legally and socially sanctioned disciplinary procedures such as corporal punishment and abusive “motivational” and disciplinary statements to and about students, which are discussed next.

Because of sparse data in some areas and the controversial nature of the topics discussed here, some who read this may consider the conclusions biased and too slanted in favor of civil liberties and concern for student victims as opposed to the more pressing need for order in the schools. However, we hope the points made here will serve to inform school psychologists about these issues and encourage the development of a research agenda in this area.
THE PROBLEM OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

During the last two decades, policies shaped by the belief that school crime is much worse than it really is, have contributed to an increase in programs based on punitive rather than preventive and remediation efforts. This is well illustrated in the debate over the merits of various punitive discipline policies for children classified under Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Dwyer, 1997) and mandatory suspensions and expulsions for certain offenses (Lewin, 1997a). Inaccurate information about the extent of school disruptions may lead educators and school psychologists to implement punitive policies that, we contend, exacerbate, rather than prevent misbehavior. Therefore, school personnel should consider, “Just how dangerous are our schools?”

School violence is not new to Western societies. Historians and contemporary observers have tracked the waxing and waning of student disruptions for several centuries in European (Aries, 1962), British (Gibson, 1978) and American education (Greven, 1991; Manning, 1979). However, in contemporary America, the landmark research on school violence was the Safe School Study (National Institute of Education, 1978a). This research was one of the earliest, systematic attempts to study school violence in the United States. Despite serious public concern about violence in schools during the 1970s, the study revealed relatively low increases in violent incidents in the early 1970s, and then a leveling off toward the end of the decade (Moles, 1990).

As was the case 20 years ago, despite public perceptions to the contrary, the current data do not support the claim that there has been a dramatic, overall increase in school-based violence in recent years (Furlong & Morrison, 1996; National Education Goals Panel, 1995, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 1995). For the most part, there have been modest fluctuations in school violence over the last several decades, as indicated on Figure 1. Some recent data, not shown in Figure 1, suggest increases in 1995 (Stout, 1995) and decreases in 1996 (Steinberg, 1996).

Large increases in youth crime, especially as reported in the media, may be artifacts of reporting procedures (Hyman & D’Alessandro, 1984; Rubel, 1977). Increases may reflect new categories of offenses (such as carrying beepers in schools), or increased activity by police to arrest certain types of offenders. Or, the increase may be real and an extension of the rise in community-based youth violence such as occurred over drug wars among gangs when crack cocaine became popular. The easy availability of guns has resulted in a significant increase in firearm fatalities among youths in the inner cities. However, relatively few of those deaths each year occur in schools (Hyman, Dabiday et al., 1997). Although politicians and the media continually portray the nation’s schools as dangerous and disorderly, the
data do not support this perception (Hyman, Weiler, Dahbany, Shanock, & Britton, 1996). Comparative studies of the locations of crimes demonstrates that schools are one of the safest places for children and youth (Hyman, Olbrich, & Shanock, 1994; Morrison et al., 1994).

The Criminal Victimization in the United States Reports (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995) indicate that rape, robbery, and assault are more likely to occur at home than in school. Homes are actually one of the most dangerous places for children. In 1992, 91% of the approximately 2.9 million abused or neglected children were victimized by family members (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1994). This resulted in 1,068 deaths, most frequently caused by parents, relatives, or other caretakers, in 44 reporting states. The National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse (1991) estimates 1,260 caretaker-related deaths nationwide.

There are almost no national data on violence-related deaths in schools. We found only two studies that attempted to collate information on deaths in schools. The Center to Prevent Handgun Violence (1990) reported that in 1990, 65 students and 6 school employees were killed with guns in schools. Two hundred and one were severely wounded and 242 were held hostage at gunpoint. Shootings and hostage-taking in schools were reported in 35 states and the District of Columbia. Since this study was reported by an advocacy group, some might question the validity of the findings. However, similar results were obtained in a methodologically sound study reported in a peer-reviewed journal (Kachur et al., 1996).
Kachur and colleagues collected data from multiple sources, including individual school districts where violence-related deaths had occurred between July 1, 1992 and June 30, 1994. During this 2-year period, 105 school-associated violent deaths were identified. Eighty-five (80.9%) were homicides, 19% were suicides and only 29.4% actually occurred in the school building. The rest were in such locations as parking lots, private property, or on the streets to and from school.

