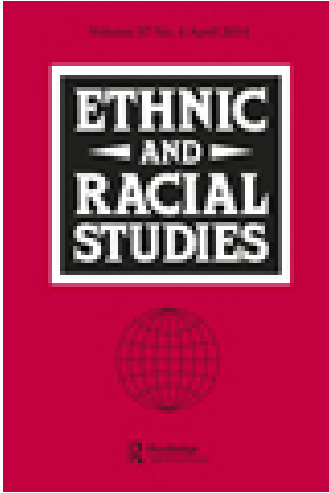


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Making the cosmopolitan canopy in Boston's Haymarket Square

Meghan Elizabeth Kallman

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Abstract

Using ethnographic data on Boston's Haymarket Square, this paper demonstrates how public space and a market opportunity can generate solidarity among people of different ethnicities in the form of a cosmopolitan canopy, and how a single ethnic tradition can nurture an open, public multi-ethnic environment. The paper illustrates how Haymarket vendors' treatment of ethnic and racial difference is actively deployed in the construction of *new* groups that largely transcend such distinctions. This article outlines the mechanisms by which a cosmopolitan canopy is sustained, and how it serves a constructive social function within the city.

Keywords: Haymarket Square; cosmopolitan canopy; Boston; Italians; open-air market; ethnicity

Introduction

Boston's open-air market, Haymarket Square, is a public produce market in which many racial and ethnic groups share entrepreneurial opportunity, class-based solidarity, and camaraderie. Very little sociology has looked at the ways in which different groups negotiate economic opportunity together, outside of the context of formal succession or an ethnic enclave, or at how such spaces can be vehicles for forging relationships across difference. This paper uses some of the insights generated in the last decade of scholarship to study the emergence of a multi-ethnic, *non-residential* area: a public, open-air produce market in a busy north-eastern city. It explores how the Haymarket functions as a 'cosmopolitan canopy', an environment that creates among vendors 'a respite from the lingering [ethnic] tensions of urban life and an opportunity for diverse peoples to come together in [an essentially] pluralistic space where people engage one another in a spirit of civility, or even comity and goodwill' (Anderson 2011, xiv). These relationships among vendors set the tone for the market

generally, extending to customers and imbuing economic transactions with a sense of tolerance and cordiality.

Using data from an ongoing ethnography, I demonstrate how public space and market opportunity can generate solidarity among people of different ethnicities in the form of a cosmopolitan canopy, and how a single ethnic tradition can nurture an open, public *multi-ethnic* environment. The paper elucidates some of the mechanisms by which this occurs, including the practices that give inter-group interactions meaning, the ways that vendors negotiate identities and symbols to create interethnic solidarity, and the importance of the practices that publicly mark the space as historically Italian.

Setting

Wedge between the financial district and the well-known Italian neighbourhood of the North End, the Haymarket, an open-air produce market, is an iteration of a long-standing commercial space in Boston. Although the city council initially permitted a formal market in 1634, the first market only came to fruition 100 years later, after weathering opposition from Bostonians who feared an increase in food prices by middlemen (Benes 1968). Four years after its construction, men dressed as clergy destroyed the original market building. In 1740, wealthy merchant Peter Faneuil offered to rebuild a meeting hall and market for Boston, provided that the city maintain it for public use; the market was inaugurated in 1742 (Benes 1968). Faneuil Hall burned in 1761 and reopened, along with its extension Quincy Market, in 1826 (Snyder 1970). Boston's pushcart vendors broke off from Quincy Market and Faneuil Hall and moved to their present location, Haymarket Square (originally named because it was a place for weighing hay) in 1839 (Osgood 1976). Both Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market also stand today, catering to middle-class businesspeople and tourists, boasting prepared food, souvenirs and consumer goods that differ substantially from the inexpensive produce that the Haymarket vendors offer.

Hardscrabble Haymarket, abutting the two indoor markets, is open year-round during daylight hours on Fridays and Saturdays. Composed of fifty to sixty produce stalls and situated near the city's historic waterfront, the market haphazardly spans three uneven blocks. Since its inception, Haymarket has consistently been an affordable source of food for the city's immigrants and poor. Most vendors sell exclusively produce, which they obtain from wholesale distributors in neighbouring Chelsea. Vegetables, fruit, meat and breads can often be purchased for less than half the cost of comparable goods in supermarkets. Although its original horse-drawn carts ceded to pushcarts and then to stands, and although the market has

enlarged and shrunk with the ebb and flow of demand and space, the arrangement looks much as it has for 150 years.

Haymarket has faced closure threats from various city and public works projects, ranging from the Big Dig¹ to various beautification schemes. In 1977, the Mayor's Neighborhood Business Program described the Haymarket as 'folksy, inelegant, and physically ugly. Quincy Market is the beautiful, indulged sister; Haymarket is the deprived, homely stepsister' (Yudis 1977, B1). In response to sustained attacks, its well-connected vendors' association (the Haymarket Pushcart Association, henceforth HPA) secured state legislation that guaranteed the market's continued operation, whose most recent iteration was the 1988 Land Disposition Agreement. The agreement stipulated that development of the surrounding areas must enhance the public's patronage of Haymarket (Primack 2005; Zade 2009). As of this writing, the city of Boston is planning to open the Boston Public Market (BPM) in a building adjacent to Haymarket Square; city officials say that they envision the BPM to be a complementary indoor market selling a variety of organic and local foods produced in Massachusetts. A second major development proposal for lots adjacent to Haymarket (known as Parcel 9) was approved in 2013.

