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# BRANDING CITIES

## A Social History of the Urban Lifestyle Magazine

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The author traces the emergence over the past 30 years of a new media genre in U.S. cities: the urban lifestyle magazine. With the shift in the primary role of U.S. cities from production sites to consumption spaces after World War II, these magazines facilitated the branding of consumer-oriented urban imaginaries. Using *New York Magazine*, *Atlanta Magazine*, and *Los Angeles Magazine* as examples, the author shows how these “branded cities” changed over time, discursively reflecting and contributing to the socioeconomic restructuring of their namesake cities and the formation of a new urban middle-class niche market.

### BRANDING THE URBAN IMAGINARY

As a variety of urban and cultural theorists have shown, the space of the city is produced not only materially and geographically but also in the social imagination and through changing modes of cultural representation. Alongside and in dialectical relation with the “real” built city exists what may be called the “urban imaginary”: a coherent, historically based ensemble of representations drawn from the architecture and street plans of the city, the art produced by its residents, and the images of and discourse on the city as seen, heard, or read in movies, on television, in magazines, and other forms of mass media (Zukin et al. 1998; Donald 1999; Harvey 2000, 155-9). And to the extent that cities are divided along lines of class, race, ethnicity, and gender, in any given city at any given time, there will be a number of urban imaginaries coexisting and competing against each other for dominance.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, although diverse urban imaginaries may coexist and compete, they do not do so on an even playing field. Distinct groups with varying degrees of

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power have different resources available to them with which to represent and promote a single version of the urban imaginary that serves their interests. With the dual rise of the capitalist metropolis and modern technologies of mass media, differentials in representational and promotional power have widened. Over the past 150 years, “urban imagineers” working with local advertising agencies, publishing houses, broadcasters, and other emerging media industries have created an extensive “critical infrastructure” of urban guidebooks, reviews, and press coverage with which to mediate ever more complex consumer spaces (Zukin 1994, 258-59). And particularly during the past 30 years, as shifts in the global, national, and local economic base have forced cities to market themselves internationally in search of new sources of revenue, we have seen most clearly how new media, in the hands of rising urban elites, do not simply sell new urban imaginaries but help to construct and impose them.

I would like to call this simultaneous marketing and production of a monolithic, consumer-oriented version of the urban imaginary the branding of the city. In common usage (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2000), the word *branding* simultaneously connotes the corporate labeling of a thing and the permanent, physical, even violent transformation and commodification of both things and living beings.<sup>2</sup> The term took on added meaning in the business world in the 1960s and 1970s, when a global financial crisis, recession, and rising competition provoked the shift from Fordist economies of scale to more flexible economies of scope and with them the development of niche marketing.<sup>3</sup> Such marketing intensified the centuries-old drive toward the fetishization of the commodity, enabling humanization of commodities alongside the commodification and dehumanization of both producers and consumers. Information-filled ads appealing to consumers as rational decision makers gave way to ads emphasizing emotional and psychological linkages between scientifically calibrated consumer lifestyles and brand-name items.<sup>4</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s, through business publications such as *BrandMonthly*, academic journals such as the *Harvard Business Review*, trade journals across a variety of industries, a number of branding textbooks (e.g., Macrae 1997; Hart and Murphy 1998), and numerous conferences and conventions (see Elliot 1999),<sup>5</sup> the notion of branding as a field of study emerged and with it the notion of “brand value” as something that could be scientifically quantified, purchased, and “repurchased” separate from the equity of the company (see Kapferer 1996).<sup>6</sup> Seeing that a brand’s power to connote such abstract notions of exchange value depended on the quality rather than sheer quantity of exposure, a new breed of “brand managers” arose to build consistent, unified brand images, strategically associating

brand names with the appropriate people, places, events, ideas, time periods, and so forth, which resonated with the target market.

I would argue that over the same 30-year period and faced with similar competitive pressures and identity crises, city agencies and city-based businesses, separately and in concert, have begun to employ branding strategies to re-create and market their own cities. In the wake of widescale deindustrialization and federal retrenchment, new "synergies" have formed between traditional city boosters (chambers of commerce, city halls, etc.; local and transnational corporations based in advertising, media, and culture industries; as well as high- and low-end service industries, from finance to real estate to restaurants. Through branding their city, these groups seek to forge emotional linkages between a commodified city and its increasingly footloose middle- and upper-class consumers (i.e., new potential residents, investors, corporate partners, tourists, and so on) in such a way that the name of the city alone will conjure up a whole series of images and emotions and with them an impression of value. Ultimately, they hope their city's identity will merge with its commercialized image as produced by advertising, media, and cultural industries and be repurchased as if it were real. In the process, the "real" material city is altered to conform to the idealized image of the brand-name city and to facilitate its further commodification.

The commodification of cities is not in and of itself new. Indeed, the Harvard Business School could still learn a lesson from the original urban boosters who, using the panoptic strategies of photographic panoramas (Boyer 1994) and "city view books" (Hales 1984), managed to sell investors on exotically named cities in the swamps of Florida and the wilds of California, sight unseen. Contemporary historians, following the path of Walter Benjamin's (1999) excavation of the capitalist dreamworld captured in "urban panoramic literature" and the *feuilleton*, have recently turned their attention to how the emerging nineteenth-century mass urban publications functioned not only as texts-on-cities but as *texts-as-cities*, creating all-encompassing, power-laden cities in miniature within their stories, listings, and guides. From newspapers and the *faits divers* press to the modern novel and Victorian slum literature (Donald 1999, chap. 2) to the rise of cinema (Hansen 1991; Donald 1999, chap. 3), theorists note how readers and spectators of these new media came to experience the fracturing of time, space, and power of the modern industrial metropolis. For as Peter Fritzsche (1999, 3-7) has insightfully observed, by overlaying the "built city" with a "word city," these media formed a new narrative map that "imposed coherence [on a world of] unfamiliarity and flux . . . inviting as well as containing movement through the city."

Yet, although the practice of strategically commodifying urban imaginaries is not new, the cycles of capital accumulation and cultural production in

which the practice is embedded have changed dramatically over the past 30 years. Like their nineteenth-century mass media predecessors, which arose with the industrial metropolis, new forms of urban media have emerged as panoramic navigational tools for a landscape of equally monumental flux: the postindustrial city. This is a restructured city in which economies of scale based in manufacturing have shifted to economies of scope geared toward high- and low-end services; an amorphous city that has been decentralized and rescaled around globally networked, exurban residential and commercial zones; a divided city increasingly fractured by lines of class, education, race, and ethnicity; and a privatized city forced to revamp and sell its image and amenities to tourists, corporations, affluent homeowners, and lifestyle shoppers (see Harvey 1992; Lash and Urry 1994; Judd and Fainstein 1999). It is a city that has been the site of post-1960s “communications revolution,” spawning a new “institutional matrix” of high-tech media resources that are less capital and labor intensive and linked to transnational corporate networks (Weiss 1973, 52; Radway 1984; Mattelart 1994, 127). And finally, it is the city of an entrepreneurial “new urban middle class,” for whom identity and politics are defined and constructed around consumer lifestyles (Atlas 1984; Goodwin 1993; Vidich 1995). It is in such a city that wholesale urban branding campaigns that align local political interests with transnational corporate media and services have not only become possible, but a central engine of urban economic growth.

A prime example of the new city branding media is the urban lifestyle magazine. According to historians of journalism, the modern city magazine movement was born in the 1960s, when some 60 metropolitan regions across the United States spawned magazines bearing their name, and has continued to this day, when more than 100 such publications exist (see Hynds 1991; Riley and Selnow 1991).<sup>7</sup> These urban lifestyle magazines, as they might be called, are consumer magazines that fuse the identity and consumption habits of their readers with the branded “lifestyle” of a given metropolitan region and were shaped by the changing institutional matrix of magazine publishing in the post–World War II period. Forced to compete against TV for advertising, facilitated by new publishing technologies, and taking advantage of the new consumer research methods mentioned above (see Magazine Advertising Bureau 1960, 1974),<sup>8</sup> the magazine industry as a whole was shifting away from mass-marketed general-interest magazines and toward niche-marketed lifestyle titles that could deliver a more specific market to advertisers (Taft 1973; Shaw 1977; Abramson 1996). Early on, this restructured industry identified the new educated middle-class niche growing in metropolitan regions across the country, as well as a breed of visionary writers and entrepreneurial

publishers who could represent this class and attract advertisers and investors seeking to tap its market potential.