Even in some of the most violent cities, children are safer in schools. For example, in 1991, the aggravated assault rate in Chicago was 1,502 per 100,000 citizens, while the public school rate was 325 per 100,000 (Chicago Public Schools, The Bureau of Safety and Security, 1994). The Los Angeles homicide rate for 1991 was 29.30 per 100,000 persons (California Department of Justice, Division of Law Enforcement, 1993), while the public schools in Los Angeles reported 3 homicides, 1 of which was accidental (Los Angeles Unified Public Schools, Department of Security, 1994). At the national level, violence-related deaths for a 2-year period from 1992 to 1994 was .09/100,000 students (Kachur et al., 1995).

Although even one homicide in schools is too much, these data suggest that more of school psychologists’ efforts at violence prevention might be expended working with parents and communities in home-community collaboration prevention programs, including interpretation of actual violence rates and their meaning (American Psychological Association, 1993; Arndt, 1992; Hawkins & Catalano, 1993; Morrison et al., 1994; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1994; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & the Center for Disease Control, 1993).

The consequence of misperceptions regarding the real extent of school violence is that schools have increasingly adopted law enforcement rather than educational models to support violence reduction. For instance, there is little or no evidence for the efficacy of many contemporary youth violence prevention approaches, including the use of metal detectors, increased police presence in schools, searches of lockers and students, student and staff identification cards, a ban on the use of beepers on school grounds, school uniforms, boot camps, mandatory sentencing, and adjudicating delinquent adolescents as if they were adults (American Psychological Association, 1993; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1994; Larson, 1994).

Although there are no data available, our own observations of youth and anecdotal reports suggest that increasing numbers of schools, including those special education schools that are designed specifically for disruptive children, are becoming more reliant on police intervention for what previously had been considered “routine” disciplinary matters, such as fighting and minor property destruction. We recognize the need for police involvement in serious offenses, such as weapons possession and extortion, which threaten the safety of the school community. However, an overdependence on police intervention in a wide range of less serious problems, which his-
Historically have been managed by school authorities, can result in a decrease in schools’ willingness to develop programs oriented toward prevention and developmentally appropriate remediation and punishment. A possible unintended consequence of overdependence on police intervention might also be the undermining of school authority. That is, students may perceive school authorities as impotent and may feel more free to act out in the absence of police.

In many ways, the present policy debate about school violence echoes the concerns that led to the Safe School Study in 1978. Although a variety of stakeholders, both then and now, call for “stricter discipline” as the solution to problems of school violence, the National Institute of Education (1978a) study focused on school organizational characteristics, such as school climate and school governance, which have been shown to reduce school violence (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1985). When students perceive that school personnel, especially the principal, are fair and caring, students feel they have a stake in making the school safe. These findings suggest the need to examine the other side of the violence issue — how unfair, punitive educators may contribute to student alienation, disruption, and violence.

In order to help change a climate in which punitiveness is valued, school psychologists can begin by sensitizing educators about the misperceptions fostered by misleading media reports. Most school violence reports, especially those appearing in newspapers and on television sound bites, require critical appraisal of the methods of data collection. Reported increases of crimes must be weighed against increases in population and the context of offenses. Also, perceptions are distorted by reporting that merges individual level data with aggregated statistics, blends status offenses with serious crimes, and ignores important demographic differences when combining information. School crime reports should conform to conventions that indicate number of offenses per 100,000 people. Or, data could be modified to reflect number of offenses compared to the total student enrollment. Comparison data could be based on a ratio in regard to offenses committed by time spent in and out of school. This would offer the public a better understanding of the real extent of offenses compared to what occurs in the community. School psychologists, by virtue of training, are ideal candidates to play a role in this area.

Educator victimization of students, often in the name of “get tough” discipline, is an important aspect of the school violence problem that is little recognized, hardly researched, and receives limited attention, funding, or programmatic concern. Yet, in relation to the vast sums spent on police-oriented procedures, preventive practices can relatively easily and inexpensively offer amelioration (American Psychological Association, 1993).

Next, we consider two practices that reflect a shift in public policy from
prevention and rehabilitation orientation, which predominated in the 1970s, to an interdiction and punishment orientation that predominates in the 1990s. These practices flow directly from the introduction of police and police procedures into the schools. All of the procedures we discuss have the potential for psychological maltreatment and consequent emotional harm to direct recipients, witnesses, and other students who learn about what happened. However, we discuss the generic issue of emotional maltreatment as a separate topic later in this article.