Haymarket emerges weekly from the scabby concrete streets. Besides the market, this part of the city is calm on a Saturday morning. Steam hisses from a memorial sculpture at the edge of the subway station. The visitor sees a street closed to his or her left and Haymarket's grubby white tarpaulin tents squatting on the pavement like so many little bugs. A yellow refrigerator truck, flanked by a handful of battered-looking pickups, decisively blocks the intersection. The first round of fruit and vegetable stalls and a large fish stall form a sort of alley upon entering. The stalls hemming the street are perhaps fifteen feet long by five feet wide, of unmatched tarps stretched over aluminium frames.

Three people sell fish in the first fish stall, all Italian, all somewhere in their late thirties. Across from them two young Latino men tend a produce stall: mangoes, two for \$1.50; cucumbers, five for \$1; orange peppers, four for \$1. The next stand offers turnips, beets, ginger, leeks, cauliflower, lemons, mushrooms and bananas. Prices are nearly identical among stalls. Several women wearing hijab peruse the offerings, some pushing baby strollers; one arm-in-arm with a man. Customers have collapsible rolling grocery carts; others carry plastic bags.

Vendors behind the stalls range in age from roughly thirteen to seventy-five, all loudly hawking produce. In the winter, they hang tarps from the front and back of the stalls to warm the space, leaving the sides open for customers to walk through. The tarps block the sun, and vendors string up bare light bulbs at regular intervals all the way down the block to compensate. Teddy's orange stand abuts an awkward street corner, running up against a closed souvenir shop advertising discount airline tickets. In the middle of the street sits a rickety-looking aluminium stall folded

outwards on three sides, exhibiting raw oysters on beds of crushed ice. The market bends around a bar on the corner, opening on a row of worn, solid-looking buildings. Every fifteen feet or so a staircase leads into a basement store offering fish, meat, pizza or falafel. Displays of olives, dried fruit, bagels and pitta are stacked invitingly around a shop's open doors. The dented sign above the young attendant's head says 'Boston Halal Meat Market', first in Arabic and then in English. The racket is impressive.

Vendors at Haymarket have been primarily Italian or Italian American for approximately six generations, although its customer base has always been broad. The last decade has brought about a major shift in the demographic of both vendors and customers, reflecting some of the changing immigration patterns in the city. The Italian vendors are selling or renting the licences to their stalls, primarily to recent immigrants from Central America, North Africa and China. These changes have greatly accelerated in the past ten years, as the profit margins of the work become smaller; better-established Italians leave the market for higher pay or simply for weekends off, leasing their stands to Latino, Asian and African newcomers. Importantly, many of these Italian families now own the produce distribution centres in Chelsea that sell the week's product, wholesale, to the vendors. However, the market remains visibly Italian, wherein Italian music blares from the radios of the remaining market 'grandfathers' and the remaining tenured Italian vendors berate each other and their customers in similarly accented Boston tongues.

The North End

The identity of many of the Haymarket vendors is still deeply entwined with the Italian tradition in Boston, primarily based in the historic North End neighbourhood. The analytical concept of *Italianità* – Italianness – is primarily 'practice rather than representation' of ethnic identity. In doing *Italianità*, Italian immigrants to America created Little Italies, among them the North End, and working-class Italian neighbourhoods have continued to represent Italian Americans long after most of them vanished into the suburbs (Krase 2004, 2006). *Italianità* is 'not something to which a person belongs but rather something that he/she does along with other people' (Stanger-Ross 2010, 137)

The North End, one of Boston's oldest neighbourhoods, was settled in rapid succession by English, Irish, Jews and Italians (Monti 2013), becoming an Italian enclave around the turn of the twentieth century when Italians moved there in large numbers. The first Italian communities in the USA were called 'colonies', reflecting the feeling of being a foreign outpost in a strange land (Krase 2006, 85). The social structure of Italian communities within US cities changed very little over the course of a

century and a half; both neighbourhoods and institutions remained oriented towards the family and peer group (Gans 1982, 198). This dynamic to some degree still exerts influence on contemporary Italian vendors at the Haymarket.

By 1913, Italians made up 10% of Boston's population (Puleo 2007, 90); between 1900 and 1920, the Italian population in Boston increased from 18,000 to 77,000 (DeMarco 1981, 23). The North End, like other Italian communities, was small, fostering both interpersonal relationships and family life. Italian enclaves typically mixed commercial activities with residential areas; neighbourhoods physically and symbolically defended the units of individual, family and neighbourhood (Krase 2004, 29). The North End's insularity had unpredictable social benefits: Whyte's (1939) well-known study showed how corner groups helped keep it more organized and safe than many experts imagined would be possible.

