

gnawing slowly and patiently at us from within until we succumb entirely to its sharp teeth; a chunk of ice growing and freezing us inside. Your lips feel dry, your palms sweat and your body shivers with the chills of a strange malaise. There comes a time when you stop thinking in terms of politics and weighing the situation realistically—in fact, you stop thinking altogether. Then fear takes over: You catch yourself in mid-gesture in your own suddenly unfamiliar room, paralyzed by the abrupt void gaping before you that sucks in all remaining traces of familiar reality like a maelstrom. You stand motionless, drained of thought. Nothing remains but that crystal moment of pure fear spreading inside. It isn't just a fear of death but of the meaninglessness of organized death, death as a statistic in a long series of statistics, mass death, the lethal power struggle.

When the changes began we didn't imagine it would turn out as it has, our closeness to war curdling the blood with fear. But perhaps the German reporters were right—perhaps we've gotten so used to war that you can no longer read the apprehension on our faces. The word "war" entered our life slowly, on tiptoe; we didn't recognize it right away. Special units of the police stood on guard in front of the National Assembly building and Croatian television headquarters, while in the stores you could buy French cheeses and wines, Norwegian caviar and salmon, American cigarettes, Swiss chocolate, Italian clothing. Despite the presence of the special troops, the fear of war existed at some other level, an abstract level of television and newspaper reports and political speeches that couldn't touch us in the intimacy of our living rooms, like the thunder of a distant storm or strains of background music which, with a little effort, can still be ignored. But the sounds came closer and closer until there was no blocking them out. When the first victims fell, there was nowhere left to hide, nowhere to run.

Has the war begun?

I look at a photograph of the late Josip Jović, at his almost childlike face, and watch Rajko Vukadinović's funeral. I see the face of Goran Alavanja, the policeman who was slain, and hear the voice of the woman whose red Yugo was riddled with twenty-eight bullets. Then I read about the deaths of Stipo Bosnjak, Zdenko Perica, Luka Crnkovic, Mladen Catio; or about the young soldier Sasko Gesovski, killed in Split. And suddenly I register a subtle distinction in my awareness, a line we have yet to cross, the reason that I could still tell my American friends, despite all that has happened, "No, we're not at war." As long as the funeral of each person killed is broadcast and telegrams of condolence from politicians are read, as long as the retouched pictures enlarged from victims' ID cards are published and their wives and mothers interviewed, as long as the wounded police are visited in the hospital by dignitaries and the doctors discuss each wound the victim received on his forearm—as long as political points can still be gained or lost with the casualties, we are O.K. We won't be at war as long as we can remember the names and faces of the victims.

But comes the day when the dead remain nameless ("Eighteen members of the Ministry of the Interior were killed today

in the vicinity of Titova Korenica," or "thirteen soldiers and twenty-one members of the police from the Krajina region," or "twenty-five Croats and thirty-one Serbs"), and their funerals and the faces of mourning kin no longer appear on television—no panning of bloodstained earth, no newspapers elaborating the details of their death ("He was standing there, over by that tree; you can still see the marks left by the bullets . . ."), no authorities proclaiming them heroes or martyrs—then war will be here and we will all know it. Even the Americans. □

■ THE VIEW FROM THE SHELTERS

New York's New Ghettos

CAMILO JOSÉ VERGARA

The anonymous building on 138th Street and Jackson Avenue in the South Bronx has the aspect of a civic structure. Its two facing wings are linked by a cheerful squarish structure with a pitched roof and a windowed cupola that allows light to enter the lofty room below. The orange brick exterior, articulated with delicate latticework, contrasts with the pale green of the metal doors and roofs. Inside, alternating color patterns lend a sense of both order and variety. As with the other new shelters for homeless people operated under the auspices of New York City's Human Resources Administration (H.R.A.), nothing betrays its function. The architects proposed placing a small bronze identification plaque at the entrance, but H.R.A. declined.

Outside, the grounds are well kept, with a shiny new playground, comfortable park benches, trees and greenery. But beyond the perimeter lies a devastated urban landscape. Crack dealers across the street run a busy operation from two buildings that flank a day-care center. In 1989 *The New York Times* designated this area one of the twelve busiest drug markets in the city.

