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## INTRODUCTION

## A STROLL THROUGH THE MARKET

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“Hey, doctor, didn’t you study barbers before working here?” Giancarlo asks me after returning to the butcher shop from getting everyone coffee.

I was in the middle of my yearlong internship at Dickson’s Farmstand Meats in Chelsea Market when Giancarlo asked me this question. Chelsea Market is located in the former Nabisco factory. It takes up an entire city block, between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenues and 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets in Manhattan. Chelsea Market is actually twenty-two separate structures, seamlessly sutured together. In the late nineteenth century Chelsea was a manufacturing area for many products, including baked goods. After a series of consolidations the National Biscuit Company officially formed in 1898, and at its peak Nabisco produced half of the baked goods in the United States, including such products as Premium Saltines, Fig Newtons, Barnum’s Animal Crackers, and, most famously, the Oreo. By the 1930s new technology, specifically long, continuous “band ovens,” was remaking the baking industry by replacing the old vertical ovens. Nabisco installed some band ovens in its complex, but assembly line–style manufacturing is better suited for long, single-story buildings. As a small island Manhattan does verticality quite well; horizontality, not so much. To stay competitive Nabisco moved all of its production to New Jersey in 1958, and sold its Chelsea buildings in 1959. Some light manufacturing companies occupied the buildings in the ensuing decades, but for the most part they fell into disuse, along with most of the neighborhood’s industrial buildings.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1990s real estate investor Irwin B. Cohen assembled a group to buy the Nabisco buildings and convert the upper floors into one million square feet of office space and the ground floor and basement into 225,000 square feet of retail space. With this plan Cohen extended the idea of repurposing

old industrial buildings into more contemporary and profitable uses, which had already been happening in the city for new housing, such as lofts in former manufacturing buildings.<sup>2</sup> Completed in 1997 the market's crowning achievement was the conversion of the back lots of each individual building into a ground-level concourse. With entrances on either end on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenues, the serpentine concourse creates an arcade-like experience for visitors, themed around food. Initially, the shops did mainly wholesale business for restaurants and hotels around the city, with some local retail. Chelsea was still gentrifying in the late 1990s, and the idea of a food destination in the neighborhood had yet to blossom.

Today Chelsea Market resembles the upscale nature of its surrounding neighborhood, with a mix of repurposed industrial hardware and sleek additions, and fits quite well into the foundations of New York City's postindustrial economy. The market itself is a high-priced mart, mostly for food, with nearly fifty shops, stands, eateries, and restaurants selling products with labels like "handmade" and "authentic." The arcade is like a postindustrial theme park. The architects and designers retained the corrugated metal and rusted girders from the complex's factory days. They also added industrial-metal motifs to the walls and signage; revealed more brickwork; and used granite, drill bits, and an exposed pipe to create a central fountain, as one would find at any mall. Chelsea Market invites visitors to experience the industrial past through a lens of modern urban consumerism.

The upstairs offices have several prominent companies of the new economy as tenants, such as Google, the Food Network, the Oxygen Network, MLB.com, and NY1, a local TV station. In 2010 Google purchased the massive three-million-square-foot Port Authority Building, which it had been leasing since 2006, located directly across the street from Chelsea Market on 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, for \$1.9 billion (the company paid for the building in cash). In doing so Google joined Lower Manhattan's expanding base of IT and media companies permanently.<sup>3</sup> Along with nearby fashion companies and the boutique Maritime and Standard hotels, these models of today's economy bring numerous young professionals to the market on a regular basis.

The collection of so many food-related businesses in one enclosed place, the pedigree of some (like Masaharu Morimoto and Mario Batali, who own restaurants there), and the market's location near the High Line, an abandoned railway repurposed into a public park, and in the exclusively hip neighborhood of Chelsea have made it a popular destination for New Yorkers and tourists alike. The market receives six million visitors every year. Tour buses regularly drop



FIGURE 1. The concourse at Chelsea Market. Photo by the author.

off passengers to explore the market (and use the public bathrooms), shop, and walk the High Line, while local companies offer food-centered walking tours.<sup>4</sup>

I first learned about Chelsea Market from my research on New York City's craft cocktail community. Tad Carducci, a bartender and half of the bar and beverage consulting duo the Tippling Bros., opened the Tippler bar in its basement in 2011. By then Chelsea was a popular neighborhood for

luxury shopping and hip nightlife and the word on the Chelsea Market was out. With so many young, well-educated people with disposable income living and working in Chelsea, and so many more visiting the neighborhood to shop and go out at night, opening a craft cocktail bar there made sense for the Tippling Bros. On the backbar at the Tippler sit several bottles of Hudson whiskeys (Baby Bourbon, Four Grain, Manhattan Rye), Tuthilltown's most famous line of small-batch spirits. It also made as much sense to Jake Dickson to open his whole-animal butcher shop there in 2009, to appeal to the city's growing foodie scene.

