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Decentralization, Democratic Participation and Authoritarian Dogma: Local Opposition to Minority Integration in France, Italy and the United States

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ABSTRACT This contribution asks: "Can there be too much democracy in integration politics?" It contends that democratic principles can be undermined through their implementation in local democratic systems. Orthodox beliefs concerning particular ideologies of democracy can undermine ethnic integration when they are utilized in local systems to maintain the status quo and block integration reforms. In order to examine this issue in detail, this paper studies ethnic politics under three models of democracy found in the United States, France, and Italy. It analyzes democratic principles and systems in the three states and their impact on the local arena, where members of ethnic minority and majority groups interact on a daily basis.

During a conference on the 2005 urban violence that erupted in migrant neighborhoods surrounding Paris and quickly spread throughout France, the mayor of the city of Tourcoing opened a debate on these events by exclaiming, "I fear for the future of Democracy in France."[1] This statement referred to the systemic socio-economic exclusion of ethnic minorities in French cities, the inflammatory statements made by French Minister of Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy that fanned the flames of discontent, and the imposition of a curfew by Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin in response to the violence. In fact, in most of the public and academic discussions of the 2005 urban unrest in France, the analysis focused on different types of "failures" of French democracy.

In general, discussions of ethnic politics identify a correlation between local democratic practices and ethnic integration (see Penninx *et al.*, 2004; Vertovec, 1998; Ireland, 1994). In the last 20 years, many scholars have argued that the conditions of ethnic minorities in European states have improved because of the spread of local democratic practices due to

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recent trends towards devolution. Functionalist theories of international relations (see Jacobson, 1996; Joppke, 1998) invoke the normative diffusion of human rights ideals, often through ethnic mobilization or the activity of transnational non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Many of these works claim that democratic rights have evolved beyond the realm of nation-state citizenship through the creation of a global civil society. Conversely, realist approaches in international relations (see Baldwin-Edwards, 1997; Cornelius *et al.*, 2004; Spencer, 1995) focus on the limits that international organizations have placed on the behavior of nation-state actors through soft power tactics, defined as non-coercive means (i.e. economic influence) to obtain objectives. Rather than directly examining the spread of ideas, this school concentrates on how intergovernmental bodies restrict the use of power by domestic actors through various policy-making tools (see Alston, 1999).

There can be no doubt that significant advances have been made globally towards the protection of human and minority rights, especially when comparing contemporary events to those that occurred only 50 or 60 years ago. Nonetheless, many scholars (see Collectif, 1997; Cornelius *et al.*, 2004; Wieviorka, 1999) of domestic politics have correctly demonstrated that ethnic exclusion persists even in advanced industrial states, such as the United States or the member countries of the European Union. In fact, the frequent appearance of ethnic violence in urban areas in Europe, especially in Great Britain and France, has led many (see SSRC, 2005) to believe that integration strategies have failed throughout Western Europe.

It is generally assumed that the increasing presence of ethnic marginalization, racism, and xenophobia in Europe reflects a breakdown of democratic practices on the continent. In response, scholars and activists alike have called for further democratization in these arenas through the decentralization of ethnic policy-making to the local level. This paper questions this approach and asks: "Is there a limit to how open democratic practices should be in integration politics?" It argues that democratic principles, such as equality, justice, and solidarity, can be undermined through their implementation in local democratic systems. The article contends that these ideals should be evoked and operationalized as a means to create a common good for all members of democratic communities. Instead, they have recently become ends in many contemporary political debates, and this shift has contributed to socio-economic exclusion because re-distributive policies, such as affirmative action, school mergers, or anti-discrimination strategies, are being opposed with the accusation that they betray color-blind notions of liberal democratic citizenship. Even in the absence of illiberal practices or overt racism, orthodox defences of particular ideological forms of "democracy" in local political debates can further ethnic tensions and undermine ethnic integration by reinforcing the exclusion and isolation of ethnic minorities.

In order to examine this issue in detail, this paper studies ethnic politics under three distinct models of democracy found in the United States, France, and Italy. Rather than focusing simply on national integration systems, the paper studies democratic principles in the three states and their impact on local political systems, where members of ethnic minority and majority groups interact on a daily basis.