During the day the management discourages people from sitting on the shaded benches that face the shelter's main entrance. The architects are disappointed; they had hoped that residents would use the facilities. But already many windows have been broken, people have been shot, and there is fear that the dealers will set up business by the entrance. The official attitude—against congregating outside—changes at night, when control is limited to the inside. On a visit there one evening last summer I found the benches fully occupied. A boy with a pea shooter was trying stubbornly to break one of the expensive lamps. Nearby, on Beekman Avenue, I was startled by the rapid burst of a machine gun. Three men, one of them carrying the weapon, cut across an empty lot, yet the people crowding the block seemed undisturbed.

Camilo José Vergara is a New York photojournalist who is completing a book on the new American ghetto, to be published next year by Princeton Architectural Press.

Immediately north of the shelter I saw a poem neatly written on a building wall. Titled "A Boy," it reads:

I am the boy who lives in a slum
surrounded by problems with nowhere to go
I am the boy who has no hope, who solves his problems with
a bag of smoke
I am the boy who lives next door, whos father is a drunk and
whos mother is a whore
I am the boy who lives a rough life, who has to depend on a
push-button knife
I am the boy who must take the first swing
I am the boy who must pull the trigger
I am the boy who whitey calls nigger

The easiest way to find the most depressed, drug-ridden and violent communities in all of New York City is to visit the area surrounding nine of its thirteen large new shelters. Five of these communities are in the South Bronx, three are in one section of northeast Brooklyn and one is in Manhattan. Ten of the shelters are city-owned, and three have been built by HELP, the nonprofit organization run by Governor Mario Cuomo's son Andrew and financed with state tax-exempt bonds.

The shelters are emblematic of New York's approach to the poor in the pre-fiscal crisis days, a multimillion-dollar adjunct to the city's \$5.1 billion ten-year housing plan, the most ambitious such project in the country. Hundreds of buildings, sealed for a decade or longer, have been rebuilt as part of the plan begun in 1986, and family houses and green lawns have replaced empty lots. The flip side of these impressive developments, however, is an atrocity, for what the plan is also accomplishing—and what will be aggravated with the city's impending austerity—is the containment and concentration of the weakest and neediest people in places that are sometimes bizarre, often disconcerting and always bleak: reservations of the poor.

From 1983 to 1989 the area around Times Square was the largest and most visible place for the temporary settlement of homeless families. Infamous hotels such as the Martinique, the Madison and the Prince George are now closed. The new homeless capital is the South Bronx. There, 44 percent of the new permanent housing for the homeless, as well as five shelters, have been completed or are under construction. Three additional large shelters will be in rehabilitated buildings. Manhattan, with only one new men's shelter and a dozen "homeless buildings," is being spared.

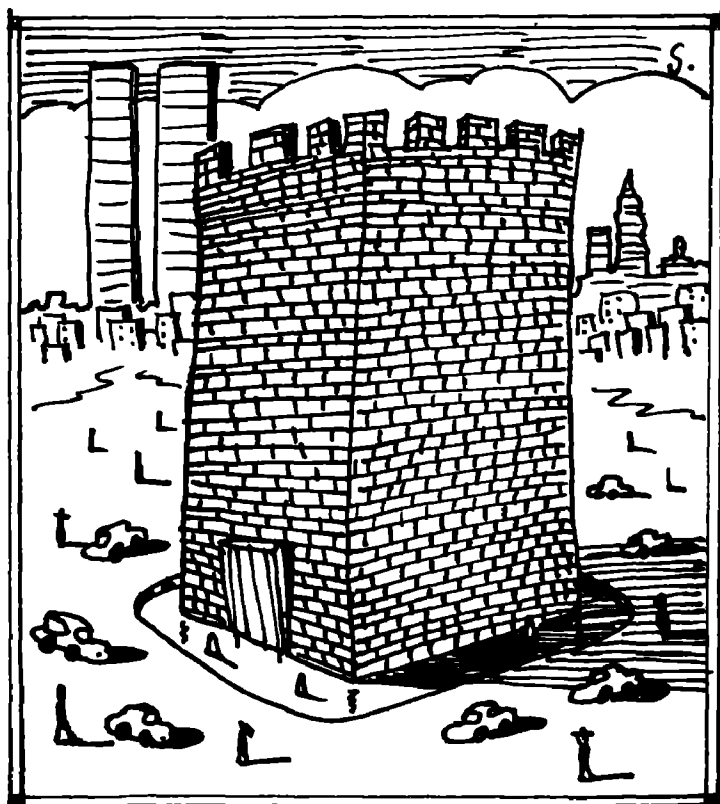
"Those looking for a place to put a shelter search for bad communities where nobody is going to ask questions," explains Pancho Rodriguez, a building superintendent in the South Bronx. "Who is going to raise objections in a community where drugs are everything?" In 1983, when New York owned nearly 50,000 apartments in the most destitute and violent areas of the city, the city government decided to reserve units that became vacant for homeless families then living in shelters or hotels. Three years later it located the majority of its shelters in these communities as well, eventually adding more than 2,000 families and several hundred single people. Now, under the ten-year plan, more than 4,000 apartments in formerly abandoned city-owned buildings have been and