The North End of today is overwhelmingly white, and about a third of the residents still there are of Italian descent (Monti 2013, 95). But it – and correspondingly, Haymarket – retains a powerful sense of Italianità. This contemporary Italianità is complicated, and those complications are reflected in the market's tone. Italian ethnicity is no longer monolithic, since it is no longer supported by overlapping dynamics of class, race, religion and residence, as it was when encircled by a residential enclave in the North End. The definition and maintenance of the collective ethnic boundary of Italianità has been complicated by both questions of who is Italian and what it means to be Italian; “Italian” remains a broadly salient but contested identity, mobilized in different ways within the context of different issues of concern to the community’ (Smajda and Gerteis 2012, 618).

Because the North End is no longer an enclave, the Haymarket's identity is, by extension, up for renegotiation. For most of its history the market has functioned as a space in which people of different backgrounds shop cheek-to-jowl in relative harmony. Although that dynamic persists, its old identity of Italianità holds the market together as vendorship changes hands. Italianità functions as an ethnic and cultural point of reference around which interethnic negotiations happen.

Destination: the cosmopolitan canopy

Little sociology has examined how ethnic diversity can create situations in which highly heterogeneous populations interact and thrive. Leading research in the area hinges on concepts such as boundary shifts, while short-changing somewhat the urban component of diversity or the study of existing incorporative mechanisms (de Souza Briggs 2013). I attempt to fill these gaps by moving the discussion of diversity into urban sociology

and discussions of public space. To do so, I employ theoretical work on the cosmopolitan canopy.

Elijah Anderson's concept of a cosmopolitan canopy describes a public space that enables participants of diverse backgrounds to come together in a civil, convivial atmosphere and temporarily suspend the racial, class and ethnic distinctions that otherwise mark their urban lives. In cities generally, with their dizzying array of colours, languages and ethnicities, there is, for Anderson, a pervasive public wariness of the Other that is temporarily suspended when participants interact under the canopy (Anderson 2004). Beneath its protective cover, 'strangers can feel secure and comfortable enough with one another to extend themselves and interact across racial lines' (Anderson 2011, 120). It is a young but highly promising concept that captures some of the more important components of public spaces, and importantly, holds the potential to help move cities out of conflict and to create environments in which citizens can thrive on diversity.

Here I argue for understanding the Haymarket as a cosmopolitan canopy, and I elucidate some of the mechanisms by which it facilitates the deconstruction of ethnic boundaries and the 'regrouping' of people. The Haymarket has always functioned to some degree in this way. However, only one publication examines it specifically (Snyder's (1970) excellent photojournalistic account), and there is no sociological documentation of the Haymarket at all. It is possible that canopies are to some degree endemic to market culture generally, appealing to immigrants because they are reminiscent of market cultures elsewhere, and because they facilitate solidarities among working-class and immigrant customers. This particular canopy (unlike Anderson's, which deals with Philadelphia and the racial politics between blacks and whites), is circumscribed by *Italianità*. *Italianità* is central to Haymarket's interethnic dynamics, representing the 'old world', the immigrant, the market culture – and standing in contrast to the 'Americanness' of the surrounding order. Specifically, this *Italianità* has several functions.

First, it sets the tone for the canopy, and becomes the dominant discourse, or a point of reference for other interethnic negotiations. *Italianità*, as a practice, holds the market together as the composition of its vendors' changes. The Italian identity is wound in with claims to moral and cultural legitimacy and authenticity (Smajda and Gerteis 2012). Like the North End in general, the Italians in Haymarket juxtapose *Italianità* with other non-ethnic groupings (such as 'yuppies' or 'The City').

Yet it is within this space of *Italianità* that the deconstruction of ethnic identities and the reconstructions of new peer groups occur. Ironically, ethnicity operates both as a way to make sense of differences among vendors and between vendors' customers, but also, and importantly, as a way to become similar. *Italianità* functions as a series of ground rules for vendors at the Haymarket. While others have discussed ethnicity as creating and protecting groupness (Gans 1982), here I argue that *Italianità*

acts as both a proxy for behavioural expectations, and also provides a language for creating a *non*-ethnic peer group (even though this peer group describes itself in ethnic language). In other words, Italianità sets the tone for the market because of its seniority; vendorship converges on Italian practices, which in turn become common and aid in the construction of a new kind of groupness.

This canopy has particular meaning in the context of Boston. Although its past differs from Philadelphia's – where Anderson developed his theory in the context of a black/white racial dichotomy – Boston has its own ugly histories of prejudice and has been 'conspicuously uncivil' at times (Monti 2013, 11). The central tensions in Boston have been interethnic, rather than only racial. But modern Boston is changing and is now characterized by what Monti describes as a sort of 'civic-minded capitalism' that complements bourgeois values of prosperity by facilitating interaction among different social groups through market competition and cooperation. While this dynamic has been present at the Haymarket for a good while, the city appears to be in some senses, following the market's example.