The choice of cases for this study reflects contemporary public debates concerning ethnic integration in advanced industrial states. Following the 2005 urban riots in France, much of the international media, especially news outlets in the United States, framed their coverage of these events in terms of the failure of the French Republican model of citizenship and calls followed for the introduction of multiculturalism and ethnic recognition. By selecting one case city from a country with Republican citizenship

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where group identities are not recognized (France), one from a state with communitarian citizenship, defined as a model of citizenship in which ethnic belonging is recognized in policy-making (the United States) and one from a state which can best be described as mixed because it is characterized by the adoption of traits from each of the above-mentioned systems (Italy), this paper directly addresses the issues raised in contentious, contemporary, real-world debates on citizenship and ethnic integration. It argues that the formal recognition of ethnicity is not the key issue that needs to be addressed in order to facilitate ethnic and racial integration. Instead, the informal structure and use of power in political systems is the critical variable that inhibits the incorporation of minorities and facilitates socio-economic exclusion.

The article is divided into five sections. The first presents the literature on ethnic integration and citizenship in advanced industrial states and examines its focus on the relationship between ethnic politics and democracy. Sections two through four present the general guidelines for integration and their relationship to overall democratic systems in the three national models chosen for this study. They also demonstrate the implementation of integration approaches at the local level in: Durham, North Carolina, USA; Florence, Italy, and Toulouse, France. Each part represents one case. Finally, section five presents theoretical conclusions.

The three case cities are quite different in terms of their overall populations and socio-economic bases representing a "most different" model of case selection. Florence and Toulouse are mid-sized cities with metropolitan populations of around 600 000 people, whereas Durham is considerably smaller (circa 200 000).[2] Moreover, the two former cities are quite wealthy as Toulouse is the home of the European Air-Space industry and Florence's economy has solid bases in tourism, services, and industry. By contrast, Durham is an old tobacco city whose economy has been transformed by the installation of high technology industries in the "Research Triangle Park" that it forms with its neighbors, Chapel Hill and Raleigh. This shift has created clear socio-economic divergences.

In terms of politics, the cities were chosen for this study because their local political systems rigorously implement the democratic models found at the national level. Durham considers itself one of the "most democratic cities" in the south of the United States. Toulouse, vaunts a strong Republican tradition, in part because of the massive arrival of anti-Fascist refugees from Spain and Italy before and during World War II. Finally, Florence is a city with strong civil society and considerable political mobilization from both left-wing and Catholic currents.

Finally, minorities represent roughly 10% of the population in both Toulouse and Florence. In contrast Durham's minority population represents just under 30% of all inhabitants. Moreover, the ethnic composition of minority populations varies from case to case. Toulouse is a city that received Spanish and Italian refugees in the first part of the twentieth century. However, the city's migrant neighborhoods are mostly inhabited by first-generation French citizens who are children of immigrants from the Maghreb or, to a lesser extent, sub-Saharan Africa. By contrast, Florence is a city of recent migration. Minorities found there are non-European Union migrants coming from different countries, such as China, Romania, the Philippines, Senegal, Iran, the United States, and Albania, in addition to Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt. There is no geographic concentration of migrants is specific neighborhoods to the extent that exists in Toulouse. Finally, Durham is an old plantation city where black slaves harvested tobacco. In the early part of the twentieth century, many African-Americans migrated there as the city was known as

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one of the black capitals of the United States. Recently, there has also been an increasing flow of Mexican immigrants. Because wealthier populations have moved to suburbs around the city, there is a strong concentration of African-Americans in the poorer city centre. These characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

Democracy and Social Integration: Theories and Principles

Until recently, most ideological discussions concerning the positions of minorities have focused on class or gender, but rarely on ethnicity, which was linked to nationalist agendas. Native Americans, African Americans, Gypsy/Roma and Jews often remained victimized by stereotypes and hatred as democratic debates surrounding their condition were slow to develop. Since World War II this has obviously changed. Even though contemporary theories of liberal democracy often ignored ethnic difference (see, e.g., Rawls, 1971; Nozick, 1974) various ethnic catastrophes placed discrimination, exclusion, and xenophobia squarely on democratic political agendas. Intergovernmental organizations, most notably the Council of Europe, and NGOs such as Amnesty International, *SOS Racisme* and the *Mouvement Contre le Racisme et Pour L'Amitie Entre Les Peuples* (MRAP or the Movement Against Racism and For Friendship Between Peoples in English) pushed the notion of ethnic rights onto domestic political agendas from the international arena.