are being rehabilitated in these same areas as permanent housing for homeless people.

Services and other institutions that no organized community wants in its backyard—prisons, sanitation works and other "NIMBYs"—have followed. New York, famous for its garment district, its diamond district and others, now has its districts for the "homeless industry." Group homes for children and battered women share buildings with homeless families; drug treatment centers, methadone clinics, shelters, soup kitchens and correctional institutions are also springing up. By encircling the blocks in which large concentrations of these facilities coexist with deteriorating housing projects in areas of heavy drug dealing and relocation of formerly homeless people, one can map New York's new ghettos.

For example, in an eight-block stretch of an isolated section of the South Bronx, between the Cross Bronx Expressway and Crotona Park on both sides of Prospect Avenue, one finds six attractively reconstructed buildings intended mostly for homeless families; a shelter for 100 families being built by HELP; a large sanitation facility; and at the heart of it, on Marmion Avenue and 175th Street, a thriving, deadly drug operation. In a *New York Times Magazine* interview last year, Andrew Cuomo was paraphrased as saying that at least half the mothers and older children in his facilities have a drug problem. Why, then, has he placed his shelters in such drug-filled neighborhoods? Rafael, the super of a building on Morris Avenue in the South Bronx, pointed to the 212-family HELP shelter then being completed half a block away and said, "There are drugs on this corner, there are drugs on that corner, there are drugs all over 170th Street. All that the women will have to do to reserve their drugs is to scream out of their windows."

The clustering of destitute people and facilities in isolated



sections is no remaking of the old ghettos. These "districts" are characterized by their bureaucratic rules, comprehensiveness of form, publicly supported economy and populations marked by the experience of homelessness and addiction. People do not choose to go to these areas; they are sent there, uprooted from neighborhoods and people they know. A small number of downtown officials make the rules that determine who is entitled to reside in most of the housing and to use the facilities. Lower-ranking officials select the needy and refer them to these places.

As much as they are defined by what they possess, the new ghettos are defined by what they lack. In other parts of the city that were once as poor as these, community development organizations have rebuilt economically mixed neighborhoods, pushed out drug dealers and prevented the city from building NIMBYs. But people in the new ghettos are too disconnected to have formed effective organizations. The transient character of the majority of the residents leaves such urban areas unclaimed, and thus politically powerless.

Your Tired, Your Poor, Your Criminal

Along Saratoga Avenue, in a crime-ridden Brooklyn neighborhood called the Hill, four specialized shelters have been completed in the past two years. They have brought more than 300 men and women, some with AIDS, some with mental problems and some drug addicted, to a half-empty area of fifteen square blocks. Because of those they serve, these shelters raise strong community opposition. H.R.A. argues that these people's problems are common among the shelter population; the Hill simply happens to have vacant city-owned land and empty buildings.

The area abounds in NIMBYs. Three apartment buildings are being rehabilitated, mostly for homeless families, and the city has given all the necessary approvals for a Juvenile Detention Center with a capacity of 100. The bulk of the Hill's population lives immediately west of these facilities, in the nearly 700 apartments of the Marcus Garvey and the Prospect Plaza Homes. These are among the most violent and feared of the city's public housing projects. Homeless families, desperate for a place to live, have been known to refuse apartments here.