In the sections below, I elaborate on the mechanisms of the cosmopolitan canopy at work in the Haymarket, showing as well how Italianità functions as an ethnic and cultural point of reference around which interethnic negotiations happen.

Methodology

This piece draws on over a year's worth of qualitative fieldwork (2011–2012) in the Haymarket itself, which is open only on Fridays and Saturdays. I visited the market weekly, in all weathers, and at all times of day, working on a volunteer basis at six different produce and fish stalls throughout the market run by vendors of different ethnicities (three Italians, one Guatemalan, one Irish and one Egyptian). Most stands are multi-ethnic. For example, Italian Petey Pesce² employs Moroccan Miloud at his fish stand, and Irish Tommy works with a Filipina woman, a Chinese woman and a third-generation Italian man at his produce stall. To capture any dynamics specific to days of the week, I varied my participation between Fridays and Saturdays, and between mornings and afternoons. I spent roughly eight hours at the market each visit.

I focused my analytic attention on interpersonal relationships, both between vendors and customers, and between vendors themselves. Participant observation enabled me to understand the rhythms of the market days, and enabled observation of interactions both *among* vendors and *between* vendors and customers. Because I rotated stalls, I was better able to understand the habits, practices and priorities of vendors of different ethnic groups, and to my surprise found that such distinctions were less relevant than I had initially expected. Being present in the

market on a regular basis eventually rendered me something of a fixture; as one vendor put it, I became ‘the crazy white girl’ eventually acknowledged as a familiar, if still somewhat curious, presence.

Additionally, I conducted five formal, semi-structured, open-ended interviews with vendors and two city officials regarding the market. The interview questionnaire – which served as a guide rather than a strict template for these discussions – was built with insights gained from participant observation. Because most vendors, due to concerns ranging from immigration status to mistrust of technology, refused to be recorded and disliked the idea of a formal conversation, I did relatively few of these. Such interviews were conducted, transcribed and if necessary translated, by myself. In this piece I have included only translations of conversations conducted in Spanish.

Measuring the cosmopolitan canopy was an emergent process; indeed, I began this research project prepared for a sociological story about competition and animosity. I expected the imminent development of the BPM to figure prominently in the dynamics of the space, and to see dramatic ethnic divisions and tensions within the Haymarket. It rapidly became apparent that the BPM was of little or no concern to most of the vendors, and that the Haymarket facilitated an entirely different interethnic dynamic: the creation of friendships, loyalties and cohesion. I thus altered my approach to data collection, seeking instead measures of interaction, friendship and solidarity that, together, can be used to indicate the presence of a cosmopolitan canopy.

My observations sought to identify cases of: interethnic friendship (deep relationships among vendors); casual interethnic interaction (the character of the exchanges between vendors and customers of different ethnicities); interethnic tension (tension among vendors that turned on ethnic differences); vendor solidarity (solidarity among Haymarket vendors in the case of outside threats); and the dynamics supporting these relationships.

During and immediately after each visit, I recorded field observations and quotes. I then transferred these notes to electronic form and analysed them iteratively. Manifestations of the above concepts were flagged in field notes as they occurred; subsequent analysis of field notes and transcriptions also helped me parse the dynamics of such interactions and recognize patterns of interaction among respondents. I organized my data (field notes, quotes and interview transcriptions) thematically in order to structure my analysis.

Results

Michelle La Pradelle’s (2006) fascinating study of open-air markets in France offers some interesting insights into the more ritualized aspects of marketing, similar to those observable at the Haymarket, including

performative banter and bickering between vendors and customers. However, La Pradelle's market is largely a social function, painted with a veneer of economic imperative to justify the repeated enactment of social ritual. Unlike the Provence market, which caters largely to middle- and upper-class publics who have other venues for procuring food, the Haymarket sells *only* food, and both its vendors and patrons are working class. Its interactions, while performative, are also deeply economic; the dual incentives of social ties and money set it apart from the wealthier Provence market that is 'as joyous as it is make-believe' (La Pradelle 2006, 20). As a public space, the Haymarket is proudly pragmatic. That the economic stakes are high in part facilitates integration.

In this section I explore how three phenomena within the Haymarket – friendships, working-class masculinity and regroupings – contribute to the maintenance of the cosmopolitan canopy. I demonstrate how Italianità functions as a touchstone for these other three phenomena, and how under this canopy, Haymarket vendors further regroup themselves, creating new kinds of solidarities.

Italianità

In a resource-short and competitive environment, Italianità circumscribes the other practices within the Haymarket. It becomes a currency that both enables it to survive politically and facilitates the creation of interethnic, canopy-like friendships among vendors that sustain an agreeable multi-ethnic social dynamic.