By historically and comparatively tracing the representation of cities in the pages of these magazines from the 1960s through the 1990s, we are able to chart the evolution and branding of a new urban imaginary among the resident new middle class, as well as the social restructuring of the cities themselves. In this article, I endeavor to do this by focusing on three magazines that were influential within the genre and represent historically distinct urban regions: *Atlanta Magazine (AM)*, *Los Angeles Magazine (LAM)*, and *New York Magazine (NYM)*. I have surveyed some 100 issues of each, looking closely at the January and June issues of every year between 1961 and 1995.<sup>9</sup> I have thus identified four general periods in which brand images of cities seem to cluster and change. For the first three periods, new branding strategies are employed that seem to relate to changing political, economic, and cultural directions of their namesake cities. I will briefly outline each of these periods by discussing one magazine that I consider the most paradigmatic of these changes. For the final period, in which the magazines and their cities begin to look increasingly similar, I will compare and contrast all three magazines. I first turn my attention to *AM*, which I believe set the standard for the earliest period of the genre.

### **CITY-AS-SKYLINE: ATLANTA MAGAZINE, 1961-1969**

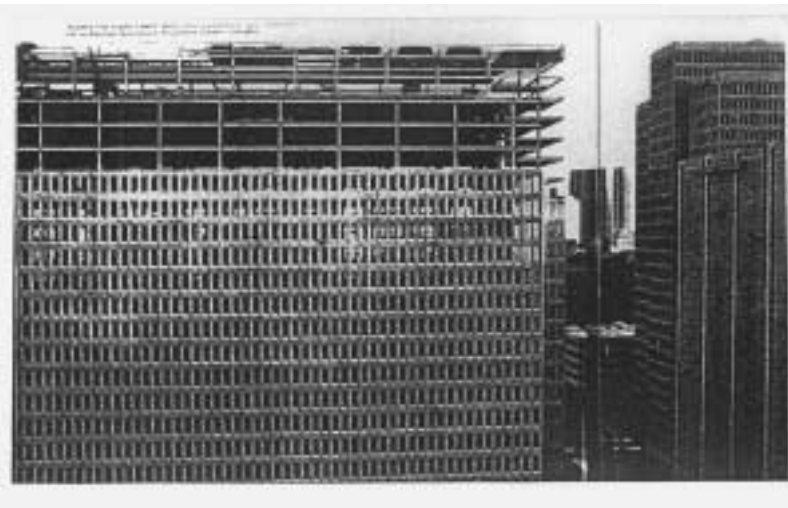
The city of Atlanta arose within a century and a half from a frontier backwater to become the so-called "Gate City of the South." With hardly any locally based transnational corporations or foreign direct investment, no port or international airport, and entrenched xenophobia among its political elite, Atlanta was still very much a typical regional capital in the 1960s (Rutheiser 1996).<sup>10</sup> Yet, in the optimistic tradition dating back to the city's phoenix-like rise from the ashes of the Civil War, by 1961, city boosters were proclaiming Atlanta "the world's next great international city." As a beneficiary of major military-industrial contracts during World War II and of the nation's first "model city" urban renewal grant, Atlanta undertook massive infrastructural overhaul throughout the 1960s. One-third of the center city's housing stock, the largest proportion in black working-class neighborhoods, was demolished to make way for a new international airport, the Georgia World Congress Center, International Expressway, and a sports stadium.<sup>11</sup> This was accompanied by some of the fastest population expansion and the most racially and economically uneven growth of any urban region in the country.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, in pursuit of their dream of promoting an unblemished, future-facing urban imagery, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce hired a major New York advertising firm to create a multimillion-dollar, multiyear campaign called “Forward Atlanta,” which they placed in elite national and international business publications.<sup>13</sup> These ads sold Atlanta’s unparalleled climate for lifestyle and business and attempted to cleanse the city of the taint of southern provincialism and racial conflict (Rutheiser 1996, 76). Founded in 1961 and one of the first urban lifestyle magazines published in the country, *Atlanta Magazine* was intended as an integral part of the chamber’s “homefront campaign” (Hynds 1994; Rutheiser 1996, 30). It was *AM*’s job to sell a more virile, cosmopolitan, and generically modern image of the “City Fear Forgot” (Shelton 1962, 19) to local as well as outside businesspeople and investors.

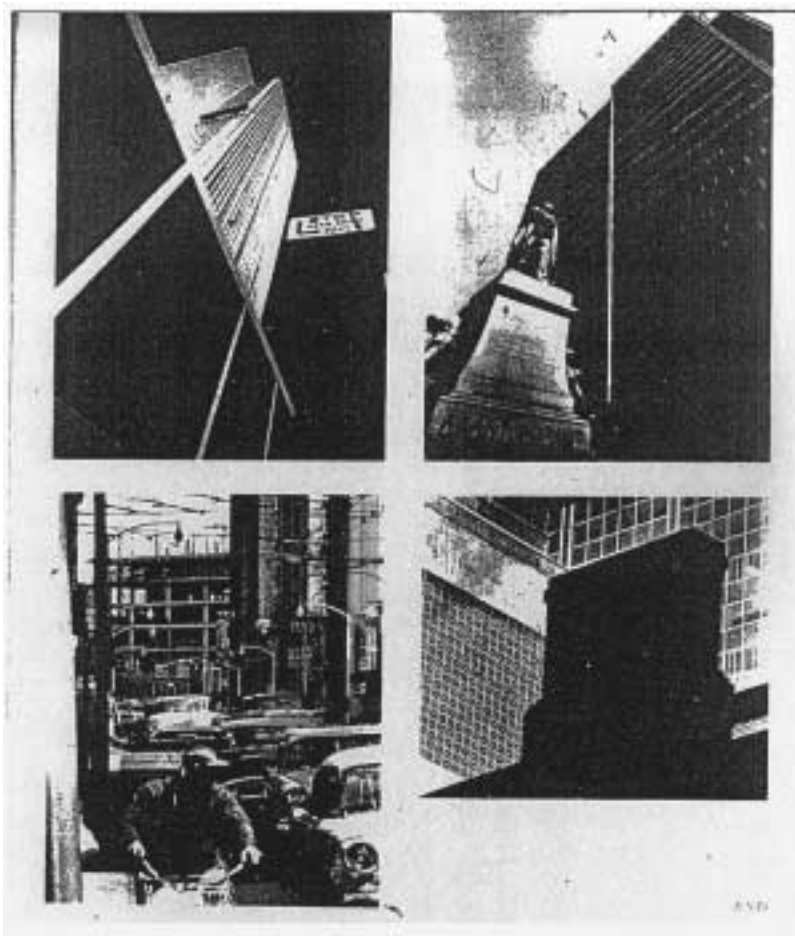
*AM* pursued this goal through features providing evidence, in the tradition of nineteenth-century “urban grand-style” city view books, of Atlanta’s irrefutable *cityness* (Hales 1984). Visually, the articles used full-page, dramatically angled, peopleless photographs of towering buildings in the process of being built; broad boulevards connecting to massive highways; and cityscapes disappearing over the horizon (see Figure 1). These were graphically overlaid with spare, evocative prose. The article “Atlanta in the 60’s: First in a Series on Atlanta’s Growth, Economic Development, and Problems” (May 1961, 21-25), appeared in the first issue and set the tone. In a full-page aerial photograph, the word *60’s* sits like the sun on the horizon, and underneath, the following text appears to rise above the city skyline:

The famous old city of Atlanta is coming of age. This is the town which movies and books have long portrayed as the hub of Southern hospitality and the Fried Chicken Capital of the World. But Atlanta is changing . . . *has* changed, in fact. The booming nerve center of the South has turned a new face to the nation. And its a broad-beamed face of fancy new skyscrapers, fast moving expressways, great wealth, and plenty of hustle. This is “Atlanta in the 60’s.”