Numerous political battles have been fought to end ethnic injustice, leading many observers of ethnic politics, especially those in Europe, to question whether the nation-state has lost its predominance in this policy arena. From the civil rights movement in the United States to recent military interventions in the Balkans, both state and non-state actors have been willing to confront ethnic hatred. Often, these struggles have been justified as defenses of liberal democratic principles. As a result, scholars of migration, such as Soysal (1994), Jacobson (1996), Turner (1993) and Bauböck (1998) have argued that ethnic inclusion has become globalized and citizenship has become transnational

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of case cities

Demographic categories	Durham, NC, United States	Toulouse, France	Florence, Italy
Minority proportion of total oopulation	Roughly 25%	Between 15 and 20%*	Between 10 and 12%
Composition of minority population	Predominantly African-Americans	First generation French citizens, mostly of North African descent	Immigrants from numerous countries including: China, the Philippines, Romania, Albania, Iran, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal
Geographic distribution of minority communities	Concentrated in poorer city center	Concentrated in marginalized neighborhoods outside city	No geographic concentration, present in all neighborhoods

*Ethnic statistics are not collected in France. "Foreigners" officially compose about 10% of the city's total population but most ethnic minorities are French citizens and, thus, not included in this figure. Thus, only a rough estimate is possible.

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through the spread of democratic values through media, intergovernmental bodies, such as the European Union (EU), and human rights organizations. This school of thought has argued that minority rights and integration policies have converged around generally accepted norms. In fact, Germany has all but eradicated its guest worker doctrine, which had been in place throughout the post-World War II period and other European states, such as Belgium, Italy, and Great Britain have progressively granted more social rights to ethnic minorities, as more attention has been paid to multicultural education in schools, minority-based employment policies have been adopted, and migrants have been given increased access to social housing (see Brubaker, 1989; Zincone, 2001). Even Japan, which traditionally has implemented the most restrictive migrant policies in the advanced industrial world, has slowly begun reforming what many critics have denounced as nativist positions (see Tsuda & Cornelius, 2004).

Theories of democracy have certainly followed these developments. During the 1990s an entire debate over the rights of minorities flourished as scholars such as Walzer (1983), Connolly (1991), Kymlicka (1989), Gutmann (1994), and Carens (2000) examined democratic models within the context of ethnic heterogeneity. Usually, these discussions included two dominant points of view, which have been well documented in the literature on minority rights. Liberals, such as Connolly (1991), Young (1989) and Carens (2000) constructed theories of rights and justice around the understanding of necessary conditions for individual members of ethnic minority groups to control their own life courses. Liberal models focus on the eradication of illiberal practices, such as discrimination, and the defense of individual rights. Moreover, they understand diversity as a resource on which democratic societies can build a common good because it provides a greater spectrum of cultural choices to individual citizens. Thus, while this approach is founded on the rights of the individual, it embraces diversity as a means to improve the common good.

Conversely, communitarian approaches (i.e. Taylor, 1992; Habermas, 1998; etc.) squarely emphasize ethnic affiliations. They argue that citizens cannot be viewed as individuals because they belong to ethnic/racial groups that condition how they are viewed by others and what spaces are available to them within civil society. Thus, group affiliation is the basis of analysis as it affects identity, socio-economic opportunities and cultural understanding. For this reason, multiculturalism and affiliation with ethnic communities replace diversity and individual citizenship.

Despite these basic differences, the thread that ties these two approaches, as evidenced by Kymlicka among others, is their belief that only democratic approaches to governance can adequately embrace the ethnic heterogeneity found in modern societies and guarantee rights to members of ethnic minorities. This thesis is rather accurate (as history has shown communism's and fascism's inability (or obvious disregard in the case of the latter) to integrate multi-ethnic societies) and this article does not intend to refute it. Instead, this piece merely pragmatically recognizes that democratic theory and practices are often quite different things and it attempts to analyze the relationship between these different levels of democracy. Whereas the theoretical literature on liberal democracy often attributes negative situations, such as exclusion and xenophobia to individual moral corruption or institutional incompetence (including market failure), I contend that the seeds of breakdown of the very democratic goal of integration are often found within the very implementation of democratic practice, especially at the local level. When actors pursue the defense of democratic doctrines as a political objective instead of utilizing them as tools with which they can create a common good, these moral positions are converted into

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authoritarian dogma, paradoxically, betraying democratic principles in ethnically mixed societies, such as mutual respect, individual equality and ethnic group integration.