Even the Reverend Randolph Brown Houses, a well-kept project for the elderly that was once a secure oasis, has begun

to suffer from the problems of the surroundings. Grandmothers have been held hostage by their own drug-addicted grandchildren, who take over their apartments and their money. On the bulletin board, a sign advertises the day and the time of the weekly trip to the local supermarket, when residents can go shopping with a police escort.

"I would like the area to come out of the hole we are in and begin to resurrect," says Jeanette Gadson, district manager for Brownsville. "All the social disasters of New York City are placed here, and the city is cutting the budget for social services." A local realtor explains how this came about so quickly: "You have to remember who we are and where we are."

'Still Alive'?: East New York

Sandwiched between the gigantic concrete slabs of the Brownsville projects and the mid-size projects of East New York, another new ghetto is emerging. A quarter-century ago, the narrow area enclosed by elevated subway lines to the east and south, and by Atlantic Avenue to the north, was a crowded industrial neighborhood. Now almost all its family houses have been demolished. Its character derives from the sharp smell of motor oil from junkyards, the pounding of heavy machinery and the screeching of subway trains. The streets are littered with tires, hoses and other auto fragments that local salvagers cannot recycle. In parking lots and buildings, dirty dogs walk through dark, oily pools among men covered with grease, men who load and unload the trucks that remove wrecked and stripped cars from the city's streets. The people who live here tend to be down on their luck: prostitutes, scavengers with their shopping carts, clients of the social service facilities, and families surviving next door to gutted and burned-out buildings.

East New York is also the site of a vast, expensive and unplanned social experiment. In 1981, to meet a court deadline that ordered the city to provide shelter on demand, New York opened its first city-run shelter in an old public school. According to then-Deputy Mayor Nathan Leventhal, the reason for siting the 400-man facility in this school was that "it would have a minimal impact on the community," the neighborhood being mostly abandoned.

In 1987 Andrew Cuomo's HELP chose East New York for its first shelter, housing 200 families. Cuomo says this was the only place where he could get an entire block of land from the city free of charge. In addition to a temporary place to live, HELP provides security, a large enclosed playground and services for the residents. Across the street from the family shelter, Cuomo is building 150 apartments, seventy-five of which are intended for homeless families. He plans to spend three-quarters of a million dollars a year to provide them with social services. At night the shelter seems inviting amid the darkness of the industrial facilities and the empty lots. A woman who lives there sees it "all lit up like an island." Yet neither it nor the apartments under construction can transcend their surroundings.

Three blocks north, the H.R.A. shelter was recently transformed from a men's to a women's facility. Across the street from that rises a busy social service center, built like a fortress, drawing clients from a large section of eastern Brook-

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES

MOVING?

Send both your old mailing label and your new address to:

THE NATION
P.O. Box 10763
Des Moines IA 50340-0763

Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing.

PROBLEMS?

If you have any problems or questions regarding your subscription, please write to us at the address to the left, or call:

1 (800) 333-8536
Monday to Friday
7 00 am to 7 00 pm CST
Saturday
8 00 am to 4 00 pm CST

lyn. Saint Mary's Hospital has two methadone clinics in this area, serving about 600 clients. The city shelter's population spills into the streets; women dally in abandoned buildings and at stoplights, soliciting drivers and passers-by. Called "one of the two most dangerous and threatening shelters in the system" by the Coalition for the Homeless, its only purpose is to offer a place to spend the night.

Life in this industrial-homeless space is vulnerable to violence from the housing projects on both sides. Walking the streets is like negotiating an obstacle course. Groups of menacing young men deal drugs in front of supermarkets, laundromats and subway stops. To avoid being attacked, says a worker in the area, one has "to look at them in the eyes, show them you are ready to fight."

The 'war on poverty,' whose goal was to uplift the poor, has been redesigned merely to contain the poor.

It takes much planning and energy to avoid walking into a drug deal, witnessing a shooting or being shot. A caretaker in the area reports a strange silence and sense of immobility, broken by bursts of gunfire, during weapons sales. The residents, knowing that a gun deal is taking place in their building, dare not leave their apartments.

Even if one did not know the crime statistics or did not hear accounts of the most recent homicides, signs of violence are everywhere: in the spent shells on the ground; in windows so full of holes as to suggest urban warfare; in the homemade targets used to test guns; and in the memorials to the young who have died. Unity Plaza, a low-rise project to the northeast, has been nicknamed Dead Man's Plaza, and in the hallway of a nearby building someone has written hurriedly, in huge letters: "Still Alive."