These photo-essays proclaimed a rebirth of the city so all-encompassing that it eclipsed all that the city had been before. “Atlanta’s Building Boom” (April 1962, 25-29) opened with an aerial photo of the new downtown shopping district topped by the towering words: “TEN YEARS AGO THIS DID NOT EXIST.” “Atlanta’s a New Type of City” (June 1967, 47-54) featured a two-page aerial photo of the downtown skyline shot with a fish-eye lens, followed by equally large shots of individual buildings appearing to burst the boundaries of the frame. The accompanying article describes how difficult it is to capture the city’s meteoric growth: “try to photograph it and the picture must be updated every few months.” This style was then mimicked in







**Figure 1: Atlanta Magazine's First Edition in 1961**

NOTE: These images are typical of the magazine's photo-essay style. Reminiscent of nineteenth-century urban grand-style photography, these peopleless panoramas of the city skyline served as evidence of Atlanta's modern cityness for outsiders and potential investors.

full-page ads for local businesses, predominated by local banks, department stores, insurance agencies, and realtors (see Figure 2).

*AM*'s relentless focus on progress reflected its adherence to the "New South Creed," in which an idealized history of the "Old South" was combined with utopian visions of the South's future growth as a means of reenvisioning the South as a modern, economically viable part of the union,



**Figure 2: Skyline Photography**

NOTE: Skyline photography, overlaid by spare prose celebrating the city's limitless growth, was mimicked in *Atlanta Magazine's* advertisements for local businesses. These juxtapositions further blurred the boundaries between advertising and editorial and revealed how Atlanta's urban imaginary was branded by a combination of media and commercial interests.

erasing its burdensome heritage of slavery, segregation, and racism (Gaston 1970; Frye 1991, 197; Rutheiser 1996). This futurism also entailed erasing another urban imaginary—one grown out of the periodicals of the reconstituted Ku Klux Klan, based in Atlanta from 1920 to 1960, and in television and newspaper reports of civil rights protests led by Atlanta native Rev. Martin Luther King decrying persistent racism in Atlanta and throughout the South. According to *AM*'s informal "national poll" of New York-based editors and rulers of the "media elite," racial unrest was found to be the single most damaging image to the city's new international aspirations (Townsend 1962). In response, the urban imaginary branded in the early issues of *AM* erased this complex of past and present racial problems by situating the city as the urban apotheosis of a successful century of Reconstruction. The following prose ran alongside a close-up of scaffolding on a new office tower ("Atlanta in the 60's" 1961, 23):

It might be said that Atlanta has seceded from the confederacy. Rebel flags and Civil War relics came off the office walls years ago, and have been replaced with aerial photographs of the city's impressive new skyline. Stately white-columned mansions are now filled to their ante-bellum attics with office workers. . . . Broad new expressways are cutting through the city's heart; gleaming new shopping centers are drawing a new ring around the town; and towering skyscrapers have come along to overshadow the Atlanta visitors once knew.

In seceding from its confederate past, *AM* was also seceding from a more centralized, racially integrated urban plan. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, Atlanta's black population more than doubled to become 25% of the city's population—as a result of both real and proportionate growth, as rapid exurbanization of a mostly white middle class was growing at the expense of the disproportionately black, working-class inner city. Although greater Atlanta's population expanded from 600,000 in 1965 to 3.4 million in 1995, Atlanta's core population stagnated at 424,300, making it one of the nation's smallest cities, as well as one of the poorest, because some 90% of job growth occurred in the outlying counties.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it is telling that when people do appear in *AM*'s photo-essays of the 1960s, they are almost entirely white. Until the mid-1970s, when a few blacks began to enter the political and business elite, images of nonwhites appeared only sporadically as part of the backdrop of scenes of urban decay, representing a past Atlanta that would be replaced by new construction—as in an image of older black women walking along a street in a downtown district marked for destruction ("Requiem for a Lady" 1962, 22). The language and imagery of decentralization in *AM* carried a double meaning: the exclusion of blacks and the inner city from a modern Atlantan imaginary.

*AM*'s branding of Atlanta in the 1960s also imaginatively redrew boundaries of class, gender, and age: Paradigmatic Atlantans became educated, upwardly mobile, 20-something white men. Women appeared mainly in ads and, when interviewed, as nameless shoppers in articles about the opening of new shopping malls ("Opening Day at the Mart" 1962, 19). Meanwhile, for men, a premium was placed on youth, virility, and business savvy. Beyond regular features on young industrial leaders and new chamber of commerce members, monthly profiles ran in the back of the magazine called "Young Man on the Go," which focused on "up and coming men in up and coming industries." As current editor Lee Walburn (1995, 12) reflected on his experience writing the column 30 years before, "Young Man on the Go . . . was the metaphor for a city typified by testosterone-driven business moxie. . . . It was as if I had been anointed to predict how the leadership of Atlanta would look when it grew up" (see Figure 3).

**CITY-AS-ATTITUDE:  
NEW YORK MAGAZINE, 1968-1973**

In the latter half of the 1960s, the first world's postwar prosperity, growth, and relative peace were coming to an end, and U.S. urban and regional economies dependent on large-scale industry and government subsidization began to decline (Harvey 1992, 141-72; Amin 1995). In addition, the social protest movements of the 1960s gained increasing coherence and militancy in their united opposition to the Vietnam War and racial inequality. Cities across the country were the hardest hit by the instability and the primary sites of the unrest. They experienced factory closings, layoffs, labor struggles, and social protest of such proportion that many predicted cities were on the brink of complete self-destruction, and the age of urban existence was over (Toffler 1970).<sup>15</sup> The urban middle class felt increasingly at risk of losing the hard-won gains of the previous decade: Many more fled to the suburbs, and those who chose to tough it out in the city felt in need of assistance. The old booster style of urban lifestyle reporting was inadequate to respond to this crisis.

Enter *NYM*. Since its inception in 1968, *NYM* is considered to have "set the standard" and "put into practice the ideas [that] influenced the development of the modern city magazine"—that is, a new style of city reporting based on the premise of providing a more radical alternative to existing city newspapers, as well as a legitimate "service" (Marmarelli 1991, 220). It was launched under the guidance of its original editor and at times publisher, Clay Felker. Since 1963, Felker had been editor of *New York*, a Sunday supplement



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**Figure 3: Young Man on the Go**

NOTE: A regular feature in the back of *Atlanta Magazine* from 1962 through 1970, Young Man on the Go aimed to introduce readers to those “fearless men” such as insurance agent Bill Pritchard, who would “carry Atlanta into a new era.”

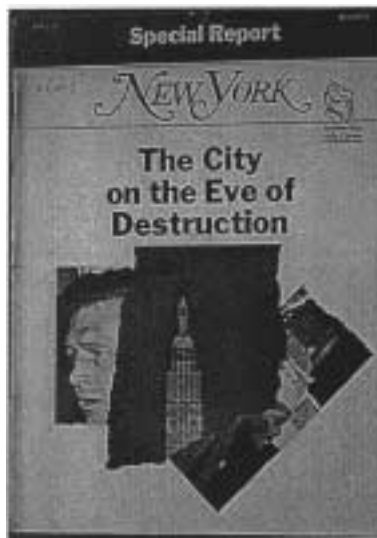
to the *New York Herald Tribune*, and had encouraged a string of experimental young writers, including Jimmy Breslin, Tom Wolfe, and Gail Sheehy, to develop their style of “New Journalism” in its pages. When the successful

supplement got done in by hard times of its parent paper,<sup>16</sup> Felker kept it alive (at the urging of Breslin) by buying it outright for \$6,572, his newspaper severance pay, and turning it into an independent publication. After raising capital from an investment house and hiring mainly all the same writers, in November 1967, Felker and publisher George Hirsch, Jr. announced that the new magazine would “concentrate on news about the arts, economics, and social problems for the sophisticated, intelligent reader who is not afraid of colorful, impressionistic journalism” (“New Owners” 1967, 37). The first issue came out on 4 April 1968.

In some ways, *NYM* has always been atypical as an urban lifestyle magazine. It is a weekly as opposed to a monthly; it reports on current, hard-hitting news stories; and its local articles often extend beyond the boundaries of New York.<sup>17</sup> But by establishing early on the unique “attitude” of its city and thus of the publication “that bears its name,” *NYM* became a trendsetter in the area of branding cities and, in that sense, a paradigm for other urban lifestyle magazines nationwide. Although early demographics were not available, such upscale qualities could be gauged, Felker believed, through the educational level, taste, and “savviness”—that is, the cultural capital—of those who could, or *wished they could*, appreciate the avant-garde style of the writing and bold nature of the content of the magazine.<sup>18</sup> As Felker said in 1967, what was required was a “subtle, sophisticated formula for a literate and active, upwardly mobile audience, depending on constant surprise, and unique writing and visual talents” (Felker 1968, 9).