Italian stall vendors are closely connected (sometimes through family, nearly always through tightly knit social groups) to the owners of the Chelsea produce distributors, who use the market as an outlet for their damaged and overstocked goods, enabling produce distributors to cut their losses. This sustained Italian presence ensures a degree of conformity with the desires of the Italian businessmen. When asked outright if there is tension between Italian and Latino vendors, Felipe tells me that at first there was, but not now. Before, the Italians saw the Latinos as competition. Now, 'the people who own the stall licenses all work at the distributor in Chelsea. Now the owners of the stalls aren't here. You pay them legally; it's like a business for them. You aren't taking customers away from them'; thus, Italian vendors remain peripherally involved with the market while cultivating good relationships with their Latino tenants. Additionally, since only licence holders are permitted to participate in the HPA, licence ownership implies a vote, a literal voice that minority renters cannot have. The Italians, whether actively vending or not, run the HPA. This process in general is not only a history of ethnic succession within the market, but a reorganization of the market's functions along ethnic lines.

The remaining Italian vendors are committed to Haymarket as part of a larger practice of Italianità that finds a special outlet on market days. Here, Italian vendors joyfully perform ethnicity in an environment that is accustomed to and values it. From my field notes:

Abramo's friend shows up and gives him a gigantic bottle of wine in a glass jug with two handles. Abramo is visibly delighted, and he yells to an Asian woman perusing his stand, "Hey, you see this?" –holding up the wine – "This is made with real feet!". He stamps the ground enthusiastically, presumably demonstrating how people make wine with their feet.

In addition to being an important component of identity for the tenured vendors, Italianità also has meaningful political implications for the Haymarket's survival. The Boston Italian community has a tremendous political presence in the city (recently succeeded Thomas Menino was Boston's longest-serving, and first Italian American, mayor). One vendor tells me:

I was at a Seder dinner a couple years ago, and I was talking to a very high-powered man... He was telling me how shocked he was – and he was a Jewish guy too, not like he was an Italian insider – he was telling me how he was always surprised at how well connected the Pushcart Association was with politicians.

Italianità remains instrumentally useful, so there is instrumental value in retaining it for use within the market.

Although vendors are no longer overwhelmingly Italian, Italian tradition still sets the tone and creates unity among vendors. Newcomers to the market are schooled in 'proper' Haymarket vendorship (sufficiently Italian in character) and then entrusted with their own stalls. Remaining Italian stewards use this 'training period' to facilitate the ethnic transition of vendors, satisfying themselves that newcomers are appropriately skilled, whatever their ethnicity.

Vendors of different ethnic backgrounds adopt Haymarket practices quickly. Incoming vendors assume standard-looking, dark-coloured work clothes and boots, universal working-class clothing. Italian seafood vendor Petey Pesce calls his Moroccan assistant Miloud 'Miloudy', in a Boston Italian linguistic makeover of Miloud's name. One vendor says:

You'll see like, old-timers walk by the new stands and they'll be like, "No no no no. There's too much green here! You gotta move the green. It's all about the colors. You gotta go green, red—" There's someone who would walk by, and be like, *embarrassed* for them! They'll be like "no no no no no. Let me tell ya. Put the box here."

Bes, Felipe and Jesús, from Egypt, Honduras and Guatemala, respectively, all worked for several years at Italian-owned stands and only took over the

rental licences when the Italian stand owners pulled out; they describe these periods as ‘training’. This helps to create a solidarity that spans the internal divisions among Haymarket vendors. Further excerpts from my field notes:

This stall is... staffed by a single Latino guy in his twenties with a blue Red Sox sweatshirt and a wool hat. When he doesn't have customers Fernando yells loudly “Ey oize neeeehst ovah heah!”. He doesn't intone it as a question and takes me a minute to understand that he is parroting the thick Boston accent of the Italians whose stands abut his, yelling “Hey, who's next over here?”

There is public deference to the Italian tenor of the market, but subtle contestation around issues that some of the newer vendors from other regions find objectionable, such as the semi-sacred giving-of-grief that Italianità defines as critical to vendorship. Felipe says: ‘[The Italians] are very rude. Customers touch something and they yell at them; I let them touch.’ He explains that his customers do not like to be yelled at; other Latino vendors agree. However, Italianità remains instrumentally valuable to the market's survival, and more importantly, functions as an ethnic and cultural point of reference for the maintenance of the cosmopolitan canopy.

Friendships

A second visible mechanism of the cosmopolitan canopy can be seen in the friendships among vendors of different nationalities and ethnicities. These relationships, based on Italian modes of interaction that emphasize an impatient, masculine version of cordiality, set the tone for the market and create an atmosphere of collegiality that engenders the feeling of a canopy, presiding over the mixing that happens under its shelter. Most vendors tell me that they have friends of all stripes in the market. Abramo says: ‘There's nowhere else that you can find this. It's not everywhere that you can have a friend named Jose, a friend named Saleem, and a friend named Corky all in the same place.’

Haymarket vendors count their market colleagues among their closest friends; even those who do not ‘look out for each other’ during their workdays. They lend assistance in the pre-dawn set-up when the wind renders tarps unmanageable; they swap cigarettes, advice on women, jokes, display techniques and occasionally product. These responsibilities to each other are taken seriously – Steve felt terribly because he failed to notice that one of Joshie's light bulbs had set his tarp smouldering. He apologized to Joshie several times, as if he had set the tarp alight himself, explaining to me: ‘We all look out for each other down here. I felt bad I didn't see it.’