And on his coffee run, my co-worker Giancarlo noticed a new barbershop, Decatur & Sons, had just opened by Ninth Street Espresso, a fancy espresso bar, just down the concourse from Dickson's. Offering quality men's haircuts in an array of cool styles—undercuts, fades—as well as straight razor shaves in a classic-looking environment, the shop joins an expanding industry of men's grooming and high-end fashion. Coincidentally, I knew its owner, Thorin, from his old shop, where he was just a barber. Thorin told me a few times he wanted to open his own shop, and a year prior he mentioned he was looking at spaces. He chose the Chelsea Market, right next to an old-fashioned shoeshine stand.

Here, then, was my entire project, in one form or another, under one roof: cocktail bartenders, spirits from craft distilleries, men's barbers at a high-service shop, and whole-animal butchers. Bars, barbershops, and butcher shops were neighborhood cornerstones in the industrial city. Today, new versions of them catering to knowledgeable and wealthy consumers have been opening in gentrifying neighborhoods in cities across the country (for example, Wicker Park in Chicago, the Tenderloin and Dogpatch in San Francisco). While not always tightly clustered in hubs like Chelsea Market, they tend to be located near one another. Professionals in high-profile economic sectors (like Google employees), members of the city's "foodie" taste community, and tourists—all key consumer groups in today's urban economy—support them. These businesses are more upscale than their predecessors and peers, like the corner bar, the neighborhood barbershop or butcher shop, and the meat counter at the supermarket. Craft cocktails cost \$13 to \$15, squat 375-milliliter bottles of small-batch bourbon go for \$42 in liquor stores, stylish haircuts start at \$40, and meat from whole-animal shops can be quadruple the cost at a supermarket. They're clearly for people with financial means. Price, however, is not the sole basis for their exclusivity, nor are they exclusive in the same way as traditional luxury goods like expensive watches or cars. These

products and services are loaded with unique cultural meanings, and these workplaces put workers in a knowledge-sharing relationship with consumers.

We can trace the rise of these new elite occupations, workplaces, products, and forms of consumption like those at the Chelsea Market to three key cultural, urban, and economic changes happening in society today: reconfigured understandings of taste, the new role of community institutions in gentrifying neighborhoods, and work in the “new economy” of postindustrial cities like New York. Looking at these three distinct changes in concert lets us see how they are producing the conditions under which these jobs are seen as among the new elite in service, retail, and light manufacturing, and under which these workers find themselves pursuing these jobs as careers without experiencing them as downward social mobility.

### **The Rise of the Cultural Omnivore**

Taste used to seem rather simple. People “knew” some examples of modern culture were superior to others. Opera was a higher form of art than rock music, wine was a more refined drink than beer, and filet mignon was better than hot dogs. Of course, there is nothing natural about taste. Both high and low cultures are social constructions. History, politics, and forms of power (economic, cultural) have shaped their statuses. Nothing makes any cultural products inherently “better” or “worse” than others, and they are valuable and meaningful to the people who consume them regardless of their status in wider society. Still, people regularly associate cultural tastes as being high-brow or lowbrow, often based on how they are made and distributed, and on who consumes them. People usually see elite culture as noncommercial and nonstandardized. Fine art, for instance, meets these criteria. But popular culture is mass-produced and standardized, like Hollywood blockbusters: open and understandable to everyone, with little depth or effort required.<sup>5</sup>

Most importantly, people have regularly linked taste with social class. “High” culture was considered not just superior, but the domain of the wealthy and powerful. Wealthy people went to the opera, took in priceless art, drank fine wines, and dined on French cuisine. They were also able to speak in detail about what they were consuming. Growing up with wealth essentially gave them the keys to not just buying but also understanding these elite art forms and products, and to acting like they belonged in elite company. Meanwhile, the working classes listened to pop music, read trashy novels, drank

beer, and ate basic stews or their own ethnic foods at home, and they never really thought about what they were consuming on an intellectual level. Since they had relatively few resources, like money and time, to reflect on culture or give their children the tools to do so, cultural products like film and music were merely entertainment, and food and drink were merely nourishment, not sources for intellectual engagement. The working class's lower status kept their cultural preferences within the province of the body, the common, and the necessary, while the wealthy class's higher status elevated their cultural preferences to the province of the mental, the rarefied, and the all-enriching. And people from these different backgrounds, the elite and the blue collar, reinforced their own social status by consuming their respective cultures.<sup>6</sup> There have been many examples of people from wealthier backgrounds "slumming" among the working classes and of folks from blue-collar backgrounds moving up the social ladder and adopting upscale tastes, and certainly "midbrow" culture complicates the model somewhat. But this system of cultural stratification still conforms to a strong idea of how Americans consume.

New consumption and lifestyle patterns have disrupted this imagination. Specifically, society's elites have been consuming low- and middlebrow culture, which they may have once shunned, in addition to or in place of traditionally upscale offerings, without compromising their status as elites.<sup>7</sup> Today's young and future leaders in business and culture are as likely to be appreciative of and well versed in hip-hop and beer as they are classical music and wine. In fact, outright snobbery has no place among these elites, who do not accept the arbitrary reasons given for why highbrow culture has been accepted as high quality.<sup>8</sup> No longer discriminating from their own social class position, these people are "cultural omnivores" in search of variety. The world is their oyster, and nothing is off limits to their appreciation because of its origins or who else shares in it. By virtue of consuming it, they do much to elevate low culture in status. Hip-hop, with origins in the inner city among poor African Americans, takes its place alongside classical music as a valid art form. Even once-abandoned factories like the Chelsea Market, with some major revamping and basic food choices like tacos and hot dogs in a mall-like environment, take a place alongside classic landmarks and fancy restaurants as integral destinations.