Rather than hyping the modernist vision of city-as-skyline, *NYM*'s branding strategy was to capture the attitude of a diverse, intrepid urban generation. Strength of personal style, the ability to shrug off difficulties in a crisis-torn city, and the know-how to exploit the exotic products found in its outer reaches were the ideal. The attitude was artfully crafted by New Journalists such as Breslin, Wolfe, and Steinem, who, writing in the first person, became quintessential “New Yorkers” and official tour guides to their New York. The gritty, ironic, blasé writing style merged with Milton Glaser's psychedelic cartoons in long, quirky articles. New York was dubbed “the city with an attitude,” and that attitude became (despite the more critical aspirations of its creators) “radical chic” (Adler Hennessee 1975; “Bloomingdales Meets Bleeker Street” 1975; see Wolfe 1970) (see Figure 4).<sup>19</sup>

*NYM* was ahead of its time not only in targeting this new audience but also in conceiving of the role of the urban lifestyle magazine as service provider. As they saw it, the purpose of the magazine was “to serve the needs of the people who struggle to live and work in New York at this time in history, when there is the chaotic development of a new urban civilization.”<sup>20</sup> This service should not be fluffy or purely hedonistic but should be useful in



**Figure 4: New York Magazine**

NOTE: According to its charismatic founders, the original *New York Magazine* mission in the late 1960s and early 1970s was to transform the staid traditions of city reporting and the consciousness of their city, using New Journalism to brashly explore the crises and cultures of a “new kind of urban existence.”



confronting the real-life issues and urban problems people of the targeted socioeconomic bracket faced, as well as the pleasures that could still be found in the city. As the magazine proclaimed on its sixth anniversary, it was the “unique mingling of information, service, and analysis that has made the magazine a survival manual for coping with the urban mechanism” (“Between the Lines” 1974, 4).

On one hand, this approach was extremely progressive. *NYM*'s white journalists journeyed into nonwhite neighborhoods in Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and the far reaches of Manhattan and dealt with issues of racism and poverty seldom featured in the mainstream press. They were also far more representative in terms of gender—both in terms of the types of men and women featured and in the balance of the editorial staff. Yet, at the same time, in a style reminiscent of Victorian slum literature, these representations were often contained within a framework of voyeuristic pleasure seeking. The opening issue (8 April 1968) provides an example of this dichotomy. In “Life in the City of Gold,” Breslin (1968, 53-57) takes a subway trip to Wall Street observing white stockbrokers who, “like politicians in the White House,” never look out the window to see what is going on in the street, remaining oblivious to brewing struggles “no different in Algeria, Newark, Detroit.” At the same time, the “slumming aesthetic” was championed in departments such as “Best Bets,” “The Passionate Shopper,” and “The Urban Strategist,” whereas the “Underground Gourmet” (Greene 1968) featured a tour through East Harlem's La Marqueta with Puerto Rican actress Rita Moreno<sup>21</sup> and proclaimed Gus's Pickles of the Lower East Side the “peerless pinnacle of penny piquancy.” In representing New York as both crisis ridden and consumer friendly, *NYM* carved a unique niche for itself among new middle-class readers (see Figure 5). Asking, “Do you have what it takes to survive in New York?” a *NYM* promotional flier (1970) explained,

Once all you needed was the patience of Job, the stamina of Superman, and the annual income of Louis XIV. Today you need more . . . you need help. That's what New York Magazine is here to give. . . . And when we've finally taught you how to survive, we'll teach you how to live.

The most crucial type of help *NYM* offered its young readers was on how to understand and ultimately play New York's so-called “Power Game”—a topic with which, by their own admission, the editor and writers of *NYM* were obsessed. Every January cover from 1969 through 1976 featured a cover article on this theme along with a list of the “top 10 most powerful men in New York,” and a range of articles throughout the year were geared toward dissecting the workings of power in all its cultural, economic, and political





**Figure 5: *New York Magazine's* Style of Journalism**

NOTE: In a style reminiscent of the tourist gaze of late nineteenth-century slum literature, a key element in *New York Magazine's* style of service journalism was to transform the distant reaches of New York into an exotic and aestheticized shopping adventure for the middle class. This was done through special features such as "Undercover New York" (left), as well as spin-off guidebooks (1972) based on the popular column "The Passionate Shopper."

guises.<sup>22</sup> Following the evolution of these articles, it is clear that entrenched power was a target of derision for this cynical generation—only until they had achieved it (see Figure 6).

This survivalist, power-hungry, service-oriented formula attracted the kind of New Yorker Felker envisioned. As commentators at the time described them, *NYM* readers were "young strivers and achievers who are committed to living in the city" and "although they are comfortable, are anxious about the challenges, complexities, and frustrations of contemporary urban existence" (Little 1969, 52; Shaw 1977, 184). What we have been provided in *NYM*, as one writer put it, has been "a combination of social consciousness and handy how-to manual for the credit-card cultural consumer" (Leonard 1969, 45).<sup>23</sup> Circulation in the first five years rose from 50,000 to



**Figure 6: New York Power Game**

NOTE: The most vital piece of service journalism *New York Magazine* saw itself offering were the rules to the "New York Power Game," and every first of the year cover issue from 1968 through 1976 was dedicated to the topic. As these examples from (clockwise) 1969, 1972, and 1976 indicate, all these images were of white male power, whereas the imagined nature of that power shifted from a youthful call for revolution, a reckoning with the old established elite, and a grappling with hidden government control to a "new power game" run by a now ascendant, no longer revolutionary new middle class.

335,000 at an average increase of 63% a year, with increases in subscription as well as single-copy sales. Advertisers soon took notice; by its sixth year, ad revenue had reached \$7 million (Marmarelli 1991, 213).

Ultimately, the success of Felker's strategy brought about his own demise as editor and, some would say, of the magazine itself. In the early 1970s, Felker sought to expand into a national magazine while purchasing other magazines and so joined with Taurus Communications, publishers of *The Voice*, to create New York Magazine Co., handing more than a third of the stock to the new corporate parent. Increasing pressure was exerted by advertisers to give free space in editorials along with paid ads and to increase the proportion of "fluff" to actual city reporting. Meanwhile, many of the writers made very public displays of disgust over what they considered to be the selling out of the magazine. Perhaps the most dramatic occurred early on, when Breslin left the magazine. In the midst of all the wheeling and dealing, the magazine had become, he said, "too dilettantish" (quoted in "Notes on People" 1971, 41):

If I see one more issue with a bleeping maid on the cover and one more story about the people who have trouble getting maids, I wouldn't even read it. For Christ's sake look at the times in which we live. I think people have more on their minds than that. . . . I left New York because it caused me to become gagged by perfume and disheartened by character collapse. . . . [I foresee] a new flourishing of boutique journalism—all frivolity and no more serious journalism.

Nonetheless, the example of *NYM*'s financial success, combined with broader political-economic changes shaping urban America, launched the urban lifestyle genre into a new branding strategy in the 1970s.

### **THE CITY-AS-INDIVIDUAL: LOS ANGELES MAGAZINE IN THE 1970s**

As geographers and economists have described, 1973, with the oil embargo and the intensification of global financial crisis, competition, and recession, marked the definitive end of Fordism and the rise of "post-Fordist" practices of flexible production, niche marketing, and increased stimulation of consumption (Harvey 1992; Amin 1995).<sup>24</sup> Urban lifestyle magazines that thrived in this era positioned themselves as advisers to the middle class on how, as individuals, to escape urban crisis and keep moving up the ladder. David Shaw (1976, 3), the media critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, summed up the trend in his review of the wave of new city magazines in the mid-1970s:

Crime, inflation, congestion, and competition are the four horsemen of this audience's imminent apocalypse. . . . [Successful city magazines] cater to those concerns—telling their readers how to protect their homes against burglary, where to shop for bargains, how to beat rush hour traffic, where to go for psychoanalysis, transcendental meditation, or crash dieting. . . . Most people read city magazines either to learn how to cope with their environment or to enjoy, vicariously, the success that others more wealthy and fortunate than themselves have had in doing so.