An urban space that junks cars, warehouses steel, temporarily houses the homeless, administers poverty services and methadone, and is permeated by drugs, fear and violence is not a neighborhood. It is a place where life is leading nowhere, where planning is nearly impossible and where the surroundings speak of dumping, of storage, institutionalization and social control.

A No Man's Land at the Edges

Bushwick, East New York, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Ocean Hill come together in an area of Brooklyn so forsaken that it even lacks a name. Father John Powis, who for a quarter-century has lived and worked in this part of the city, calls it "an unrepresented area made up of the edges of different places; people have been dumped here for decades while the local politicians looked the other way."

Here one can see an exceptionally attractive family shelter, a red brick structure recalling a monastery with its air of

self-sufficiency and reverence. But such lofty sensations are overwhelmed by the building's setting. It abuts the Jamaica elevated subway line in a neighborhood where the houses are falling apart. To the west is a shooting gallery. Two blocks east, in an empty lot full of weeds, discarded mattresses, appliances and tires, stands the semiabandoned former Deaconess Evangelical Hospital, now the Bushwick Relocation Center. This shelter houses 133 women, many of whom are rejects from other shelters. Crack users hang out and prostitute themselves. A neighborhood resident described the women as those whose children have been taken away and put in foster homes, and whose only possession is an extra pair of underwear.

Two additional shelters operate in this section, and construction on a large family facility is due to begin soon. By 1992, when the last of the shelters is scheduled to open, a three-block radius along Broadway will have more than 600 homeless people. Amid persistent poverty a stark design for breeding further homelessness, drug addiction, AIDS and crime is emerging.

Pavement and Prison Walls: Briarwood

"A shelter is like spitting in your face," says Michael, a retired teacher who is angry because of the family shelter under construction a block from his apartment in Briarwood, Queens. This most public of the city shelters—and the only one likely to be completed in an integrated neighborhood—is at the intersection of the Van Wyck Expressway, 134th Street and Union Turnpike. Wedged in a landscape of fast-moving car lanes, the shelter will, for a few seconds, be glimpsed by millions. Yet set below street level, its entrance facing the expressway, it is hardly assertive.

"It is being built on sandy soil, worthless land," Michael says. "They spent millions digging and securing the foundations. They say it is going to be three stories high. The prison is right behind. They light up that bastard [the prison] at night; you create a nightmare over there." He adds, "You are going to have ladies pushing their children in their strollers, and I don't like it. I think they would be more comfortable in their own neighborhoods."

The recent fair-share rules of the New York City Planning Commission support a more even distribution among rich and poor sections of the city of what the commission calls burdensome facilities. Yet this is a false hope. Since most of the shunned facilities are completed, under construction or already sited on lots prepared for digging, the rules are too late to make a real difference. Moreover, it is unlikely that the city will embark on another round of large-scale construction for at least a decade. Fair share cannot dismantle what years of political expedience and racial prejudice have erected.

The new ghettos refute the notion that eventually we will all be part of one big middle class. During the past decade the "war on poverty," whose goal was to uplift the poor, has been redesigned merely to contain the poor, further segregating them from the rest of society. With their big shelters, busy social service offices and deteriorating housing projects, these areas employ thousands of social workers, guards, corrections officers, nurses and doctors at a huge cost. Now, at a time of

fiscal crisis, the budgets that maintain the vast array of welfare and government services in these areas are subject to shrinkage and deferral of all but minimal expenditures. In the words of a local resident, the bright new facilities will soon look like "just another rathole." But even costlier, and more deleterious, is the contribution of these new ghettos to dependency, illness and delinquency, and to the waste of human beings. Before the full entrenchment of these nightmarish "districts," the people of New York City need to plan how to dismantle them and begin again. □

■ BIG-BUCK BASKETBALL

Acolytes in the Temple of Nike

JACOB WEISMAN

The business of sport, most of us are becoming aware, is not only a big business but one that is no longer the sole property of the teams involved—nor has it been for some time. A quick look around the Seattle Coliseum during a SuperSonics basketball game will quickly confirm this suspicion. A total of ten bulletin boards, advertising companies such as Alaska Airlines, Blockbuster Video, G.T.E. ("The smart business") and Safeway ("What a neighbor should be"), circle the outer reaches, blocking scoreboard visibility for fans sitting in the top rows.