This shift in cultural consumption has launched a debate over whether culture has become truly democratized, or if it still signifies distinction. Is the old order of what is "high" and what is "low" culture, or what is "elite" and what is for the "masses," over—in which case everyone can now equally

access and appreciate all cultures and cultural products? Or does the old stratifying order persist today, only in new forms, and therefore does what people buy (or listen to, or see, or eat, or drink, or wear) still distinguish them from others in ways that reinforce their own social backgrounds? In other words, is difference erased when elites listen to and talk about hip-hop, or does it somehow remain? Despite the potential of cultural omnivorousness to remove distinction from people's tastes, most research supports the latter claim: people still reproduce inequality when they consume low culture, they simply do so along new lines.<sup>9</sup> They are simply new elites.

For example, today's "foodies," or everyday people who love talking, reading, and writing about food along with eating and cooking it, face a contradiction. On the one hand, they earnestly seek out and praise a wide range of foods and cultures regardless of their origins, while rejecting the exclusive snobbery from traditional but arbitrary elite food cultures, such as French haute cuisine.<sup>10</sup> Everyone should get to eat good food, and everyone can be a foodie, their democratic thinking goes. On the other hand, foodies also make new definitions for what is and is not "good" food. They create and police the "symbolic boundaries" surrounding these definitions.<sup>11</sup> They ask a number of questions about food to determine its quality: Is it "authentic?" Or does it have geographic specificity? Was it made simply, by hand? Is there a clear personal link between the product and its maker or makers? Does it signify history and tradition? And is it "exotic?" Or does it come from a distant culture? Does it break common eating or cooking norms? Foodie culture promotes these meanings through various traditional and new media outlets, while foodies debate them in conversations and online. Most importantly, the "authentic" and "exotic" foods foodies typically laud as "good" are hardly accessible to most people in terms of both their cost and the complex understandings behind their "good-ness." While they champion democratic and multicultural eating, these new elites still seek out and obtain greater cultural status through consumption, but by different means from the traditional model.<sup>12</sup>

A dimension to this shift identifies culture not merely as knowledge to be known or a product to be consumed, but as behavior to be performed.<sup>13</sup> At one point, elites looking to show their status and distance themselves from mere aspirants through consumption could simply name fine distinctions in the cultural products they liked, such as knowing specific details in high-quality men's suits, the subtle variations in multiple performances of classical musical pieces, or the differences between wine vintages.<sup>14</sup> But with so

much cultural knowledge openly and easily available on the Internet, and with the risk of coming off as an elitist snob, people show their status by acting out their cultural bona fides, but casually, and with ease. Pushing fine distinctions is forceful showing off. New elites want to show their multicultural tastes as a normal aspect of who they are, and as something others can obtain. Such performances, which must be casual and convincing, are sources of cultural power in an era of omnivorousness.

This shift in cultural consumption and taste is important because it permeates the social worlds of craft cocktail bars, craft distilleries, upscale men's barbershops, and whole-animal butcher shops. In one sense, the products they sell and the services they provide are very ordinary. People order cocktails and booze at bars all the time, everyone gets a haircut at some point, and meat is a dietary staple. People are highly aware of these basic, neighborhood businesses, and someone has to provide the services and make these items for customers. These workers often frame their special products and services as basic and mundane, like any other version of them. In other words, they take a very democratic approach to what they offer.

But what they make, do, and sell is neither ordinary nor broadly accessible. Each workplace and its workers elevate their products and services above the common and into a rarefied cultural realm through particular work practices, applied cultural knowledge, and philosophical underpinnings.<sup>15</sup> While we know much about how cultural omnivores consume, a look on the ground at these new elite culture workers reveals where and how these tastes get made and spread.

A number of philosophies undergird the work practices and professional identities of these workers. Cocktail bartenders use the philosophy of "mixology," which includes following precise recipes, using specific ingredients, and employing certain tools and techniques, to make what they think are "great" drinks the "right" way. Craft distillers use ideas like "sustainable" and "local" to undergird their production of "authentic" small batches of spirits. Men's barbers at upscale shops rely on a sense of style and masculinity rooted in hip, downtown urban cultural scenes and use both traditional and new haircutting techniques to provide stylish haircuts for professional men in a deliberately masculine setting. And whole-animal butchers use a "meat philosophy" that determines ethical and sustainable meat and artisanal butchery techniques to make rare cuts of meat and meat products. These workers imbue their products and services with these meanings while inculcating these values of "good" taste to consumers.

Using craft-based techniques and applying cultural knowledge make these workers and businesses among the new cultural elite in retail and light manufacturing. They are where savvy consumers can find items and services that appear rather normal, and a part of everyday life in the city. But they really contain complex meanings that make them unique, “authentic,” and special to these consumers. Most importantly, these businesses are places where workers create and teach “good,” omnivorous tastes.