Without exception, Haymarket vendors claim to love what they do. This love is the reason that the market still attracts vendors, in spite of the long, gruelling hours, the questionable pay, and the problems related to permitting and the city. Being a Haymarket vendor is, for most Italian vendors, an important part of their lives, and this feeling of belonging touches the incoming vendors as well. Joshie tells me:

We do it because George's great-grandfather was one of the first people down there, in the 1870s. And he's been down there since he was a kid... Two weekends ago, we took the weekend off... I was down at the Haymarket hanging out at 5am! I texted George being like "I'm the biggest fucking loser right now, but I'm hanging out with Nino and Phil" ... It beckons you in so many ways... Like, what the fuck would Ricky-D do on a fucking Friday? I mean, he loves it! I mean, literally, if the Haymarket shut down, he would still just get up, smoke a joint, drive down to the Haymarket.

'Amo eso [I love this],' Fernando says firmly. 'No me gusta. *Amo* eso. [I don't like it. I *love* it].' Tommy echoes: 'I love it. You don't get rich doin' this, believe me.' Another says:

You can start to develop... insight into this love-hate relationship that everyone who works down there has. Because it's just a hard place to work... Very physically taxing. Very, very difficult people that you interact with. Like, I really, really do *not* like the Haymarket right now. I don't. [pause]. But I love it! [laughs]

These vendors come to the Haymarket not simply to work, but because their community is meaningful to them. The sacred space of the canopy balances other disincentives – long work, cold weather, poor pay – bringing vendors back, week after week.

Working-class masculinity

However close these friendships may become, working-class masculinity sets the tone for most of them and acts as an equalizer among men of different ethnicities. Joshie says: 'George and I... we're big strong guys that love to do physical work, because we both feel like that's an important part of being a man. We both like to sweat, get dirty.'³

This overt masculinity does not compromise these friendships; indeed, it seems to deepen them. Tommy has resolved many disputes over stall space with his fists in a way that has not seriously imperilled his subsequent relationships with once-opponents. Nino and Bob used to physically fight on a weekly basis over access to sidewalk space; twenty years later, the two remain friends. (When relationships truly rupture, vendors simply refuse to have anything to do with each other.) This physicality – of lifting,

sweating, working, fighting – is an important language of both vendorship and of masculinity. Vendors' language suggests that the space's masculinity is sacred and more generally, that to transgress any Haymarket tradition is to betray the market's (Italian) history.

This masculinity is contoured by a deep sense of working-class identity. Several of the better-established Italian vendors have professional or semi-professional jobs – one sells insurance during the week, one is a schoolteacher – but most of them work in food distributors, grocery stores and other blue-collar jobs. Being identified as of the working class, and positioned strictly in opposition to 'high-end' or 'yuppie' communities, constitutes a clear boundary between those who are part of the market and those who are not. Further excerpts from my field notes:

"Tell her my pet peeve about the Yuppies," Mark demands, looking at Nino. He answers his own question. "I fuckin' hate," he sneers, "when the yuppies come down and say 'I want *one* orange and *one* plum and *three* cherries and *one* head of broccoli.'"

Experiences of work at best give different ethnic communities something in common, even as they continue to live lives that are ethnically and/or racially separate. For instance, radio particularly helped consolidate a more universal working-class experience in the middle of the twentieth century (Cohen 2008, 235), reinforcing cultures that bring diverse workers together. It is no different at the Haymarket, where the common working-class culture is visible among different ethnic groups as well as across different racial lines.

A subtler, yet extremely powerful form of performing class-based identity appears in the vendors' reluctance to have anything to do with the proposed indoor market. The words 'high-end' or 'yuppie' appear consistently in vendor analysis of the BPM; vendors routinely insert the English term 'high-class' into Spanish descriptions of the new market. By specifically delineating themselves as *not* high class – by deploying their shared class as a defence mechanism – the vendors create a show of unity among themselves in the face of an outside threat, and a unique way of maintaining the market's autonomy through subtle social differentiations.

Regrouping

In the Haymarket, the vendors' treatment of ethnic and racial difference is actively deployed in the construction of *new* groups that largely transcend such distinctions. Vendors describe alliances as being made and unmade under a discourse of ethnic difference – Tommy tells me that he and Ricky-D are friends but that Ricky-D would take any opportunity he had to stab him in the back, because Ricky-D is Italian and Tommy is Irish. Moroccan Miloud was hired, fired and rehired at Italian Petey Pesce's fish

stand on the basis of his competencies. Homeless ‘Sergei the Slav’, Haymarket’s ‘free agent’, is summoned and employed variously by vendors in need of an extra set of hands, irrespective of Sergei’s inability to speak English, or his Slavic-ness. This work suggests that in practice, the reshuffling relationships actually occur on the basis of other qualities (stealing, loyalty, competence) and are painted with a veneer of ethnicity after the fact as a way to make sense of interactions.