**STRIP SEARCHES**

As educators, police, and the public have become more alarmed by the use of weapons and drugs in schools, there has been increasing use of intrusive detection procedures, such as school-wide locker searches and individual or group strip searches (National School Boards Association, 1993; Stefkovich, 1993a). This latter procedure has in the past been considered inappropriate for school settings and was thought to be a violation of students’ Constitutional rights. However, when the Supreme Court ruled in the case of New Jersey v. T.L.O. (1985), students’ privacy rights in schools were eroded (Aldridge, & Wooley, 1990; Stefkovich, 1993b). While the case itself involved the search of a student’s purse for cigarettes, the ruling lowered students’ general privacy rights so that their protection from search and seizure are now less than those afforded most citizens (Schreck, 1991). However, even though the Court lowered the standard for student searches (Dise, Iyer, & Debler, 1995; Stefkovich, 1993a, 1993b), it is clear from past precedents, recent cases, and the dissenting views of Justice Stewart in T.L.O., that educators do not have free reign to conduct strip searches of students for minor offenses. Further, many strip searches have negative effects on student morale. They may lead to distrust for school staff and alienation from law enforcement authorities. These are often threshold factors for students’ motivation to increasingly break the rules.

Clinical evaluations of the victims of strip searches indicate that they can result in serious emotional damage, including the development of, or increase in, oppositional behavior. For instance, interviews with parents and adolescents in one case (Tipper et al. v. New Castle, Pennsylvania Area School District et al., 1993) indicated that many of the students who were strip searched developed a loss of faith in the previously admired administrator who conducted this search, loss of interest in academics, depression, hostility, anger, and ruminations about retaliation.

Over the last 4 years, the senior author has consulted in four cases of unsuccessful strip searches that ranged geographically from Pennsylvania to Hawaii. They were similar in terms of officials’ attitudes and actions and students’ emotional responses. While this is hardly a large number of cases, it is more than we have been involved with during the preceding 15-year
period. Further, as we have learned from our research on corporal punishment (Hyman, 1990), small numbers of cases reaching the level of litigation and public attention usually indicate that there are many more cases in which parents do not have the will, resources, or desire to litigate or go public.

The procedures for evaluating the emotional impact of strip searches are the same as for other types of school victimization. Before seeing the student, we review school records and clinical and academic evaluations. We then administer and evaluate the student’s responses on the *My Worst School Experience Scale* (MWSES) (Hyman, 1990; Kohr, 1995) and their parents’ responses on the *Stress Response Scale* (Chandler, 1983). The parents respond twice, indicating how the student was before and after the incident. We have found this later procedure quite useful in determining proximate cause of the stress symptoms (Trudel, 1994). If preliminary evaluation suggests stress symptoms serious enough to support a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), we conduct a complete clinical assessment.

Comprehensive assessment usually reveals serious symptomology, including anger and acting out. Rarely do we have reason to suspect malingering, which we have never observed among the students searched. Students’ symptoms need to be quite disturbing to them and their families and the parents must be highly outraged to motivate them to litigate against the power of the school. This decision requires determination, since families and students frequently experience hostile reactions from some neighbors, peers, and members of the community.

A typical case involved seven adolescents who were strip searched because another student reported observing one of them distributing marijuana to the others (Tipper et al. v. New Castle, Pennsylvania Area School District et al., 1993). Initial interviews revealed varying degrees of emotional reactions among the students. All developed some stress symptoms, but two developed enough symptomology for diagnosis of PTSD. The more severe stress responses included refusal to go back to school, ruminations about revenge, undesired thoughts about the incident, loss of faith in school staff whom they once trusted, increased tendency toward either avoidance and withdrawal or aggression and increased anger and defiance at home. These symptoms lasted long enough in the older students to result in attempts to withdraw from school and alleged delinquent behavior.

There are virtually no social science data on strip searches. A survey of all high schools in Pennsylvania (White & Hyman, 1994), with a 21% response rate, indicated that 29% of the schools allowed strip searches. During the previous school year respondents reported that most searches were for drugs (89 cases), followed by searches for money, jewelry, and other alleged stolen items.

Fifty-two percent of respondents felt that it was acceptable to require removal of shoes and socks, while 3% approved of removal of all clothes. Responses suggested much confusion about proper procedures, constitu-
tionality, and personal liability, although 90% agreed that students should be protected from unwarranted invasions of privacy. Fifty percent felt that strip searches were an invasion of privacy and 50% percent considered the practice potentially emotionally damaging.