Democracy and Social Integration: Models and Practices

Social integration models are multi-faceted as the nature of citizenship is complex. For example, immigration is such an important issue internationally because it touches on so many different aspects of politics: economic markets, political systems, identity, welfare state, etc. For this reason, advanced industrial states have emphasized border controls. These highly symbolic strategies demonstrate concern for different "threats" posed by migration. However, border control policies are also followed because states have recently adopted more progressive policies towards the rights of migrants once they enter and legally settle. While the EU and the US have invested heavily in physical barriers and detection technology, they have also granted a wider array of social rights to legal immigrants.

As stated above, many observers of integration politics have drawn a connection between democratic practices and improved ethnic integration because of these general trends. Advanced industrial states have, indeed, improved legal mechanisms for ethnic integration, especially at the local level where authorities have been given greater freedom to implement measures aimed at furthering ethnic integration. However, important differences exist between integration systems in the advanced industrial world. These distinctions are created by variations concerning notions of ethnic identity, core values regarding democracy, state structures and political mobilization.

In *Limits of Citizenship* (1994), Yasemin Soysal classifies models of incorporation by examining the structural differences in European integration regimes. She identifies the following typologies: (1) Liberal,(2) Statist, (3) Corporatist, and (4) Fragmented. Despite the fact that it was written in the 1990s, Soysal's work is still valid and more recent studies of migration and citizenship, such as those published by Joppke (1998), Vertovec (1998), etc., confirm her conclusions. Her book is the most structured comparative work on integration regimes in Europe as it organizes many of the important policy variations identified on a smaller scale by other scholars of migrant integration (see works by, e.g., Brubaker, 1989; Ireland, 1994; Papademetriou, 1996; Bonifazi, 1999; Hollifield, 1992) into coherent comparative models.

These studies correctly recognize that integration models reflect structural differences between advanced industrial states that go beyond ethnic politics. Concepts such as the role of the state, state–society relations, the structure of power, arenas for mobilization, etc. influence all citizens, not just ethnic minorities. Soysal's work is interesting because it examines different models of integration that identify how power is structured in various countries.

In addition to the different concepts of citizenship mentioned in the introduction above, the countries examined in this paper represent different models of government, power-sharing and incorporation. Employing Soysal's framework (which reflects Esping-Anderson's (1991) work on welfare regimes), the United States can best be described as liberal (market dominated), France is statist (high degree of state centralization), and Italy is fragmented (lack of a clear incorporation model leaving integration responsibilities to the third sector). It should be noted that while Soysal classifies the United States as liberal in a market sense, with regard to minority integration it has

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taken a more communitarian form, given its willingness to recognize group affiliations in policy. In contrast, France's statist structure does not recognize group differences officially, presenting instead a more neutral-state approach to integration in Republican form. Italy is fragemented in both spheres.

Table 2 outlines the structural differences between the three states. Rather than simply focusing on integration, the analysis presented here discusses important characteristics of practiced democracy. The table shows significant differences related to the centralization/decentralization of power, the relationship between citizens and the state and interest representation.

These characteristics of democratic systems are significant because, despite legal progress in the field of integration politics, the actual structure and exercise of power is the key to ethnic inclusion or marginalization. In fact, ethnic exclusion cannot simply be considered a product of the breakdown of democracy. Instead, the characteristics of democratic systems contribute to structural failures because informal barriers to integration play a more significant role today than formal ones. Whereas the above-mentioned evolution of legal instruments aimed at promoting ethnic incorporation has eradicated formal discrimination, systemic exclusion has become embedded in the very democratic systems created to abolish it. This argument is explained in further detail in the following sections.