Cocktail bartenders use their own tastes and those of their taste community to choose ingredients for their drinks. They often favor less prestigious spirit categories (rye) and inexpensive, unknown brands (Rittenhouse) over highly regarded (aged scotch and cognac) and popular ones (Grey Goose vodka). Similarly, craft distillers often use local and rare ingredients different from what popular liquor brands use (heritage ryes, corns, apples) and adjust recipes (reducing the juniper content in gin) to make products with unique flavor profiles. And distilling in small batches (“artisanally”) leads to inconsistent flavors compared to mass-produced and blended spirits. These decisions of cocktail bartenders and craft distillers and the techniques they use to make their products help restructure taste in the drinks world. They elevate certain products, lower others, and create new “good” ones based on the philosophies and work practices behind them.

Barbers in upscale men’s shops use a sense of style and detailed service within the confines of a masculine-coded space, where professional urbanites can get stylish haircuts without compromising their manhood while also consuming working-class culture. And whole-animal butcher shop workers butcher and sell cuts of meat that are both unusual (feather steak, boneless chuck short rib) and popular (tenderloin, strip steaks). But they ignore popular ideas of what makes meats cuts and meat products “good” and “bad,” such as fat content, and instead use their own tastes to distinguish cuts from each other. In short, today’s upending of tradition and restructuring of cultural taste have influenced all four of these industries, with a small segment of workers leading the charge of creating and teaching “quality” taste in unique workplaces.

### **Shifting Community Institutions in Gentrifying Neighborhoods**

Many popular images of neighborhood life in the industrial city are of self-contained “urban villages.”<sup>16</sup> These are the Little Italys, Little Polands, Greektowns, and other enclaves for ethnic groups (mainly of European descent), as

well as neighborhoods for Jews and blacks (or shtetls and ghettos). To their residents these areas were like safe havens, intimate places of familiarity in the anonymous city. Residents defined their neighborhood's culture and uses, and the more a single group dominated a neighborhood's population, the stronger its boundaries dividing insiders and outsiders. Like Main Street in Small Town, USA, these neighborhoods had everything for residents' daily needs: native cuisines and groceries, social hangouts, and mother tongues in the streets. The businesses were community institutions, provided the basics, and got people out of their cramped apartments and together in public. Of course, these pictures of the urban village are often romantic. Life in them wasn't always harmonious. Conflicts regularly emerged between different groups over such issues as jobs, housing, and the use of public space; some groups were essentially forced to live in these areas, and they sometimes lacked adequate services and/or became victims of "urban renewal" programs.<sup>17</sup>

Its founders based Chelsea Market's concept on the romantic urban village idea. It is the shopping street of the old neighborhood except indoors and in microcosm. Inside shoppers can go to the butcher, baker, greengrocer, chocolatier, cheesemonger, and fishmonger. They can buy a bottle of wine or booze, or milk at the dairy. They can browse in the bookstore; stop in the ice cream parlor; get a haircut, shave, and shoeshine; and then pop downstairs for a beer or cocktail. And because it's the twenty-first century and the foodie movement is in full swing, they can also get Cambodian sandwiches, crepes, vegan sushi, "authentic" tacos, fancy espressos, and oysters. The workers often know and are passionate about the items they sell. It is the anti-supermarket. But there are big differences between it and the urban village. Chelsea Market is a repurposed factory in a wealthy destination area, not the streets of a neighborhood. Shoppers are usually professionals who work nearby, visitors from around the city, and tourists, not necessarily neighbors. And the workers celebrate the sense of craft and cultural knowledge undergirding these businesses rather than any sense of local community or group identity.

The actual and romanticized urban villages gradually declined in the decades after World War II. Manufacturing industries began to leave cities for less expensive land and labor in rural areas and overseas and for more efficient production, as Nabisco did when it left Chelsea.<sup>18</sup> With factory jobs disappearing in cities, people, mainly of European descent, and retail businesses, such as their community institutions, began moving to suburbs (known as suburbanization, or "white flight"). Some workers began commuting to white-collar jobs in offices for companies in the service industries, such

as finance, accounting, and advertising, or in suburban office parks. Real estate and business investment in the central areas of cities declined, while crime and inner city poverty increased. Some groups, most especially African Americans, were essentially left behind. Urban renewal programs, such as the building of public housing projects, concentrated poverty and joblessness in dense clusters. By the late 1970s old industrial cities seemed all but dead, while suburban living thrived.

The moving of the white, well-educated middle class to the urban core since the 1980s has helped revive the urban village model for city neighborhoods in the postindustrial era. Critical of suburban living and in search of an urban lifestyle, this group of college students and recent graduates, creative workers, and young professionals often shows a desire to put down roots in “authentic” neighborhoods, such as by shopping at local, independent stores. Of course, most of the neighborhoods available to young newcomers in terms of having affordable vacancies and a vibrant street life have been in recent history working class and low income, with people from minority populations or the remaining white ethnic groups still living in them. Rents gradually increase and new businesses catering to this population open as these neighborhoods gain reputations for being up-and-coming.