A literature search revealed no studies of the efficacy of strip searches in finding contraband or preventing use. Our respondents reported an average of about 13% success for drugs to about 50% for weapons. Success in finding weapons may not even require an intrusive search. Weapons such as guns and knives are bulky enough so that they can easily be detected by requiring emptying of pockets. Often, such objects can be felt or observed when bulging from likely places such as waistbands or taped to legs. However, small amounts of drugs may be easily concealed, thereby requiring intrusive searches, which should be conducted by trained personnel. Data from our clinical interviews suggest that intrusive strip searches in which students are required to remove most or all of their clothing are generally not very successful and tend to cause the greatest emotional turmoil.

In conclusion, recent court rulings and fears about drugs, weapons and theft in school have resulted in increased willingness by school authorities to conduct intrusive searches that were previously taboo. While in dangerous situations these procedures may be warranted, this changing practice has the potential to undermine student morale and damage students emotionally. Further, these tactics may increase student mistrust and alienation, and have the potential to change students’ perceptions of school staff from caregivers/educators to policemen/enforcers. Anecdotal evidence and clinical data suggest that these practices increase student rationalizations for vandalism and aggression against authorities among those who are searched and other students in the school.

UNDERCOVER AGENTS IN SCHOOLS

Fear of youth crime spilling over into schools, and the potential for using schools to gather intelligence about criminal behavior, have led some local police agencies to use undercover agents (Jacobs, 1992, 1994). As in the case of strip searches, this intrusion of police procedures into the schools has the potential to cause serious emotional harm to students, and may engender student mistrust and alienation.

For example, an undercover agent was hired by local law enforcement authorities to investigate substance abuse and distribution in two small rural school districts. In both districts the agent used the same modus operandi, posing as a rebellious malcontent, ingratiating himself with students and their families, and then dating and having sex with a 15-year-old girl in each district. The agent never produced any substantive arrests or convictions. In both cases, the adolescent girls were devastated to discover that their newfound boyfriend had lied continually about himself and his feel-
ings for them, and had sexually and emotionally abused them for his own ends. In both cases the girls became seriously depressed, were ostracized by peers, dropped out of school, and harbored intense anger and a desire for revenge against authorities. As is evident in this case, the use of undercover agents in the schools, for whatever reason, can easily lead to student victimization.

Critics might point out that better screening and supervision of agents will prevent the types of abuses described in the cases cited (Jacobs, 1992, 1993a, 1993b). While this may be true, there are so little data available about how to screen for corruption in this area, that effective standards may be quite elusive. A review of the literature yielded little information on guidelines or efficacy of undercover investigations in the schools (Jacobs, 1993a, 1993b). This triggered the development of a pilot survey to investigate the nature of undercover operations in schools.

The study consisted of a national phone survey of a sample of federal agencies, local police and school officials in 42 states (Perone & Romano, 1995). A total of 68 people were interviewed by phone. Fifty-six of the respondents reported familiarity with, or use of, undercover agents in schools. Most, however, reported that their agencies were not directly involved in covert operations in schools. Those who had direct experience with undercover operations were evasive about providing information, especially about efficacy. Most polled officials indicated awareness of the potential for sexual misconduct with students and the potential emotional harm that this could cause young people.

Those respondents who reported not using the procedure noted the following concerns: poor effectiveness, problems monitoring agents, difficulty recruiting youthful appearing, trained officers, reluctance to use students as agents, failure to arrest anyone but students who are small-time pushers (and often users themselves), lack of cooperation from school principals, public suspicion of covert operations involving students, and temptations by agents to become sexually involved with students and to identify with student culture. Civil liberties groups were especially concerned about compromising the authority and autonomy of schools whose mission is to promote learning in a safe atmosphere. Unlike most law enforcement officials, school personnel are familiar with child and youth development, family issues, peer culture, and the vulnerabilities of students in different age groups.

Educators who would not allow undercover agents in their schools pointed to the potential for creating a climate of student paranoia and distrust of school staff. Such a climate, they felt, would have a negative impact on the learning atmosphere. Some expressed concern that blurring the boundaries between education and law enforcement might undermine traditional democratic ideals protected in the schools.