Illuminated Coca-Cola signs hang above the four courtside exits. The scorer's table rotates a series of new ads every five minutes or so throughout the course of the game, continually catching one's attention with their sudden movements. No matter where the eyes might rest, no matter how trivial that spot might be, it seems someone, somewhere, coveted its commercial potential. The folding chairs used to seat the visiting players sport Coca-Cola logos. The sweats worn by the Sonics ball boys carry Avia logos (as do their caps and the backs of their shirts); there is also an honorary Coca-Cola ball boy at each game.

The scoreboard is a whirl of computer-generated graphics, advertising such products as Isuzu Motors, Miller beer, Oberto Sausage, Elephant Car Wash, Taco Bell, Tombstone Pizza, BP Oil and Ernst Hardware. In all, sixty-five different product lines flash across the big screen at least once every game—many accompanied by messages broadcast over the public address system. Full-blown advertisements for Coca-Cola, Subaru and Tim's Cascade Style Potato Chips ("The potato chip that goes crunch") fill the breaks between quarters. The Sonics Dance Team, brought to you courtesy of Nestlé Crunch, performs original dance numbers to popular hits between timeouts.

The National Basketball Association and the Sonics are re-

luctant to disclose the revenue generated by the vast whirlwind of sponsorships, claiming, as well they might, that they have no wish for one company to know what another might be paying for the same service. A more logical explanation for the N.B.A.'s reluctance, however, would in all probability center around negotiations with the N.B.A.'s players' union, which is currently looking into the possibility of including sponsorships and endorsements in its revenue-sharing contract. The players now receive 53 percent of the total gross revenue from television contracts and ticket sales, which adds up to almost \$1 million per player.

Whatever the precise amount, the income the Sonics produce from their various sponsorships must be staggering. According to the Sonics' sales manager, Scott Patrick, while twenty-five of the Sonics' seventy-three sponsors pay only between \$10,000 and \$30,000, thirty-three pay from \$30,000 to \$70,000, twelve pay at least \$100,000 and three pay in the high six figures. Add to that the individual promotions and giveaways, which can cost companies \$100,000 or more, as well as league sponsorships divided among all twenty-eight N.B.A. teams, and the total rises well above the large share the players now receive, depending on the accuracy of figures provided for the purpose of leaving a lot to speculation.

Eight or nine years ago, every player on every team, right down to the players on the injured reserve, could expect to make at least \$30,000 a year merely from wearing on the court whatever brand of basketball shoes he was paid to endorse. More recently, however, the shoe companies have consolidated their endorsements, paying huge sums to the high-profile athletes while completely excluding those on the lower rungs. The best and most charismatic players, like Chicago's Michael Jordan or San Antonio's David Robinson, can expect to earn many times more than their already considerably large salaries strictly from endorsements. Jordan himself has endorsed at least nine products—two lines of Nike basketball shoes, Wheaties, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Chevrolet, Guy Laroche watches, Wilson basketballs and Bigsby & Kruthers suits.

The stakes are high, and shoe companies, often at the front lines, begin wooing the players they believe will be the superstars of the future while those players are still in college or even high school. L.A. Gear recently signed Louisiana State University head coach Dale Brown for a rumored \$250,000 to have him endorse—and, more important, to have his team wear—its brand of basketball shoes. One of Brown's players, 19-year-old sophomore Shaquille O'Neil, is perhaps the most coveted pro prospect in the country. He may join the N.B.A. as early as next year, but he'll wear L.A. Gear until he leaves L.S.U. to become a professional. L.A. Gear hopes O'Neil will like the shoes enough to give it the inside track in the competition to sign him to a contract when he does leave college.

The process of wooing potential stars often begins even earlier, with bribes of free shoes and athletic equipment to children not yet out of junior high or high school. If players show enough promise, their interests will often be looked after by a shoe company, which will try to convince them to go to the right college—one where their talents can be showcased and where, not coincidentally, the team's coach endorses that company's brand of footwear.

Jacob Weisman, a freelance writer living in San Francisco, worked as an intern in the public relations department of the Seattle SuperSonics.

Copyright of Nation is the property of Nation Company, Inc.. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.