Social Integration and American Democracy

The American political system most closely demonstrates the relationship between democracy, ethnic marginalization and informal barriers to citizenship. Many international observers of American politics note the clear social paradoxes found within the country. Even though its overall wealth is enormous (and growing), social marginalization among ethnic minorities is also increasing. Recent census statistics clearly demonstrate a widening gap between Asians and whites on one hand, and Latinos and African-Americans on the other.[3] Also, the US notion of citizenship has a liberal foundation based on the notions of individual opportunity and merit. However, at the same time, it is communitarian because minority integration policies recognize group membership as an influential determinant of

Table 2. Forms of democracy

	United States	France	Italy
Interest representation	"Town meeting" based on public discussions	"Delegated democracy" based on elite decision-making	"Indirect democracy" based on parliamentary representation
Structure of political power	Decentralized, separation of powers	Statist (centralized authority)	Parliamentary
Role of welfare state	Complement labor market	Social solidarity/rights	Social solidarity/rights
Level of centralization	Federalism	Limited devolution	Incomplete devolution
Integration philosophy	Communitarian	Republican	Fragmented: Catholic humanitarianism/left-wing solidarity
Agents of integration	Labor markets/schools	The state	NGOs

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individual life opportunities (see Horowitz and Noiriel, 1992). In general, the state plays a minimal role in integration politics and social programs are aimed at complementing market forces. In fact, it is the labor market combined with the education system, which has been the traditional motor of social and ethnic integration throughout the nation's history.

Politically, the US federal system of government should create proximity between citizens and their elected leaders. Under the idealistic "town meeting" model, appreciated by de Tocqueville (1991), among others, citizens have the opportunity to offer opinions on local issues and participate in debates on questions that affect their daily lives. This principle lies at the heart of the US political system, which explains the radical decentralization that elevates the role of local actors in the US higher than that found in most advanced industrial states. Moreover, the administrative separation of powers was instituted to prevent domination by any single political force and, at least formally, ensure that the democratic system of government represented the interests of US citizens rather than a restricted group of elites.

The weakness of this system has proven to be the combination of these characteristics. Ethnic minorities, most notably Latinos and African-Americans, have enjoyed less success in the labor market because many lack access to resources which are necessary for success in the post-industrial world, especially education and employment networks. Because of the federal system described in the paragraph above, US education varies significantly from one area to another as school systems are linked to municipalities or counties rather than states or the federal government. This fact further reinforces the ethnic differences created by the labor market (see Kozol, 1992) and creates social isolation (see Wilson, 2002) because it promotes a vicious cycle in which educational attainment is necessary to overcome economic marginalization but it is difficult to achieve because the quality of local schools is often linked to existing wealth in corresponding communities. School budgets are based on local tax bases which reflect existing socio-economic levels. Stated plainly, schools in poor areas receive less money whereas public systems in wealthier communities have access to greater resources.

Politically, this situation is well-known in the US but often ignored. The lack of welfare state policies and the emphasis on individual participation in integration politics has stigmatized poverty and created a cultural as well as ethnic rift in American society. This division is becoming more intense, as the following local case demonstrates how democratic practices at the sub-national level hinder the creation of policy remedies, especially in moments of political crisis.

Durham, North Carolina, and the Politics of Education

For much of the twentieth century, Durham, North Carolina was a quiet, but successful provincial city in the Southern United States. Its economy was based on tobacco and the city's nickname "The Bull City" and its baseball team "The Durham Bulls" derived from the cigarettes produced there. Duke University, begun in 1924, was an excellent regional institution focused on teaching.

Recently, like many cities in the United States, Durham was forced to reinvent itself economically. The tobacco industry suffered from massive public anti-smoking campaigns and successful lawsuits against cigarette manufacturers. For this reason, city leaders, along with officials from the nearby cities of Chapel Hill and Raleigh, attracted investment in high technology and computer industries through the construction of the

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Research Triangle Park, which is now the second largest technological research area in the United States, second only to Silicon Valley. For its part, Duke has grown into an internationally renowned research university and a major employer in the area. Obviously, these changes have significantly affected the local population.

In many ways, Durham is a typical American city. It is currently undergoing a process of de-urbanization as the economic changes in the city have led to outward emigration towards the city's suburbs. The poorer areas in the city centre are mostly inhabited by African-Americans. In socio-economic terms, this has created a net racial separation in the city. According to recent census figures from the 1990s, African-American unemployment was 2.5 times higher than that for whites. The median income for African-Americans was $10 000, while that for whites was $18 000. Similarly, there were 9000 more African-American families living under the poverty level in the County of Durham than white families.[4]

Among young people, the socio-economic differences between racial groups were even more pronounced. The number of unemployed African-American youths between the ages of 16 and 19 lacking a high school diploma was 4.5 times higher than the same demographic group of whites.[5] This situation has obviously had social repercussions as homicides, assaults, and drug trafficking have reached alarming levels in the city. For these reasons, local officials looked to school reform as a necessary step to social integration.