Supporters of undercover work claim it helps “round up” many students at once, it sometimes leads to the arrest of others in the surrounding com-
community, and if it is successful, it slows down or prevents drug use by those arrested (Shuster, 1994). Officials in big cities with extensive experience claim that agents must be highly trained and closely monitored, must not invite students into their homes and should not be provocateurs. These officials believe that, with careful screening of officers, undercover programs have been successful, but could not, or would not, provide any data to support their contentions.

At the federal level, most officials had little or no information about covert police activities in the schools. A review of national crime reporting data did not provide any information about the efficacy of these programs.

In conclusion, review of the literature and our small national survey suggest that the use of undercover agents in schools should be carefully considered. We believe that it may only be justified in extreme situations where there is a strong likelihood of significant arrests for major crimes. It is likely that well-informed school staff, especially school psychologists, usually know who is using drugs and have information about much of what undercover agents want to know, without having to resort to covert activities. Counselors and psychologists can be much more effective in the long run when provided with sufficient resources to implement programs of prevention, intervention, and treatment for at-risk students (Furlong & Morrison, 1994; Hawkins & Catalano, 1993; National Institute of Education, 1978a, 1978b).

Because it is relatively new, it may be easy for some to recognize the possible negative affects the entry of police practices in the schools. However, corporal punishment and psychological maltreatment are two practices, historically embedded in school culture, which also have the potential to increase student alienation and misbehavior.

**CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

Corporal punishment is generally defined as the purposeful infliction of pain or confinement as a penalty for an offense (Hyman, 1988; Hyman, Barrish, & Kaplan, 1997). In most schools it involves the use of a wooden paddle (Graziano, 1990; Graziano & Nameste, 1990; Hyman, 1990; Hyman, Clarke, & Erdlen, 1987), however it can take other forms. It may be broadly defined to include unreasonable confinement in a restricted space, inappropriate uses of time-out, forcing children to assume fixed postures for unreasonable periods of time, excessive exercise and drills, forced ingestion of noxious substances and exposure to painful environments (Czum-bil & Hyman, 1997; Hyman, 1988; Hyman, Barrish, & Kaplan, 1997).

As previously mentioned, the public’s fluctuations in interest and support for the use of corporal punishment in schools is often influenced by perceptions that are driven by media sensationalism and exaggerations of the extent of student misbehavior (Hyman, Dahbany et al., 1997). For in-
stance, reaction to the flogging of an American adolescent in Singapore mirrors our deeply held frustrations about adolescent misbehavior (Elliot, 1994). In a case that received wide publicity, an 18-year-old youth confessed to vandalism and was sentenced to 4 months in prison, a $2,220.00 fine and six lashes (later commuted to four) with a cane on his buttocks. A *Newsweek* poll, conducted before the flogging, indicated that 38% of the respondents approved of this form of punishment, even though it usually results in injury and shock (Elliot, 1994).

The media coverage of this incident stimulated a rash of statements, proposals, and actual legislation encouraging increased use of corporal punishment, including in schools. In 1995, Alabama passed a law forcing school boards to defend teachers accused of abusing students as the result of the use of corporal punishment if they were acting “within school guidelines.” In 1996 the California legislature considered two bills, both supported by the governor, which would have reintroduced paddling in the schools and mandated public paddling of minors convicted of the crime of graffiti (Hyman, 1997). While the bills were defeated, many legislators ignored the abundant evidence that guidelines for the use of corporal punishment are too vague to prevent actual abuse and the rules are often violated with impunity (Czumbil & Hyman, 1997; Hyman, Clarke, & Erdlen, 1987).

The resistance to eliminate corporal punishment in schools reflects our ambivalence as a nation regarding punishment versus prevention and rehabilitation as responses to misbehavior and criminality, and our refusal to recognize spanking and paddling as forms of violence (Hyman, 1990).