At the vanguard of this movement in the early 1970s was *LAM*. Of all cities forced to restructure during this period, Los Angeles set the standard for what the dynamic and decentralized postindustrial city was to become. As Scott and Soja (1996) showed, certain unique features enabled Los Angeles to contain, as well as ignite, successive waves of economic and social crisis throughout its 100-year history. Although it was the single largest recipient of federal aerospace contracts and the third largest industrial city in the country, it had also developed a diverse, flexible economy based in services, light manufacturing, entertainment, and tourism. Planned in the 1920s as the prototypical "automobile city," Los Angeles also anticipated the trend toward decentralization. And having spawned some 20 segregated, isolated, and privatized "homeowner communities" and an immense public and private police force, the region was able to "rebound" from the Watts riots of 1965 more easily than smaller cities facing lesser levels of urban unrest (Scott and Soja 1996, 3-17).

Given its exurban context, *LAM* was an urban lifestyle magazine with particular challenges. It was founded in 1960 by visionary publisher and former adman David Brown, who combined two struggling local art-and-entertainment magazines to create what he originally billed as "The Guide to the Good Life in LA and Suburbia."<sup>25</sup> Unlike *AM*, which was assured a budget and readership by the chamber of commerce, or *NYM*, which was able to build its base through branding the chic attitude of residents who strongly identified with their city, *LAM* was faced with both a lack of assured income and the fact that potential readers of the targeted economic bracket were generally relocated suburban commuters who did not live in or identify with the "city" of Los Angeles at all.

*LAM* did not break even until the early 1970s, by which time it, along with its namesake city, had been successfully restructured to fit in with a new economic and cultural environment. *LAM* eschewed *AM*'s triumphal emphasis on cityness and *NYM*'s gritty investigative reporting while combining the former's upbeat boosterism with the latter's radical chic. Dubbing Los Angeles the "Me City," *LAM*'s innovation was to boil the entire identity of its

city down to the scale of the individual body and to promote a new notion of urban lifestyle based entirely in individual consumption habits. Ultimately, the urban imaginary branded in its pages was one of self-indulgence, social climbing, and the perpetual transformation of image—both one's own and that of the city.

Not coincidentally, *LAM*'s approach was most evident on its covers. Beginning in 1972 and 1973, the magazine began phasing out recognizable images of the physical geography of the city on its covers—as it had in the past with landmarks, skylines, and beaches (see Figure 7). Instead, using a monochrome studio backdrop, covers began to feature models and celebrities who, through wardrobe, physique, and personality, became the individual embodiment of the city.<sup>26</sup> The first such cover was for the April 1972 issue, featuring a young woman's heavily bandaged face under the teaser "New Faces of 1972." After receiving a flood of letters wanting more information on plastic surgery, neophyte editor Geoff Miller reported having an epiphany: "I said 'Wait a minute! This magazine isn't about a city! It's about the way people live . . . and what they do with their lives'" (Meyer 1991, 127). Promptly thereafter, the coquettish June 1972 cover girl promised readers "100 Shameless Ways to Indulge Yourself." And for those who still had not gotten the self-centered message, the January 1973 cover sported an extremely fat, unhappy-looking man in a suit, feasting on chocolates and smoking a cigar, alongside the banner headline: "Don't Just Lie There, Los Angeles . . . IMPROVE YOURSELF!" (see Figures 8 and 9).

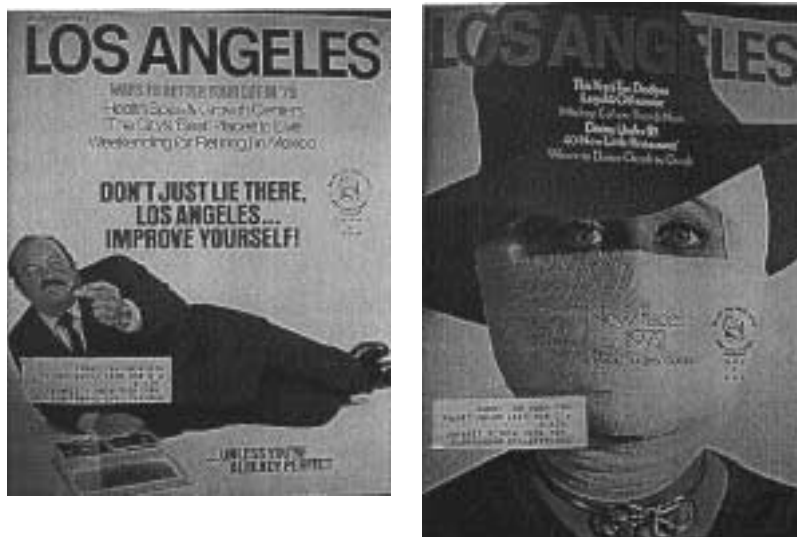
Backing up the new aesthetic of city-as-individual were features articulating the ideological shifts within the new middle-class generation of the 1960s. Although borrowing the prose style of radical chic, these articles vehemently called for a backlash against the preceding generation of liberal urban policy, social activism, and counterculture. The lead of the main feature (Roberts 1973), also in the January 1973 issue, captured this spirit:

The Revolution ended in '72, not with a bang, but a whimper. The hippies have abandoned Sunset Boulevard to the hustlers. Yesterday's urban guerrillas are writing their war memoirs and marrying movie stars. . . . The Middle Class, it seems, has nine lives. And Los Angeles, the supreme middle class city, is digging itself out from a major, if not catastrophic social earthquake. Seventy-Three will be a year of reconstruction and realism. Some familiar monuments are gone and will never be replaced. The dream of the Super-City, Megalopolis, Tomorrowland Now—who wants it anymore? This will be the year when we quit shooting for the stars in more ways than one. . . . For if the rebellion of the Sixties established little else, it did succeed in establishing the value of the individualist and of ways of life not officially sponsored by management.<sup>27</sup>



**Figure 7: Los Angeles Magazine Covers**

NOTE: *Los Angeles Magazine* originally branded its city through a combination of beautiful people in landmark locations, as seen here in a sample of covers from 1971 and 1972. In a style characteristic of sunbelt booster literature, these images sold an image of good life in a bucolic yet urban setting.



**Figure 8: Los Angeles Magazine Covers**

NOTE: Starting in 1972, images of Los Angeles's landscape were permanently replaced by studio shots of individual models representing the city. The urban imaginary also shifted from an easily attained good life to one based in the continual transformation and improvement of oneself and, by implication, the city.

This was a sign of things to come. Although pointedly political editorials were to disappear by the late 1970s, the focus on celebrity, fitness, shopping, personal finance, and real estate would come to dominate *LAM*'s content into the 1990s. This shift also had a gender and race component. Images of women—particularly young, conventionally attractive, and scantily clad women—began to far outnumber images of men as the magazine began to transform into a quasi-fashion magazine. By the mid-1970s, men's appearance on the covers was at most three issues a year: for the Valentine's issues (e.g., Donny Osmond, February 1979) or for special issues on finance (as in January 1977's cover featuring a handsome, expensively dressed man of retirement age). Meanwhile, among men and women of all sizes and ages, no nonwhites appeared on the cover until June 1985, when African-American actress Shari Belafonte was pictured plucking a cherry off an ice cream sundae. By the late 1970s, well-known Hollywood celebrities had permanently displaced anonymous models on the covers. The makeover of one's body, spirit, finances, and lifestyle, and images of individuals who were successful in these areas, replaced all representation and discussion of social and politi-



cal issues facing the city as a whole. According to editor Geoff Miller, publisher Dave Brown

learned to cover politics only incidentally and as a service, “not as an absorbing spectator sport,” as it is covered in eastern cities where “people believe their lives are controlled by politicians.” Here “local politics is like hiring a family lawyer—do the job and don’t bother me. I’ve got to find out who I am.” (Meyer 1991, 127)

### **CITY-AS-COMMODITY: CORPORATIZATION AND STANDARDIZATION, 1980s-1990s**

As interurban competition on a global scale became the norm in the 1980s and 1990s, image took on an ever more vital role in urban economies. Theorists explored the ironic nature of postmodern “fortress cities” that replaced public spaces and services with the shiny, defensible facades of high-tech shopping malls, apartment complexes, and corporate towers in their effort to attract consumers while containing and policing local working-class residents and other undesirables (Davis 1990, chap. 4; Christopherson 1995; Hannigan 1998). “Quality of life” became the rallying cry of many big-city mayors elected at this time, based on a “broken windows” theory whereby the simple appearance of disorder had a material effect of provoking criminal behavior, thus justifying urban policies based more on cleaning up those appearances than on addressing underlying social issues.