However, it is a socially dangerous business to transgress ethnic and racial boundaries when such boundaries have powerfully shaped Boston’s social history and social survival has long turned on in-group allegiances. The vendors have created a system of mechanisms for rendering inter-group contact less objectionable, elucidated in speech as part of a practice of naming. ‘Sergei the Slav’ is known as ‘Sergei the Slav’ and never simply as ‘Sergei’, Likewise, ‘Jonah the Fag’ is never simply ‘Jonah’, nor is ‘Black Bart’ ever simply ‘Bart’. Such practices that differentiate actors by their (marginalized) identities or ascribed characteristics help underscore the presence of the pecking order, with Italianità at the top.

Importantly, however, this sort of naming also helps legitimize practices that otherwise challenge powerful social norms (employing a homeless, mentally ill man, or befriending a gay or a black man in a straight, Italian, macho space). In other words, Jonah the Fag is a permissible member of the group *because* his ‘Faggyness’ is emphasized. The Haymarket is temporarily able to suspend the implications of differences in race, ethnicity and sexual orientation in a world where such differences typically matter greatly. The canopy blurs these boundaries, but does not erase them.

Instrumentally, this new vendor-wide solidarity is enacted in the struggle against encroachment by the City of Boston. Although provisions in public policy protect the Haymarket’s existence, and formally at least, it cannot be ousted, the vendors’ perspective is that the city of Boston dislikes the Haymarket. Its immediate neighbours (high-end hotels) are especially hostile to it. The city deals with its irritation through a policy of near-constant harassment and the ticketing of minor infractions. Joshie says:

The city hates the Haymarket. *The city hates the Haymarket.* ...the property – as the land – that the Haymarket sits on, is simply too valuable to have quote unquote... an open-air, dirty, disgusting, people fighting and throwing hammers – to have that in that area.

Teddy, Tommy, Nino, Petey Pesce and others complain regularly about the city’s policy of ‘ball busting’ over small details; Nino was cited and fined heavily for having a box of produce protruding an inch from under the stand. Joshie continues:

People don't want all the slip and slop and swearing and pissing in bags and yelling and screaming... so as political support slides, and you have the fire marshal coming down and saying "everyone has to have flame-retardant tarps!" ... Some guy who's been there for sixty years has been doing that every weekend since he was five years old... And he'll not be like "okay, if that's the way it has to be." No. He says, "Go fuck your mother! I'll do it how I want to do it."

Vendors commonly close ranks and refuse to talk to anyone they even remotely suspect of being on the outside. One cautions me against questions 'that sound like you're from the Internal Revenue Service. [We] don't want to talk... because [we're] xenophobic, in the strictest sense of the word. [We have a] fear of outsiders'. The concept of an outsider, however, relies on a parallel concept of insiders, and the vendors understand themselves, as a larger group, in this way.

This regrouping – into a solidaristic, interethnic, sometimes interracial, working-class group of Haymarket vendors – can also be seen in the forms of interaction between customers and vendors of different ethnicity. In these customer–vendor interactions as well, Italianità sets the tone for exchanges. Traditional Italian vendorship is raucous, direct and noisy. Excerpts from my field notes:

"I'm with Dumb and Dumber." Val [a vendor] jerks a finger at [the two other vendors in the stall]. "Beavis and Butt –" He breaks off, stalled by a searing look from [Beavis], who is shoveling potatoes into a bag in large handfuls. "You gotta have fun down here," he tells me, grinning. "You gotta fight with the customers, it's more fun that way." And then, over my head to a customer, "Dana! Did you get that hand grenade I mailed you?"

The sheer amount of customer–vendor teasing helps outline a practice that is present, first and foremost, in interactions. It creates social contours within which economic transactions occur. These gestures might, in other contexts (such as the clean halls of academe), be considered disrespectful and even racist. Further excerpts from my field notes:

A Japanese man with the longest eyebrows I have ever seen is bent over the stall, picking out oranges. Teddy leans across the display and pulls on the man's eyebrows, grinning. The man looks up and smiles and takes a playful swipe at Teddy; I get the feeling that this is a familiar pantomime... Teddy takes an empty box and tosses it at the man, where it lands gently over his head. "Hey!" he yells, "I caught me a Jap!" The man takes the box off his head, laughing.

Later Joshie describes to me how:

Someone [will be] standing there for ten minutes being like "I want two for one dollar, not one for one dollar" [mimicking accent], and you're just like "I'm sorry, I really can't do that.". Super nice. Like, "You know, they're a

dollar each, we pay good money for them”, and “two one dollar! Two one dollar!”. “Sorry, that’s the price”. “You no like me! You don’t like Arabs!” And it’s like, it has nothing to do with the fact that you’re Arab! ... “you don’t like my family!”, and you’re like *wait a second*, where is this going? All of a sudden it’s like this huge racial thing, you know? But I’ve worked down there long enough, and there’s a flip side to that too. Which is that there is some beauty in the fact that you have all these different kinds of people down there. I mean, nowhere else, *anywhere*, do you have all these kinds of people trying to figure it out.