While there are no definitive studies that connect school paddling with school violence, there is extensive research, based mostly on modeling theory, showing the connection between children’s aggression and spanking in the home (American Psychological Association, 1993; Bandura, 1973; Bandura & Walters, 1963; Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Petit, 1996; Eron, Walder, & Lefkowitz, 1971; Kolko, 1992; McCord, 1988, 1991; Patterson, Capaldi, & Bank, 1990; Weiss, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1992). Based on social learning and modeling theory, there is reason to believe that the infliction of pain by caregivers other than parents would likely elicit aggression from the recipient. One would expect increasing aggression as a function of the frequency, intensity, and duration of the paddlings. Case studies of paddled school children whose parents litigated against the offending schools support this assumption (Hyman, 1990). There is also evidence from the literature on abuse and PTSD studies that, in some children, witnessing corporal punishment can have the same effects as actually receiving it (Hyman, 1990). There is a need for further case studies, especially in states like Texas, Alabama, and Florida, which have historically had relatively high rates of school paddlings and high rates of student violence (Hyman, Dahbany et al., 1997; National Education Goals Panel, 1995, 1996).
Some would argue that there are many examples of students who are paddled but do not become aggressive. Evidence suggests that the effects of corporal punishment can be mediated by such things as respect for the paddler, parental support, the child’s motivation to get along, and other factors. However, this argument ignores two points. Almost all violent delinquents have a history of corporal punishment, often at home, in school, and not infrequently, in correctional institutions (McCord, 1991). Further, Barrish (1996) and Straus (1994) reviewed the research of others and demonstrated in their own work that, while there are many possible mediating factors in the corporal punishment to aggression hypotheses, most studies show that the correlation is consistent across most studies.

It is unlikely, especially because of restrictions by human subjects review panels, that gold standard, experimental research will definitively demonstrate the association between school paddlings and school violence. For instance, it would be quite difficult to randomly assign students or schools to paddling “treatments.” But most school psychologists, especially those who work with students with conduct disorders in schools that allow paddling, will attest to the anger, rage, and desire for revenge that corporal punishment of any type instills in recipients, especially those who have a history of abuse at home. But, while the stress-related symptoms of corporal punishment may result in aggression, there is also evidence that psychological maltreatment by educators may have some of the same effects (Hart, 1987; Hart & Brassard, 1987; Hyman et al., 1988).

**PSYCHOLOGICAL MALTREATMENT**

Psychological maltreatment consists of a variety of verbal assaults including sarcasm, ridicule, name calling, and denigrating statements that have the potential to anger and alienate students (Hyman, 1987; Sarno, 1992). It takes many forms, including mental cruelty, sexual exploitation, allowing children to live in dangerous or unstable environments, encouraging or permitting children to use destructive drugs, providing negative and destructive role models, exposing children to systematic bias and prejudice, emotional neglect, and subjecting children to institutional practices that are clearly demonstrated to inhibit maintenance of basic human needs (Hart & Brassard, 1987).

Studies of psychological maltreatment by caretakers indicate that preschool and school-aged maltreated children perform at lower levels than control children on measures of (a) ability, (b) academic achievement, and (c) social competency (Brassard & Hart, 1989). Maltreated children also display more behavior problems, including aggression and poor interpersonal competencies, as rated by teachers. In addition, their feelings of inadequacy and resentment may lead to violence.

Several studies of maltreatment by teachers suggest that school children
report traumatic symptoms that are similar whether the traumatic event was physical or verbal abuse (Hyman et al., 1988; Krugman & Krugman, 1984; Lambert, 1990). Extrapolation from these studies suggests that psychological maltreatment of school children, especially those who are poor, is fairly widespread in the United States. However, this problem is not limited to American schools.

In a unique study that would be nearly impossible to replicate in the United States (it is unlikely that school boards would risk public acknowledgment of abusive teachers), Olweus (1996) found that 10% of a sample of 5100 Norwegian elementary and junior high school teachers overtly bullied one or more students on a regular basis. This and other types of psychological maltreatment of students by educators is an issue that has received relatively little attention in schools and is not generally considered a cause of misbehavior.

In the early 1980s, while the senior author was involved in a school violence project, an informal survey of a random group of inner city high school students was conducted. When asked why they misbehaved in school, the most common response was that they wanted to get back at teachers who put them down, did not care about them or showed disrespect for them, their families or their culture. What students described did not receive much professional attention until the end of the decade (Hart, Brassard, & Germain, 1987).

Much of what we rely on to demonstrate the possible relation between emotional maltreatment in schools and student aggression is based on anecdotal evidence and case studies (Hyman, 1990; Hyman & Gasiewski, 1992; Hyman & Weiler, 1994). The connection between emotional abuse by parents and aggressive behavior has been discussed in the child abuse literature where subjects for study are easily obtainable. However, schools do not encourage research regarding possible emotional maltreatment of students by staff or investigation into how this behavior might affect student misbehavior.