A well-known term for these events is “gentrification,” which continues in urban neighborhoods around the country today. Each of the businesses in this book has opened in gentrifying neighborhoods. The most successful of these neighborhoods, which have been gentrifying for decades, such as Chelsea and those in lower Manhattan, are now becoming upscale destinations, with increasingly more expensive housing, shopping, and nightlife.<sup>19</sup> But gentrification potentially displaces existing low-income groups and their businesses from their neighborhood and effectively denies access to it for any future ones.<sup>20</sup>

As in the industrial era, new businesses open in today’s gentrifying neighborhoods to serve the local community, which is markedly different from the existing communities or those of the past. Young, well-educated residents often have discerning, omnivorous tastes and senses of style, and/or disposable income and curiosity to check out trends, which these new elite culture workers seek to satisfy. These consumers are often knowledge and culture workers who respect creativity and uniqueness, and who admire craft and artisanality in an age of digital formats and mass production.

Cocktail bars, upscale men’s barbershops, and whole-animal butcher shops all draw on the romantic imagery of classic community institutions and on

vintage versions of their businesses through their themes and motifs. Many cocktail bars model themselves on Prohibition-era speakeasies or swanky hotel bars. New men's barbershops look like classic shops or hunting lodges with vintage barber chairs and stations, where men can hang out with each other and talk in comfort. Well-lighted and white-tiled with large display cases and service counters, whole-animal butcher shops evoke simple meat-and-potatoes American food. The owners of these businesses strive to provide these environments and services for their communities.<sup>21</sup>

For the most part, however, these businesses attract narrow slivers of their local populations—specifically, those who see the value in spending a lot of money on basics like alcohol, haircuts, and meat, and, obviously, those who can afford to do so with regularity. Some have become destinations for curious consumers who like the novelty of drinking cocktails in a bar with a hidden entrance, of getting a straight razor shave, and of watching a butcher separating their steak from a whole animal.<sup>22</sup> And some consumers are “in the know,” or members of their industries' rarefied taste communities. Sharing knowledge of and passion for the products and philosophies of these businesses binds these consumers together, although they often do not live near the establishments, or each other.<sup>23</sup>

Most importantly, in practice these new businesses do not serve as community institutions in the same ways as their forebears or contemporary peers in minority and immigrant neighborhoods do. Taste, of the physical (craft spirits taste better) or philosophical (meat “should” be raised a certain way) variety, or both, unites them with their customers. Socially, these businesses structure interactions and conversations between workers and customers around the products they sell, techniques they use, and philosophies they promote. There are exceptions, such as regular customers who become friendly with a bartender, barber, or butcher. Rarely, however, do relationships grow between customers, and rarely do customers feel a sense of community greater than themselves while at these establishments. They are not bound together culturally, racially, or ethnically as people are at the working-class bar, African American barbershop, or Halal butcher shop, nor do they sense sharing a common fate or set of circumstances as people in these groups do. These businesses merely meet a lifestyle-based need. While boasting a community orientation, they are in effect individually oriented.

Meanwhile, as examples of the city's “old order” institutions of luxury consumption and service struggle to survive (opera houses), renovate to adapt

(high-end hotels), and disappear (haute French restaurants) in today's era of taste, these new establishments increasingly occupy their former positions among the cultural elite. In part these new businesses have reached this point of exclusivity by both adopting omnivorousness and borrowing a sense of high-end, personalized service from the old elite.<sup>24</sup> Quality service lies at the heart of each of these business types, but what separates the new cultural elites from their older peers and makes them part of a new form of luxury is how their workers intertwine interactive service with cultural knowledge and omnivorous tastes, and highlight a sense of craft in their work. These elements elevate these businesses to a new level of cultural status in gentrifying neighborhoods, and make them attractive places to work and build a career. We already know much about consumption and retail outlets as both signposts and catalysts of gentrification.<sup>25</sup> These businesses further our knowledge of this complex process by showing the important role that work practices of craft and craftsmanship are playing in transforming community institutions in these neighborhoods.

### **The New Economy: Segmented Industries, Masculinity, and Craft**

Economic foundations help shape how cities grow and change, and cities change most dramatically when their economy's foundation shifts underneath them. The United States prospered in the early twentieth century and after World War II because of urban manufacturing, with the industrial sector reaching a peak of nearly twenty million workers in 1978.<sup>26</sup> These "blue-collar" jobs were well-paid with benefits, and did not require more than a high school diploma. And as companies grew, so did their administrative support staff, or "white-collar" workers, in office buildings.<sup>27</sup> Blue- and white-collar workers could generally expect long-term employment in their companies, and opportunities to get promoted and retire on generous pensions. With high productivity lowering prices on consumer goods and the growth of inexpensive housing in city outskirts and suburbs, these jobs allowed millions of American families to enter the middle class. Having a good, stable job, owning a home and a car, and parents giving children more than they had: many of these popular staples of the American Dream emerged during this period.