In 1989, a task force created to study the differences between the schools in the City of Durham, mostly attended by African-Americans, and those in the County school system, largely attended by whites, released its conclusions regarding the disparities between the two educational systems. From a financial point of view, the city invested more money per student ($4418 versus $3980) but it offered fewer services. The explanation for this discrepancy was that the city schools paid 45% more than the county to maintain physical plants and support administration. By contrast, the County invested 35% more in educational programs. Not surprisingly, in a poll of teachers from both systems, 76% agreed that "the County schools are better."[6]

In terms of the data on student achievement, the task force found that 28% of the students in county school system dropped out without a diploma. The corresponding figure in the city schools was 46%, which was the highest rate in the State of North Carolina. Standardized test scores on the California Achievement Tests, the North Carolina Tests in Writing, Mathematics, and Social Studies, Scholastic Aptitude Tests, and Advanced Placement exams all demonstrated significantly higher achievement in the county schools. This evident discrepancy in education levels created informal obstacles to social integration and facilitated racial exclusion.

For these reasons, the STEP (Students Together With Educators and Parents) program was proposed in 1994 with the objective of integrating the two school systems so that each school would reflect the racial proportions of the county's population within 15%. While leaders should have expected turmoil from the proposal of such an ambitious project, the political storm that followed the proposal was exacerbated by the nature of local politics in Durham, which closely reflects the characteristics of the "ideal" American political system described above.

In fact, Durham political officials often boasted/complained (depending on their point of view) that the city is one of "the most democratic" places in America. During an interview for this piece conducted by the author, a local City Councilor categorically stated "We practice extreme democracy." This fact was demonstrated structurally as the

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authority of the city's mayor was overshadowed by the influence of the Board of County Commissioners and the City Council. For this reason, all political proposals of significance were publicly debated (a.k.a "town meeting") before being ratified.

Due to the open nature of local politics, the community immediately took sides on the school merger issue and debates were heated. While African-American groups, such as the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, and progressive associations, such as People's Alliance, supported the proposal, conservative bodies immediately opposed it. The members of one group called Education First promised to sue the Board of education "within a week of the implementation of the plan." The city's Chamber of Commerce also opposed the integration project because it claimed that it would cause white flight, thus, hurting the local economy.

Because of the vociferousness of the debates on STEP, the proposal was immediately watered down. Five different reform projects were examined by the Board of Education before they agreed on a plan to redraw the school district lines "to help racial integration" and create magnet schools in the city open to students from both districts. In order to pass the measure, the Board of Education finally left the city and held a private meeting away from public view. In fact, the defeat of the originally proposed legislation to aggressively promote racial integration created such problems in the local political arena that headlines from the *Herald Sun*, Durham's newspaper simply asked, "Is Anyone in Charge?" Consequently, within two years, many of STEP's supporters on the County Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education had lost their positions in different elections that were considered a referendum on their handling of the integration issue. Public pressure significantly altered the face of local integration politics because of the public nature of democratic debates. Too much exposure to public opinion and citizen input rendered lawmakers helpless in front of a social situation that needed urgent attention. Moreover, in order to avoid a direct confrontation along racial lines, much of the opposition to the school merger was grounded in the argument that government authorities were overstepping their bounds by re-drawing education districts. Many grassroots opposition forces supported the limitation of government intervention in social issues to minimal involvement. This was justified as a defense of democratic practices. These local community members argued that government officials whether local, state, or national, had no right to further a social agenda without the approval of local citizens.

Because of the "tyranny of the public" that overwhelmed Durham during this period, one could argue that the logical remedy to this situation would be to shield public officials from outside influences, offering them increased freedom to act autonomously for the benefit of the local community. Such a situation is found in other states, most notably in France. The next section will, however, show that the change in institutional setting does not always provide higher levels of integration.

Social Integration and Democracy in France

For most of the last century, the French integration model was deemed to be a success as much as the American model was viewed as severely flawed. While the US was coping with racial segregation and ethnic exclusion, the French *République* represented equality and non-discrimination. Alas, after having been considered one of the most tolerant countries in Europe for most of the last century, the immigration debate has divided

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French society during the first years of the new one. The republican tradition, once the basis for assimilation, has fallen victim to the politics of cultural pluralism, leading to vitriolic, political, social, and economic debates. Adrian Favell correctly states: "Truth and relative proportion can be the first victims of politics when it is pursued in highly symbolic ways. This is the great danger in the French debate, in which the overcharged rhetoric of immigration and integration, *nationalité* [nationality] and *citoyenneté* [citizenship], has become a kind of institutionalized *langue de bois* [language of stereotypes]" (Favell, 1998, p. 160).