A series of studies identified 105 specific psychological reactions to both physical and psychological maltreatment, which are measured by My Worst School Experience Scale (MWSES) (Hyman, 1990; Hyman & Snook, 1997; Kohr, 1995). Three retrospective studies suggest that at least 50% to 60% of school children suffer from at least one occurrence of maltreatment by an educator, which leads to some stress symptoms, including aggressive responses (Lambert, 1990). Respondents reporting remembered stress symptoms included 53% of a sample of teachers and college students (Zelkoff, 1990), 64% of a junior high school sample (Lambert, 1990) and 38% of Hispanic elementary school students (Vargas-Moll, 1991). Since these studies focused on teacher-induced PTSD and explored all types of teacher maltreatment, some of the aggressive feelings reported were also caused by physical or sexual abuse. There was no attempt to separate actual aggres-
sion from feelings of aggression. The results indicated that at least 1% to 2% of the respondents’ symptoms were sufficient for a diagnosis of PTSD. It is known that when this disorder develops as a result of interpersonal violence, externalizing symptoms are often the result (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

While 1% to 2% might not seem to be a large percentage of a school-aged population, in a system like New York City, this would be about 10,000 children so traumatized by educators that they may suffer serious, and sometimes lifelong emotional problems (Hyman, 1990; Hyman, Zelikoff, & Clarke, 1988). A good percentage of these students develop angry and aggressive responses as a result. Yet, emotional abuse and its relation to misbehavior in schools receives little pedagogical, psychological, or legal attention and is rarely mentioned in textbooks on school discipline (Pokalo & Hyman, 1993; Sarno, 1992).

As with corporal punishment, the frequency of emotional maltreatment in schools is too often a function of the socioeconomic status (SES) of the school population (Hyman, 1990). Evidence suggests that minorities and children from low-income families are at greater risk than are other children. However, high SES students are not immune from psychological abuse in schools (Hyman & Pokalo, 1993).

Data based on case studies, anecdotal reports, and some beginning research, suggest that psychological maltreatment may occur in schools more often than many think. Social learning theory, clinical evidence, and the few studies identified in this article suggest that there may well be a relationship between verbally abusive educator behavior and increases in student misbehavior. At the least, most school psychologists are aware of situations where educator verbal assaults triggered violence in already aggressive students. There is a need for more epidemiological data, clinical studies, and experimental research in this area. Specifically, schools with high rates of psychological maltreatment and violence could be paired with the experimental schools receiving treatment procedures to significantly reduce emotional maltreatment of students. There may be some schools willing to invest in this type of study.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In their efforts to reduce school violence and student misbehavior, too often schools and school authorities contribute to the potential for violence by sanctioning or ignoring practices that victimize children. This article reviews some concerns about this other side of the school violence issue. School psychologists must be knowledgeable about the extent of school crime in order to avoid supporting policies that are based on political experience rather than being grounded in psychological theory and research. Problems such as student violence and substance abuse are complex. Sim-
plastic solutions, especially those grounded in punitiveness, have seldom been demonstrated to be effective. The psychological literature on violence has consistently offered support for prevention and prosocial interventions (American Psychological Association, 1993), which range across the spectrum of psychological theories (Hyman, Dahbany et al., 1997). Some supposed preventive and interdiction techniques, especially those that depend on police procedures, and the use of negative motivational techniques, such as corporal punishment and psychological assault, may only serve to increase student alienation, misbehavior and desire to “get even.”

School psychologists need to critically assess crime statistics and reporting. Accurate interpretation of data, enhanced by familiarity with theory, research methodology, organizational change, human development and behavior, and consultation skills, should be the basis for a systemic, proactive involvement in policy making and informed practice regarding school violence.

A preliminary research agenda should include a series of studies demonstrating the relation between various types of student victimization by educators and rates and types of school misbehavior and crime. Instruments such as the MWSES need to be widely used in order to obtain demographic information on the extent and type of emotional maltreatment in schools. Such instruments will allow for quasi-experimental studies on the effects of these behaviors on school violence, and for clinical and case studies. These studies should include student perceptions of types and levels of maltreatment by educators. Comparison studies between schools must control for community crime levels through the use of multivariate designs.

There is a strong need to improve school reporting procedures for student offenses (Hyman, Dahbany et al., 1997) so that data can be used as dependent measures in comparison studies of the efficacy of various police procedures.

This paper is meant to offer a provocative discussion of another side of school violence. It is hoped that it generates many questions that lead to more involvement by school psychology practitioners and researchers. If we allow the politics of punitiveness to frame the debate about school violence and determine our solutions, we will continue to sanction school policies and practices that may do more to cause student alienation, aggression, and violence than to cure it.

REFERENCES