At its peak, however, manufacturing jobs represented only about 30 percent of the American labor force, but they were the engines of urban economies. Factory workers and those administrative white-collar workers in the increasingly complex bureaucracies for these and connected industries (legal, accounting, finance, insurance, advertising) drove their growth. These workers bought cars and televisions, went food shopping, and ate out at restaurants. They built, expanded, and repaired homes, went on vacations, and saw movies at theaters. They went to bars and liquor stores, got haircuts, and bought meat. Steady employment at the blue- and white-collar levels in manufacturing and connected industries supported these and many other jobs in the service sector. And all of these workers and businesses, in both manufacturing and service, paid taxes to their local municipalities and states, which supported more jobs in the public sector (teachers, firefighters, government employees). Manufacturing workers, such as those in the Nabisco factory and larger factories in more lucrative industries than baking (for example, steel, automobiles) around the country, were important for being 30 percent of the workforce (at its highest) and because of their impact on the other 70 percent.<sup>28</sup>

Then the economy began to slowly shift during the 1970s as manufacturing declined. Increased globalization and free trade since this time has meant companies could move their factories abroad to countries with cheaper land and labor, raising their profits. Technological innovations have also made manufacturing more efficient, which means companies have gradually needed fewer workers to produce even more products than they did before. As a result of these twin factors, employment in manufacturing has steadily declined since its peak, while production has increased and the price of consumer goods has remained affordable.<sup>29</sup> Today approximately 12.3 million people work in the manufacturing sector, which is only about 8.8 percent of the workforce.<sup>30</sup> These jobs have also diverged in terms of quality. Some high-end ones, such as in aeronautics, pay very well and require considerable skill and advanced degrees. But most workers in the manufacturing sector have seen their wages drop, their benefits slashed, and their stable jobs grow more precarious as competition from abroad and the next technological innovation loom.

Perhaps most importantly, when manufacturing jobs vanished, so did jobs in the service and public sectors. The loss harmed some places worse than others. Smaller cities that depended on a small factory (Galesburg, Illinois: Maytag) and larger cities that depended on a single industry (Detroit:

automobiles; Akron: rubber; Youngstown and Pittsburgh: steel) were hit the hardest by this shift.<sup>31</sup> Cities like New York, which had a more diverse manufacturing sector and a more dynamic economy overall than cities like Detroit, certainly suffered through deindustrialization, but not as uniformly and for not as long. Spatially, New York City experienced large pockets of poverty, especially in neighborhoods and communities dependent on manufacturing work. In Chelsea, for instance, manufacturing gradually disappeared, warehouses emptied, and shipping ended, while employment and rents declined. These conditions primed the neighborhood for gentrification, but the city still needed a new economic foundation for that process to begin.

The shift that began in the 1970s led to the postindustrial era of today. Rather than material goods, the production and distribution of ideas drive today's successful urban economies. This "new economy" is a knowledge economy.<sup>32</sup> The most successful industries with the greatest potential for growth create ideas that can become usable, and sellable, products and services. These industries include information technology, finance, telecommunications, nanotechnology, health (pharmaceutical, biomedicine, and other life science research), and culture. Many fall under the general categories of "high-tech" and "high-end service." A product's value lies in the idea behind it, such as its function or design, while the product itself gets made elsewhere (like Apple products in China) or nowhere except in digital code (computer software, phone apps). Driven by human intelligence, creativity, and ingenuity, or "human capital," companies in the new economy must constantly innovate and come up with new ideas to succeed.

As in the industrial era, the majority of jobs today are in local services, which are still, most importantly, an effect of economic growth in the innovation sector, not a cause.<sup>33</sup> Workers in the knowledge-based industries support service industries like beverage, grooming, and food. As the former grow in a city, so do the latter. People in the services cannot support each other without outside help. Bartenders, craft distillers, barbers, and butchers cannot buy products and services from each other unless someone else, someone who generates exchange value from what they make in their work, does so first.<sup>34</sup> The key difference is between what generates exchange value in the postindustrial era versus what did in the industrial era—namely, knowledge and ideas versus material goods.

Work in any sector and industry today looks very different from yesterday. While "stable" and "stability" may have once described jobs and work

conditions in the industrial era, when people often stayed at one company their whole careers (or at least had the option to do so), many scholars use the term “precarious” to describe work in the new economy.<sup>35</sup> Jobs have become less stable and secure than they were in the past because of how both companies and workers have responded to the forces of postindustrialism. The United States has significantly deregulated many sectors of the economy since the 1970s, such as the finance, transportation, communication, and energy industries. A key goal of removing limits on how companies can act has been to increase competition between them domestically and abroad, which in theory makes them more productive and flexible and lowers prices on goods and services for consumers.<sup>36</sup> But giving companies greater autonomy over their behavior has led to such common uncertainties as mass layoffs during financial strains and outsourcing work abroad and to freelance, temporary, and part-time workers, which reduces the need for full-time employees and, by extension, reduces costs due to lower pay and few, if any, benefits.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, people also face greater job insecurity because of competition from well-educated, highly skilled workers who move to the United States from abroad. The impacts of these changes vary by industry, but they have become common aspects of work in the new economy.<sup>38</sup> As a result of this precarious, unstable economic environment, many people today feel significant stress and uncertainty in their work lives, which they must increasingly cope with on their own and often experience as a personal failing.<sup>39</sup> The age of certainty and stability has given way to an age of risk.<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, some workers relish the enormous potential of work in the new economy. While the “stable” industrial era meant people often stayed at one company, with security but also with limits on their earnings, today they are freer to work on their own terms. Temps, freelancers, consultants, and contract employees all fall under today’s “gig economy.”<sup>41</sup> These workers trade security and stability for autonomy.<sup>42</sup> If knowledge, ideas, and information drive the economy, then people’s abilities to be creative and innovative make *them* the most valuable commodity on the market.<sup>43</sup> Companies need talented people because talented people generate ideas, goes the reasoning. Talented people should therefore not sell themselves short, limit themselves, or deny their potential by staying in one place. And advanced communication technology allows people to work from nearly anywhere while being active in their business networks and communities. While risk defines today’s economy and industries create the conditions for the gig economy by preferring