It may seem surprising that a country such as France should be so divided over immigration given its long tradition of tolerance. However, France has never followed one specific model of integration. Expressed in terms of citizenship, immigration has never received the legitimacy it holds in countries like the United States or Canada, where *jus soli* notions of citizenship focusing on place of birth are prevalent. On the other hand, France has not followed the *jus sanguinis* model traditionally present in Germany, in which ethnicity is a prerequisite for citizenship (see Brubaker, 1989). Therefore, contemporary scholars of French politics, correctly identify France as a country of immigrants but not a country of immigration (see Hollifield, 1992; Papademetriou, 1996; Viet, 1998). Placed in this conceptual vacuum, French politics have been strongly divided by the immigration issue because both pro-integration and anti-immigration forces can make strong claims to their respective notions of identity and citizenship. Maxim Silverman (1991) accurately notes that, "Immigration can represent both the liberal republic and the threat to the liberal republic, it is the embodiment of France's capacity for assimilation and proof of a break-down in assimilation, it is the embodiment of pluralism and proof of the impossibility of pluralism" (Silverman, 1991, p. 15).

According to the republican model of citizenship, individuals are valued by their contribution to the collective public interest. The state, in this regard, imposes a notion of "total citizenship" on the individual citizen in which full social acceptance is directly linked to individual contribution. Thus, *liberté* (freedom), *égalité* (equality), and *fraternité* (brotherhood), the underlying philosophic values of the French Revolution, and the core concepts of French society, are guaranteed to those who contribute to the economic, social, and cultural prosperity of the nation. These rights are conditional on the social contract in which the individual citizen embraces certain responsibilities and obligations in exchange for the protection of civil and human rights. Thus, unlike the United States where the concept of multiple identities (i.e. Italo-American, African-American, etc.) is one of the foundations of the national "melting pot," the republican model aspired to a situation in which the French-born child of foreigners would not be distinguished from a child with French ancestors.

Cultural pluralism, the natural antagonist of republicanism, has created deep schisms in contemporary French politics and society. The rise of the radical right, heightened protests by immigrant associations for increased cultural autonomy, and the contested debate over citizenship rights has radically changed the nature of French immigration politics. The current trend towards the politicization of immigration began in 1973 with the first oil crisis. It escalated during the rest of that decade and erupted in the 1980s and 1990s. On one hand, the economic recession and resulting shift in public opinion provided the extreme right, especially Jean-Marie Le Pen, and the *Front National* (FN) or National Front, with a niche in French party politics (Betz, 1994). Conversely, socio-economic exclusion has led to political and sometimes violent forms of mobilization within the

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banlieues (marginalized neighborhoods) dominated by ethnic minorities. The national riots that occurred in October/November 2005 were the zenith of this form of social rebellion as they contagiously spread throughout France.

As a result of these developments, integration issues have polarized much of the French electorate and they have focused heavily on questions of security. Due to the efforts of the radical right, the word "immigrant" had taken on new meaning as it had been fused with "foreigner," "Muslim," "Clandestine," and "Arab" in public discussions. In response, many immigrant groups have changed their definitions of integration, claiming that economic integration would only be possible through the recognition of group rights and affirmative action programs. Second generation immigrants (who are French citizens) have reclaimed the cultural rights that their parents renounced. They argue that equality can only be considered complete if measured in economic, political, and moral terms. These groups contend that debates over identity and security fail to address severe systematic problems such as high immigrant unemployment rates, youth delinquency, and the attraction of militant Islam. Most significantly, however, these groups argue that, under the republican model, immigrants could never be fully integrated because the community that the foreigner attempts to join is ready to reject him/her on the basis of difference. Hence, they have embraced these differences and renounced the republic. The result has been increased violence in the *banlieues* of major cities, such as Toulouse.