This era also saw the increasing corporatization and globalization of the media industry. Convergence of digital communications technologies, sweeping deregulation of the industry, and the merging of transnational media conglomerates led to increased corporate control over all stages of production, distribution, and marketing of media products (McChesney and Herman 1997, 107-9). As media critics have pointed out, this had a profound effect on the nature and function of the public sphere: Controversial topics and in-depth reporting have been displaced by entertainment and advertisement; coverage critical of corporate practices or products has diminished, whereas those that support corporate values—such as individualism, consumerism, and the need for security—have increased (McChesney and Herman 1997, 2-8). The role of the magazine as a space for lengthy, investigative, muckraking features has been transformed by these shifts.<sup>28</sup> And the role of urban lifestyle magazines, with the corporatization of both their industry and their subject, has become doubly transformed. With some of the wealthiest demographics of any mass medium, they have been particularly





**Figure 9: Los Angeles Magazine Advertising**

NOTE: Shots of the famous California coastline were still found in the magazine after 1972, but only in the context of advertising. In the image on the left, from the cover of *LAM*'s first special home-buying guide (1973), the beach is a view to be purchased along with a condo, and in the ad from the guide at right, it merges with the brand image of Winston cigarettes.

enticing corporate properties and have become imagineers par excellence of the abstract notion of urban quality of life.

By 1980, all three of the magazines I researched were bought up by international media conglomerates—*NYM* by Rupert Murdoch in 1980 and *LAM* by the American Broadcasting Corporation in 1977 (itself acquired by Disney in 1996), whereas *AM*, after being bought by Communication Channels Inc. in 1977, was to change hands five times in the next 15 years.<sup>29</sup> Having proven themselves as successful niche publications, the magazines were acquired by corporations seeking to create “stables” of locally based media for national and international advertisers. New corporate publishers struck on a common formula: toned down and reduced editorial content, increased pages of advertising and lifestyle reporting, new “special sections” filled with consumer reports, and encyclopedic high-end listings sections at the back. They also became integral links in new city-branding campaigns launched by local tourist offices in all three cities—most famously, the I ♥

New York campaign launched by the state of New York was carried by *NYM*, which published the shopping guides to the city for the campaign. The result: The three magazines became increasingly standardized. Differences *within* the magazines between editorials and advertisement, as well as differences *between* the magazines in terms of the “brand identities” of their namesake cities, were increasingly erased. With the jump in advertising from 55% to 75% of total content by the end of the 1980s, human beings started being replaced by consumer items, particularly food, as the brand identity of the city. For instance, the images chosen for every January cover of *NYM* and *AM* from 1990 to 1995 were glossy close-ups of platters of gourmet delicacies prepared in one of the “top 10 area restaurants.” This increasing replacement of editorial with lifestyle reporting was hailed by publishers as a “boon to readers” and a more “accurate” representation of the city (Rupert Murdoch, as quoted in Bradshaw and Neville 1977). Increasingly, the notion of service espoused by the magazine implied consumption rather than overcoming real problems. As *NYM* editor of the late 1980s Edward Kosner observed, *NYM* had become “oriented more towards using, enjoying, and finding, than surviving.” By the late 1980s, as the middle-class target readership entered its comfortable later years, the urban survival manual became the urban consumer manual.

As the magazines became increasingly dominated by advertising and ad-driven lifestyle pieces, the tone of their editorials also changed, becoming decidedly more hyperbolic and less critical in describing the greatness of both the particular city and magazine that bears its name. *NYM*, for example, which started out as the most politically progressive of the three, began to have opening statements by the editors and publisher that read like promotional inserts. Cathleen Black, *NYM*'s publisher from 1979 to 1983, enthused, “*New York* has always been more than ‘just a city magazine,’ for the magnitude and verve and excitement of this city demand uniqueness from the magazine that carries its name,” and on the anniversary of *CUE*'s addition to *NYM*, “The result: a magazine that is the best, most thorough, most complete guide to this wonderful city” (Black 1981). The magazine's promoters claimed at various times during this period that “*New York* lives on the quirky pulse of the capital of the modern world” (Kosner 1988); “[it] knows no geographical boundaries” (advertising flier, 1979), and it “covers and—uncovers—the most intriguing aspects of life everywhere” and “is perhaps the liveliest, most upbeat, most provocative publication in English” (advertising flier, 1975). Its ads began to use the slogan, “No city is as influential as New York,” as a means of selling the magazine (advertising flier, 1980).

Meanwhile, deepening economic and racial inequality and turmoil were obscured behind the celebratory, impersonal veneer of lifestyle reportage.

When editorials did appear on local problems, they generally addressed quality-of-life issues mainly affecting the white middle class (see Pileggi 1981a, 1981b). If they addressed problems of the rich and poor alike, it was generally only once such problems had reached a point that they could no longer be ignored—and then the coverage was limited and one-sided. For instance, in 1989, *NYM* devoted a special issue to “The Race Problem” in the wake of the racially biased reporting of the Central Park jogger case, in which black youths were the defendants, and the Howard Beach murder case, in which white youths were the defendants. In the lead article, the author said he understood “the anger and resentment on both sides.” He continued, however, to argue that people could no longer claim racism was the problem and that “the only possible goal for the black underclass [could be] a new model [based on] integration—that is assimilation into the middle class economy” (Diamond 1989, 41).

Similarly, *LAM* had four articles on the riots in South Central Los Angeles, which occurred in the wake of the Rodney King verdict, all from a very particular viewpoint. Two appeared in the June 1992 issue, which came out a week after the riots. The first was an opening statement from editor Lew Harris describing how he “loaded up the brand-new range rover with groceries and clothes” and, after debating “just doing a drop off . . . in Santa Monica . . . in that car especially,” bravely drove to a church in South Central Los Angeles (Harris 1992, 12-13). The second article to appear was the following: “War Heroes: Good Guys Who Did the Right Thing in the Rodney King Riots” (Neumeyer 1992, 14-17). Here the magazine celebrated those non-whites who did not get involved in violence, with a special focus on Latino actor and Malibu resident Edward James Olmos. In the July issue, “Traumas of a King Juror” appeared, detailing the ethical dilemmas and discomfort of a white juror (Ogle Davis 1992). And in an ironic twist on the consumer survivalism motif noted above, the monthly “Handbook: Your Monthly Survival Guide”—generally devoted to things such as “late-night shopping” and “gourmet cooking classes for kids”—was aimed at the “Rebuild L.A.” campaign, listing charities to which people could donate money. Lacking completely was any discussion of the roots of the Rodney King incident itself, the actions of the Los Angeles Police Department, racial tensions in Los Angeles, or the actual destruction that was caused.

And finally, a special issue of *AM* was devoted to the struggle to save Atlanta’s economically depressed and racially segregated downtown in advance of the 1996 Olympics. In a style reminiscent of the attitude in the early 1960s, the article was not about how to improve conditions for Atlanta’s black inner-city residents but rather about the possible decline of Atlanta’s standing in national and global opinion if the black neighborhood was not “cleaned

up.” Titled “Healing Downtown: Other Cities Are Facing Up to Crime, Homelessness, and Business Flight and We Can Too” (Marill 1995, 38-49), the concern here was that tourists would stay away from the games because of the problems in the neighborhood surrounding the Olympic stadium. Meanwhile, other cities around the country were listed that had gentrified their downtowns through business improvement districts—including New York and Los Angeles—and a similar development plan was proposed for Atlanta.

In general, these articles pronounced the realities of these major urban conflicts in terms allowing no room for dialogue with people involved or analysis outside mainstream, and ostensibly white, middle-class points of view. Such a limited editorial approach reflects the change in urban lifestyle magazines and their namesake cities over the past 30 years. As the scale of the city transcended the local to encompass the surrounding exurban sprawl, the branded identity of the city became increasingly abstract, shifting from man-made cityscapes to the radically chic “in crowd” to individual celebrities to completely inanimate consumer goods. In the process, the erasure of real social relations became easier to make. While crisis mounted, the urban lifestyle represented by the magazines had less to do with the human face of the city at all, and took the form of an imaginary conflict-free landscape of the city as pure commodity.