short-term, temporary, and freelance employees, many workers see these opportunities as personal choices.<sup>44</sup> Whether force or choice, the results of these activities is precariousness and insecurity in the job market.<sup>45</sup>

Jobs in the new economy in general fall somewhere on a spectrum between “good” and “bad” based on such criteria as salary, benefits, stability, status, autonomy over work, and time spent working.<sup>46</sup> Most importantly, education usually serves as the great divider between whether a job is “good” or “bad.” A college degree has almost always meant a higher salary, but today, with fewer well-paying and stable manufacturing jobs, a lack of a college degree is even more harmful to one’s chances of getting a good job.

Following from this breakdown, not all service jobs in the new economy are created equal. As the service sector has expanded to accommodate workers in the knowledge industries it has also become more segmented. Elite service jobs, like those in finance and the law, require advanced degrees and generally offer people the chance to earn high incomes with a good amount of stability and status. But most jobs in this overall sector, the ones in local services, are in a lower tier in terms of salary, autonomy over work, stability, and the status the job confers. A lot of research has been conducted on “emotional labor,” or those service jobs, like flight attendants and waitresses, that require workers to control their emotions to elicit an emotional response out of their customers and clients.<sup>47</sup> While emotionally draining, these interactive service practices also further reinforce much service work as “bad.” In addition, the work in these jobs is often physically draining and not mentally challenging, like knowledge work is. These include most jobs in retail and food and beverage service, housecleaners, and health care aides, none of which require advanced degrees.<sup>48</sup>

At first glance, bartender, distiller, barber, and butcher are not “good” jobs in the new economy, if we compare them with other ones. They are not at the forefront of innovation, like high-tech entrepreneurs and software engineers, but are basic manual labor and retail jobs in service industries and manufacturing. They do not offer job security, and the incomes are low on average compared to college graduates in other occupations.<sup>49</sup> They still require workers to get their hands dirty, stand on their feet all day, do heavy lifting, sweat, and deal with various splashes, spills, and stains. These jobs require people to know how to interact with consumers and engage in emotional labor (with the exception of distilling), and they are not known for requiring workers to use much special knowledge or creativity, or at least only a basic amount, and

not enough to rank them among today's vaunted knowledge-based or creative jobs.<sup>50</sup> And they do not bring much status. The people in this book often describe having to justify what they do to their families, who imagined a nice, clean, stable office job for their kids. When people with college degrees become low-level service workers, they often find ways to justify doing so, such as by saying it's a means to an end. Their "real" job is something else: artist, actor, musician, or student. They're just trying to pay the bills.<sup>51</sup>

But these workers love these "bad" jobs. The idea of taking pleasure in and deriving meaning from one's job underlies work in the postindustrial era. Work has become a path to happiness, not a duty or simply a way to earn a living.<sup>52</sup> Or, work should be pleasurable and meaningful. With its emphasis on human abilities and personal autonomy, the new economy promises the achievement of happiness through work. The workers in this book believe in this idea. They have sought out work that provides meaning for them. And they have found occupational communities whose members recognize them and their work as good.<sup>53</sup> More importantly, most were in privileged positions to do so, as people with many options in the job market are. They are young and free to choose whatever job they wanted, in most cases without any responsibilities such as a family to care for, and often with college degrees in hand to give them choices.

A key argument in this book is that today's expanded service sector has not just segmented in terms of "upper" and "lower" tiers, with high-skilled knowledge-based jobs in one and unskilled manual labor-based jobs in the other. The picture is more complicated. Good versions of typically low-status, manual labor jobs also exist in small segments, or niches, within service and manufacturing industries. The jobs in this book have been recoded as "cool," creative ones, with opportunities for young workers to shape tastes, innovate, and achieve higher status. They seek out these jobs as careers instead of other jobs in the new economy with higher profiles. For them, these jobs are vocations, or callings, providing meaning through materially oriented, craft-based manual labor, in front of knowing peers and an accepting public. While emotional labor is present in these occupations, it does not best explain the nature of the interactions these workers have with consumers. Cultural knowledge and craft-based technical skill structure both the work these workers engage in and much of the interactive service work they provide. Their work is omnivorous cultural production and dissemination: they sell the ideas behind their products and services as much as they sell the products and services

themselves. These jobs, then, show how the new economy has expanded into non-knowledge-based businesses of retail, service, and light manufacturing, leading to the segmentation of their larger industries.

