

SOCIETY

random supply of scrap materials, such as old packing crates.

The accident rate is no higher than in traditional parks and there have been no serious injuries, says Louv. Liability insurance remains the greatest problem, though all but one of the existing adventure playgrounds have insurance protection provided by the cities' regular carriers with no additional premiums. More difficult to overcome is the popular resistance in low-income areas, where residents say they already have enough shacks and junk (they want asphalt playgrounds and concrete turtles). And disputes persist among recreation officials over what properly constitutes "play" in a technological, urban society.

Fear and Loathing in the Classroom

"Analysis and Critique of HEW's *Safe School Study Report to the Congress*" by Robert J. Rubel, in *Crime and Delinquency* (July 1978), 411 Hackensack Ave., Hackensack, N.J. 07601.

New federal data on "violent" schools in America reveal such odd patterns as these: A teacher who is robbed once by students in one two-month period is 60 times as likely to be raped by pupils during the next two-month period as one who has not been robbed; 41 percent of school bombings occur on Tuesdays; a student runs the greatest risk of being assaulted on Wednesdays.

Yet, classroom violence in America is not as pervasive as many believe, writes Rubel, director of research at the Institute for Reduction of Crime in College Park, Md., analyzing a 1978 report by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Only 8 percent of all school principals complain of more than 7 incidents of violence per month (a level considered "serious"), and many report that violence has leveled off since 1973.

More serious than the financial or physical damage is the climate of apprehension and disruption that violence creates. Some 33 percent of junior high school students in large cities report they avoid certain dangerous areas of their schools (most frequently a restroom), and 7 percent reported living in constant fear. Such fear tends to cause student absenteeism, which in turn affects federal or state per-pupil cost reimbursements to schools.

Yet, Rubel says, the HEW study disproves two pervasive beliefs: first, that schools cannot do much to reduce crime and violence because these are broad social ills; and, second, that outsiders are responsible for most school violence (except in cases of trespassing and breaking and entering, between 74 and 98 percent of all offenses are committed by youngsters enrolled in the school).

It is clear, Rubel concludes, that the factors *not* under the educators' control are far less important than such school-controlled variables as number of students per teacher, class size, and the principal's own qualities of fairness, firmness, and consistency in helping individual teachers to maintain discipline.