### **BRANDED CITY-AS-TEXT: MERGING URBAN AND CORPORATE IMAGINARIES**

Last year, the Disney Corporation, the second largest global media corporation, was forced to liquidate all \$650 million worth of its extensive magazine holdings in the face of shareholder pressure, yet curiously insisted that one magazine be retained regardless of profit: *Los Angeles Magazine* (Berthelsen 1999, C12). What is significant in Disney’s decision is not that it shows a belief in the mission and profitability of urban lifestyle magazines per se, but rather, as both industry experts and former *LAM* employees immediately speculated, what it revealed about the *political* as well as financial value these magazines realize for their corporate owners.<sup>30</sup> Under their ownership, *LAM* had become the sole urban lifestyle magazine representing Los Angeles, itself the capital of the global media industry, and according to these industry insiders, the company needed to keep its “‘hometown’ presence” to secure its corporate image and local power base.<sup>31</sup> As Disney and other transnational corporations have learned, one of the easiest ways to ensure a strong local presence is to become part of the landscape by appearing in established urban lifestyle magazines or even (for sums inconceivable in the 1960s and

1970s to the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Clay Felker, or Dave Brown) by developing altogether new magazines,<sup>32</sup> which provide place-based advertising aimed at the upper socioeconomic brackets of that market.

As has been noted, multiple urban imagineers may coexist and compete, but only those with the requisite political, economic, and cultural capital will have the power to brand an imaginary that will have enduring impact on the social life of the city. And as the political economic structure of the post-industrial city has changed, the impact such image branding can have and the power it can bestow have increased. These facts were not lost on the visionary urban lifestyle entrepreneurs of the 1960s and 1970s who, if they initially lacked political and economic capital, possessed the cultural capital to advance a new middle-class vision of the city and, in the process, rise to the top of a new urban power game dominated in large part by the media.<sup>33</sup> And as they rose, these entrepreneurs joined the ranks of transnational media corporations and city governments increasingly dominated by such corporations, creating one of the first spaces for the now common practice of “place-based” urban marketing, whereby particular “authentic” urban lifestyles, public spaces, and local traditions are used as vehicles for corporate branding (Hannigan 1998; McDowell 1999, C1; Ward 1998).

In their infancy, these magazines served to manage the brand image of a city for a relatively marginal new middle class with the backing of civic boosters and local business and media interests. They now help manage the brand image of the city in association with major transnational corporate players who seek a local presence in that city and who have become the publishers of and major advertisers in these magazines. It is perhaps not coincidental that all three magazines have trademarked the name of their respective cities while under corporate ownership over the past decade (see [www.ustma.org](http://www.ustma.org)). According to U.S. trademark law, the only way that a proper name or place can be trademarked is if it has acquired “secondary meaning” through continual and widespread association over a period of time with a particular product. Although these magazines accomplished this level of name recognition through the early branding strategies analyzed in this article, their success at branding their city made them desirable properties for corporations aiming to do the same and, in acquiring them, merged an urban with a corporate imaginary.

Although critics argue that such a high degree of corporate control over this urban media genre limits the free exchange of ideas, in the minds of the corporate publishers and the editors they hire, the increasing commodification is not simply a good business decision but also a boon to readers, as it provides a more accurate representation of their city. When Murdoch doubled *NYM*'s ad pages by adding *CUE* listings to the back, he explained, “It will

help make the magazine even *more New York*" (Bradshaw and Neville 1977). And when *AM*'s ad revenues hit \$2.5 million at the same time that its circulation reached an all-time high, C.C.I. group publisher David Foster concluded, "*Atlanta* had become a mirror of the city" (English 1991, 29).

And in this sense, these editors and publishers are correct—for while the magazines have become standardized under corporate control, so too have their namesake cities. Like their nineteenth-century mass media predecessors, which reflected and formed a part of the modern rhythm of the early capitalist metropolis, the urban lifestyle magazine has been shaped by and helped shape the late capitalist city and its corporatized public sphere. As cities have been redeveloped as sanitized, privatized spaces for consumption, urban lifestyle magazines and Web sites appear as one of the most effective means of experiencing, as in a *branded city-in-miniature*, these increasingly commodified and inhuman urban landscapes. The upscale images of brand-name "Atlanta," "New York," and "Los Angeles" found in their pages have been shaped by, as well as helped shape, other such trends, including the "reclamation" of downtowns by shopping centers and entertainment zones, the gentrification of older manufacturing districts, and the predominance of urban tourism as engines of economic growth. Future research will more closely investigate these interrelationships.

What the present research seeks to show is that the rise of urban lifestyle magazines and their new form of urban branding can be interpreted as a discursive and ideological vehicle for the ascendancy of a new urban middle class, as well as for the restructuring of U.S. cities, over the past 30 years. For although these magazines have come to represent narrowly defined, consumer-oriented, and politically conservative urban lifestyles, it is precisely such lifestyles, under the name of "quality of life," that have been established as the legitimate basis of urban development and public policy in U.S. cities. And although the brand identities of these magazines have become increasingly standardized under corporate control, so too have the branded facades of the cities themselves, as remodeled by consortia of mass media, advertisers, and transnational corporations. Thus, urban lifestyle magazines can be seen as a unique sociohistorical map of U.S. cities as they have been imagined, branded, and unevenly developed within the framework of the post-industrial economy.

## NOTES

1. Were you, for instance, to stand on a street corner in turn-of-the-century New York City and ask people to epitomize the essence of their city, those in the upper class might point to the

palatial public spaces of the “the city beautiful” (Gilmartin and Massengale 1983), those in the working class the nickelodeon adventures and tenement-lined streets of “Gotham” (Sante 1992), and those of the gay male subculture the speakeasies and bathhouses of “the city of bachelors” (Chauncey 1994).

2. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2000) definition, the verb *to brand* refers to the act of marking with a trademark or distinctive name to identify a product or manufacturer and the use of iron brands to mark the skin of an animal with a sign of ownership or the skin of a criminal with a sign of permanent stigma. For more on the early history of branding as a marketing tool for newly integrated U.S. corporations at the turn of century, see Sklar (1988) and Strasser (1989).

3. Harvey (1989) has described this shift in capitalism as one of away from rigid modes of Fordism geared to mass markets, and toward more “flexible accumulation” geared to niche marketing. For a discussion of the genesis of new forms of market research to measure values and lifestyle-based niches, see Atlas (1984); for the role of new statistical methods to measure these “intangibles,” see Katona (1960).

4. As Strasser (1989, 158-59) pointed out, the split between “informational” versus “suggestive” approaches to advertising has existed since the beginning of brand marketing at the turn of the century, reflecting changing attitudes toward the ability of science to manipulate human nature (see Curti 1976). See Applebaum (1967) and Intrep Data Corp. (1993) for examples of the final victory of the suggestive approach in the 1960s.

5. As Elliot (1999) discussed, the 90th annual gathering of the Association of National Advertisers, the trade organization representing the nation’s largest marketers, was devoted entirely to the theme: “Brand Building for the 21st Century.”

6. Richard Tedlow, a Harvard Business School professor and veteran marketing researcher, defined the new version of branding as “a way of creating the idea of value in a product,” explaining further that “branding is about reassurance, about consistency, about loyalty, about repurchase behavior” (Caylor 1999, 4-5).

7. There are more than 100 “city magazines” listed in the *Standard Rate and Data Service Guide*, not including the more specialized city-business, city-fitness, and city-house and garden books.

8. A current example is the entire August 1998 “Branding Issue” of *Folio: The Magazine of Magazine Management*, which indicates that magazines are still focusing on how they can be better marketers than TV and other media, as well as how they can better manage their own brand names through product placement, Web versions, and so on.

9. I chose to focus on the January and June editions because they are often “special issues” devoted to articulating an urban lifestyle in a new way. In January, this often involves defining the most important lifestyle trends—issues, attitudes, leisure activities, hot neighborhoods, hip restaurants, “people to watch,” and so on—for the year ahead. In June, it involves identifying the most important lifestyle trends for the summer.

10. Rutheiser (1996) described in fascinating detail how, from the Civil War on, Atlanta’s strategic location, combined with massive booster drives proclaiming its “resurgens,” enabled the city to rebuild its image and economy, positioning itself as one of the symbolic and financial centers of the Reconstruction South.