These interactions between vendor and customer forge relationships across what constitute traditional ethnic fault lines. The use of joking and slurs to *displace* aggression (rather than arouse it) has been documented elsewhere (Zenner 1970) and this mechanism persists here. Teddy and his Japanese customer have created a bond that is routine and friendly, using racialized language. Teddy’s customer can select oranges from any of the fifty to sixty stalls and vendors, and yet he returns to Teddy every week; he can exercise purchasing power. These interactions, as Joshie observed, have much to do with ‘trying to figure it out’.

Similarly, it is an economic truth in markets that those vendors who speak the language of their customers have a competitive edge. (Tommy yells every five minutes to his Chinese help, ‘Sandy! I don’t hear any Chinese, Sandy!’, to which Sandy obediently breaks into a shrill string of offerings, in Chinese.) Italian vendors, to compensate for their heavy reliance on English, report that the trick is to learn a few words of each language and then mimic the accent. In this case, such mimicry also functions as a social bridge:

“Dos tomatoes,” Mark says to someone, in first-class Spanglish.

“Arygato!” George yells at no one in particular, seemingly by way of practice, “Konichiwa!”

“I always try to learn,” Joshie says. “I know how to say all the vegetables and how much they cost, in Chinese. ... Chinese women love it, you know? I think that’s a good bridge. Just so you can be, I’m not like some big, like, you know, *animal*, it’s a good way to break that down.”

These linguistic connections, forged through economic necessity, have all the legitimacy of being necessary in a market context but also depoliticize the learning of other languages. To speak Chinese can now be seen in terms of attracting new customers, not ceding one’s position of power. While not unique to the Haymarket, this practice of learning a word or two can set the tone of canopy-like interactions and facilitate integration.

Haymarket vendors and customers seem to understand both how unusual it is to have this degree of integration among ethnically disparate groups and how fragile it can be. Disagreements within the Haymarket

were, in my fieldwork, always conducted on an individual level that protects inter-group peace. Tommy, for instance, believes that Ricky-D would stab him in the back given the opportunity. He explains that this is because Tommy is Irish and Ricky-D is Italian, although the initial issue was pilfering money from Tommy's cashbox. Disputes are settled one-on-one, in *ethnicized* but *individual* language – Tommy does not accuse all Italians of being thieves, but does speak of Ricky-D's perceived transgressions in ethnic terms. This approach preserves the workings of the canopy while permitting the resolution of disputes in language that makes sense to their participants.

Together, these components – Italianità that circumscribes other interactions, friendships, masculinity and class – help create and nurture the feeling of a cosmopolitan canopy among vendors, enabling them to regroup themselves into a new, market-wide collective. That new solidarity among ethnicities extends to the rest of the market, creating a sense of comity and goodwill among customers as well. Here again the canopy blurs boundaries that are active in the outside world, but does not erase them.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper has elucidated the mechanisms by which an interethnic space serves a constructive social function within the city. I have expanded upon the notion of the cosmopolitan canopy, using the Haymarket in order to understand the mechanisms by which such a protective space can emerge and be sustained. Italianità holds the market together as its identity evolves, while the multifaceted relationships among produce vendors sustain the canopy's civil tone. The paper illustrates how Haymarket vendors' treatment of ethnic and racial difference is actively deployed in the construction of *new* groups that largely transcend such distinctions. The vendors' cordial relationships are, in turn, reflected in their interactions with Haymarket customers.

Further, this project has illustrated how the concept of the canopy can be refined and extended. While some of the canopies in Anderson's book are spaces wherein participants transcend class boundaries, I show how the mechanisms at work here *regroup* vendors of different ethnicities and races, creating new solidarities. Ethnic difference is aired and discussed convivially as a way to neutralize its threat; ethnicity actually gets *invoked* to identify a group that is ethnically heterogeneous, in a new kind of grouping. This new grouping relies on mechanisms besides ethnicity to sustain itself; friendly expressions of gender and class among Haymarket vendors help set the tone for the market. The city of Boston creates a common 'enemy' for vendors of various backgrounds, where new

solidarities are activated. Similarly, the practice of Italianità is historically located and continues to pay cultural dividends.

Canopies such as the Haymarket are places of productive social interaction in environments historically fraught with tensions. Understanding how they function can potentially help create more such spaces and a healthier urban world.

Notes

1. The Big Dig was a construction project that took place in Boston, rerouting Interstate 93 to a tunnel under the heart of the city. It was concluded in 2007, nearly ten years behind schedule.
2. All names, including nicknames, have been changed.
3. There are perhaps twenty women among perhaps 130 vendors, and with one exception, they dress differently from the men (in clean, relatively stylish clothes; many of them wear make-up) as if to emphasize their femininity. The women work hard, but largely invisibly. With one exception, and myself when I was there, women vendors are of colour. Latino stalls have proportionally far more women; Italian stall owners tell me that they have never been in the habit of having women working for them. 'I wouldn't let a woman work down [h]ere,' one says firmly, 'It's too vulgar.'

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