We can also understand the new economy, and the transformation of these occupations, through a gender lens. Most of the workers in these occupations and book are men. For cocktail bartenders and upscale men's barbers, the ratio of men to women is greater than national statistics of these occupations show. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), women are nearly 60 percent of all bartenders and 22 percent of all barbers, while cocktail bartenders who are men outnumber women and upscale men's barbers who are men have an even greater majority than barbers in general. The BLS does not keep records of distillers, and butchers are categorized with "other meat, poultry, and fish processing workers," and 25 percent of these workers are women. Anecdotal evidence that I have obtained from people in these industries shows that women are rarely distillers at large liquor companies, and even more rarely butchers at butcher shops and slaughterhouses.<sup>54</sup> While still minorities compared to men, I believe women have greater representation in these niche occupations than in their mainstream versions. Still, men tend to dominate these niche industries as both workers and owners.

Work and workplaces have always been important loci for men to determine their own worth and that of others, as well as to achieve masculinity.<sup>55</sup> Men, specifically white men, throughout American history have often struggled in these endeavors in work settings amid regular economic shifts and the gradual inclusion of other groups, such as women, nonwhite men, and immigrants, into their industries. For instance, as offices came to characterize elite work settings in the mid-twentieth century, men, who saw them as gendered, feminizing spaces that restricted their opportunity to perform masculinity, experienced a decline of independence and autonomy over their work, compromising their goal of becoming "self-made" men. The growing presence of women in the office setting and their perceived threat to men's power during this time increased men's anxiety over their ability to perform their manhood.<sup>56</sup>

The stable manufacturing jobs in the industrial era were masculine-coded and mostly filled by men. They allowed men to show their manhood through manual labor, while these workplaces fostered male camaraderie. These jobs also gave men incomes to support their families and serve in the important role as breadwinners. The coming of postindustrialism and the new economy

has meant the gradual transformation of this dynamic. Women are increasingly becoming breadwinners and household heads as the new economy favors jobs either historically filled by women or that require feminine-coded skills and abilities (for example, communication, empathy).<sup>57</sup> In short, men perceive fewer opportunities to display their manhood through work in today's economy when a "good" job typically lacks a comfortable homosocial environment to perform masculinity, involves intangible knowledge work, consists of precariousness, and includes women and workers from diverse groups.

But these new elite manual labor jobs give men—mainly those of a certain race and social class standing—the chance to use their bodies directly in their work, as men did in the industrial era but do so less often today, as well as their minds, which grants them greater status in these jobs than they would otherwise have. They are simultaneously respected knowledge workers and skilled manual laborers, and perform their work in public. Men are thus able to use these jobs to achieve a lost sense of middle-class, heterosexual masculinity in their work. Women in these new elite manual labor jobs, however, experience threats to their pursuit of a professional identity in these male-dominated, masculine-coded jobs in spite of the lessened role emotional labor plays in them. These threats specifically come from male consumers, who sometimes question their expertise. While the voices of women are present, this book mainly features men, who get to uniquely perform masculinity through intertwined forms of physical and mental labor.<sup>58</sup>

A final aspect of the new economy in the postindustrial city playing a role in the rise of cool manual labor jobs is an expanding "artisan economy" of small-scale manufacturing.<sup>59</sup> Businesses in the artisan economy, such as craft brewers, coffee roasters, and knitters, are based on shared understandings of quality, authenticity, and the importance of "localness." They thrive on cultural omnivorousness and the idea of connecting people with the products they buy and the people who make them. Of the four jobs in this book, craft distillers best fall under this category. They make a new product out of raw materials, just like major industry, except on a very small scale and with an emphasis on craft. The other three are primarily service jobs. But common to each of them is how people practice and promote a sense of craft in their work.

I smiled to myself on the day Giancarlo returned to the butcher shop from getting artisanal coffee and told me about the new barbershop. I had already

thought of Chelsea Market as an excellent example of these cultural, urban, and economic transformations. The barbershop simply completed the circle. The market is unique for combining these workplaces, jobs, products, and services, and for grounding these cultural and economic shifts happening in today's postindustrial city, in one enclosed place. A former complex of manufacturing in a formerly industrial neighborhood, Chelsea Market and Chelsea's gentrification mirror the rebirth of New York City and other cities from the industrial era. Where workers once toiled by hot ovens and packed Oreos into boxes for mass consumption, today they make and distribute ideas and cultural content in upstairs and nearby offices for elite businesses in the new economy, while tourists and shoppers stroll through and consume in the arcade. They go because of its unique shops, where a different set of workers not only make and sell special products and services but also the ideas behind those products and services that make them special.

The three transformations that frame the content of this book—the restructuring of elite taste around omnivorousness, the changing of traditional community institutions into destinations of the new cultural elite in retail, and the recoding of work in the new economy—combine to explain how these jobs and businesses have become upscale, cool, and desired. Examining these cultural, urban, and economic changes together through the cases of these new elite jobs pushes forward our understanding of each.