11. This urban renewal was funded through some \$5 billion in government grants. As Rutheiser (1996) pointed out, although the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and others protested this urban renewal—which, as in other areas, was called “negro removal”—these protests were contained by a highly coordinated civic and corporate elite.

12. The Atlanta metropolitan statistical area expanded from one city of 600,000 people in 1960, 5 counties of 1.4 million people in 1970, and 20 counties with almost 3.4 million people by



1995 (Hartschorn and Ihlanfeldt 1993). As the authors point out, this greater metropolitan growth has been to the extreme detriment of the central city. A clear indicator of this has been unemployment in the central city, which has increased consistently since 1965, increasing five-fold between 1990 and 1995 alone.

13. This was a larger-scale replay of the original "Forward Atlanta" campaign begun in the 1920s, with which city leaders sought to extricate Atlanta from its Reconstruction era slump.

14. This is a paradigmatic example of what some call the "doughnut effect" (Hartschorn and Ihlanfeldt 1993) and what others call uneven development (Smith 1984) common to sunbelt cities.

15. New York City began to lose the bulk of its port industry, which had driven the regional economy since the nineteenth century, whereas Los Angeles and Atlanta saw major layoffs in the aerospace industries that had moved there during World War II. New York and Los Angeles also saw increasingly militant strike activity, and all three saw protests in response to poor living conditions in the inner cities, as well as a general rise in crime. Antiurban diatribes were rife. For instance, in his best-seller *Future Shock*, Alvin Toffler (1970) warned of "urban man's impending loss of psycho-social orientation—and thus his ability to make thoughtful, rational decisions—because of the ever accelerating rate of growth and change of his environment."

16. The *New York-Herald Tribune* had been bought out and merged into the hybrid *World Journal Tribune*, and then that venture died in May 1967. This can be seen as an early indication of the corporate concentration occurring within the news industry alongside the proliferation of these new niche publications.

17. The *Standard Rate and Data Service Guide* classifies *NYM* as a "news weekly," separate from its "metropolitan/regional/state" grouping. And *NYM* is perhaps the only urban lifestyle magazine to sell its articles to wire services and nationally syndicated presses.

18. This may have been the first clear articulation of what was and is the prevailing strategy of all urban lifestyle magazines. Edwin Self, having published what is arguably the first urban lifestyle magazine, *San Diego Magazine*, since 1948, explained the following to Jeremy Schlosberg in the 1980s: "The basic philosophy we had then and what we're still trying to do today is reach the intelligent people of the community" (Schlosberg 1986, 22). As Schlosberg pointed out, education—along with occupation, income, and age—remains one of the key demographics advertisers in city magazines look for.

19. Although the intent of Wolfe's (1970) original use of the term *radical chic* was to ridicule those wealthy white Manhattanites such as Leonard Bernstein who courted Black Panthers in their effort to be hip (perhaps an antecedent of the "politically correct" jibe), soon after, the term turned back on its inventors and was used to characterize the style without substance of *NYM*'s own writers and readers. When Felker joined Taurus Communications, publishers of the *Village Voice*, critics jokingly articulated the perceptions of the two publications, predicting "the merging of radical cheek with radical chic" ("The Odd Couple" 1974).

20. Quoted in Sheehy (1977, 48), see also Felker's manifesto "Guerilla Tactics for Consumer Journalism" (1971, 7-8).

21. "A sad index of this city's polarization is that this extraordinary and vibrant enclave is virtually unknown beyond its immediate environs." The article is accompanied by a chart of all the strange vegetables in the carts, such as "yucca" and "mongoes" (*sic*).

22. A fascinating series of these early articles on power was compiled by Clay Felker (1969, 7-8, 12):

For years my favorite dinner conversation when I was with knowledgeable New Yorkers was a variation of the old ten-best game: name the ten men who run New York City. I soon found that The Power Game was not only popular but increasingly complex and confusing. Everyone had (and has) differing lists according to his degree of personal sophistica-



tion or point of view from the particular social and economic pyramid he occupies. This is to say, it came down to a question of how power is defined. . . . Power of course is more than a game. The real reason it fascinates . . . is that power is the name we give that mysterious force which shapes our lives in the city. The thrust of this book is identical with the force that brought *NYM* into being. We live in an urban civilization and unless we understand it we will be overwhelmed by the scale and complexity of its problems.

23. The earliest Diner's Club and American Express credit card ads appeared in the pages of *NYM*.

24. As Harvey described, the federal government, faced with massive debt, stagnating production, and mounting inflation, began to curb public spending, mainly by divesting subsidies from cities. This launched most U.S. cities—many of which, like New York City, already had massive debts—into spiraling fiscal crisis. Those cities that had a manufacturing base, such as New York and Los Angeles, were forced to rapidly restructure: instituting austerity policies, downsizing and diversifying industry, deregulating their financial markets, expanding service sectors, and expanding the symbolic economies of advertising, media, and entertainment (see Scott and Soja 1996). With the resulting bifurcation of the job ladder between very high- and very low-end service sectors came the increasing polarization of cities along lines of race, ethnicity, education, and class.

25. The magazines Brown bought and merged were *The Prompter*, a black-and-white playbill that had run out of money by its second issue, and *L.A.*, a politically liberal literary monthly 14 issues old and nearing bankruptcy.

26. The last example I found of a cover model shot against an outdoor L.A. backdrop was June 1973 (see Figure 7, upper right hand corner), and it seemed like a mixture of the emerging L.A. lifestyle ideal with the traditional, generic urban skyline. It features an orangy-tan blonde clad in a string bikini and L.A. Dodgers baseball cap, swinging in a string hammock and sipping from a pineapple, with the skyline of downtown L.A. behind her. The headline reads "Stay in Town Summer: Making the Most of Sunning, Sipping, Dining, Camping, Shopping, Sightseeing, Concertgoing, and Other City Pleasures."

27. The article continues by stating that this individualism will come to embody "the personality the city will begin to take on in the next 12 months." As opposed to the "good life of the 1950s" or the "adolescent frenzy of the 1960s," the conclusion was that this individualist city "is the greatest urban civilization we can hope for in the 70's," one in which "it is possible for people to pursue their own private ends and yet coexist in reasonable harmony and sometimes even with shared pleasure." As if to illustrate the point, peephole-like ads offered glimpses of groups in the hot tubs and living rooms of "exclusive" housing developments. The issue also carried articles on "Health Spas and Growth Centers," "Best Southern California Stocks," and "Weekending (or retiring) in Mexico."

28. This shift was noted recently by many veteran magazine writers and editors from across the United States in a *New York Times* article titled, "At Magazines, the Art of Stirring Debate Seems Lost" (Kuczynski 1999, C1).

29. After C.C.I., *AM*'s corporate publishers included Argus Press in 1981, MetroCorp in 1987, American Express Publishing Corporation in 1990, and Ennis Publication in 1995.

30. As Berthelsen (1999) details in his article, the particularly puzzling issue was why Disney would hold onto a magazine based in a town "anathema to magazine publishing"—L.A. having seen a highly publicized "shakeout" in the past three years of all other urban lifestyle titles, including *LA Style*, *Angeles*, and *Buzz*. Although Disney's simple answer was *LAM*'s financial success, Berthelsen refers to unnamed "media observers," mainly former *LAM* employees, who believed the more complete answer was *LAM*'s success at "keeping the lid on an independent media, or at least [keeping] out a new owner that might be more inclined to run critical articles on

Disney.” These observers cited how Disney quickly bought up all the defunct competitors’ mailing lists and trademarks, as well as the company’s well-known “unspoken rule”—that is, “never do anything that could offend Disney.”

31. This is in keeping with Disney’s strategy to, as one executive put it, “think global, act local” by monopolizing global markets while packaging products in culturally specific dress and gaining influence over regulatory bodies in specific locales (Tagliabue 1996, C1, C3).

32. For an example of corporations that are creating altogether new place-based lifestyle magazines to enhance their image, Time Warner “is now showing advertisers a prototype for *Coastal Living*,” a magazine “aimed at people who live on the coast as well as people who aspire to live there” and “with a median household income of \$60,000” (see Kelly 1996, 12).

33. To cite Felker’s (1969) introduction to “The Power Game” once more: “Definitions of power change. . . . New York is not a political capital in the way that other imperial cities of the past—such as Athens, Rome, Paris, or London—were. . . . It is the communications capital of America and the world. In New York it isn’t military might that matters but the power of ideas.”

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