La République*, and Social Integration in Toulouse*

Since the time of the French Revolution, Toulouse has enjoyed a reputation as one of the most "republican" cities in France. When monarchists in different regions plotted a counter-revolution to restore the monarchy, they came to Toulouse, which at the time was the capital of the semi-autonomous region of *Aquitaine* looking for support from elites who could have profited politically from a divided French state. The city's leaders, however, reaffirmed their support for the fledgling republic and supported the government in Paris. Since that time, the city's dedication to republicanism has been almost mythical. In the first half of the twentieth century, anti-fascist refugees from Spain, Italy, and Portugal flooded Toulouse, having chosen the city because of this reputation. More than 100 000 refugees quickly integrated politically and economically and they reaffirmed the city's republican political culture by adopting French republican values.

Like France, Toulouse has historically been viewed as a place of multi-ethnic integration and anti-discrimination. However, like the general French climate, much has recently changed in the city. When urban riots broke out throughout France in October 2005, Toulouse was significantly affected. In fact, the city has been the site of social conflict for some time. The first significant urban violence occurred in 1998, when police officers accidentally killed a young man of North African descent, and riots occurred in a group of neighborhoods collectively known as the *Grand Mirail*, where most of the city's ethnic minorities live. The 1998 violence lasted for four days and the final toll included: the burning of 70 cars, vandalism against public offices, and the destruction of one metro station and one bus. Since that time, the city has witnessed attacks on police and fire fighters, burned cars, and vandalism on a regular basis. Just as the city previously represented the success of the republic that it embraced, it now symbolizes its failures.

In fact, the city has become socio-economically divided into parallel communities. Due to the installation of Airbus and other technology companies within the industrial

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parks created by local authorities, Toulouse has the third highest concentration of professionals in all of France. It is also the fourth wealthiest city in the country. Conversely, the economic boom created by this growth led to increased immigration, both internal and international. The city's labor market, which has become highly specialized, has not been able to accommodate all of these workers. For this reason, overall unemployment rates have grown to 14%. The city's ethnic minorities have been especially affected.

Socio-economic statistics clearly illustrate the bifurcation of the city's economic markets. In the *Grand Mirail* neighbourhoods the percentage of professional residents is only 6.3% despite the presence of a major university. The city's overall proportion of professional residents is 13.4%. Unemployment in the *Grand Mirail* is 20.1% compared to 13.7% in the city (*ibid.)*. A recent study in the neighborhood also showed that the economically depressed situation is especially pronounced for ethnic minorities. According to this research 43.1% of Africans in the neighborhood are unemployed and two-thirds of the African women are working in precarious or part-time jobs (Collectif, 1997).

These economic conditions have had serious social effects on the neighborhood. In a recent poll of *Grand Mirail* residents, over half claimed to have been victims of crime in the 12 months before the poll was conducted. Similarly, the neighborhood has seen more than 200 cars burned every year over the last four years. Drug-related crimes have also increased. (*ibid.*)

In response to these problems, city, regional, and national officials have developed a series of initiatives to improve social conditions in the *Grand Mirail*. Unlike local officials in the US who enjoy great autonomy but receive little support from national agencies due to the localized nature of the policy-making process, officials in Toulouse, like those in all French cities, work within a relatively rigid bureaucratic structure that is highly centralized. State agencies, such as the *Fonds d'Action Social* (FAS) have set up a number of funding opportunities for local government and NGOs to create social action programs but they attach these resources to strict rules concerning their potential uses. Thus, the *Grand Mirail* has one of the most active non-governmental sectors in all of France. Organizations in this neighborhood focus on education, job training, crime prevention, health care, conflict mediation, sports, music, arts, etc. Nonetheless, the neighborhood becomes more and more isolated politically because public funding for these initiatives follows the French republican model and it is tied to geographic neighborhoods, thus excluding the possibility of intra-city partnerships. Because the non-governmental sector is active and separate from the rest of the city, it has developed in a parallel realm in which leaders have embraced their autonomy and a local counterculture has developed. This has created a threat to long-term goals associated with integration and it reinforces ethnic segregation.

Hence, the question that has increasing significance for the city of Toulouse, and for France as a whole, is "What is the relationship between ethnic political exclusion and urban crime?" In the days following the 1998 riots, most observers argued that the *Grand Mirail* exploded because of the lack of political participation amongst most residents of the neighborhood. In fact, the lack of political representation cannot be ignored as a mechanism for violence.

During the late 1990s and early part of the twenty-first century, Toulouse has witnessed numerous political protests that have become a significant part of the city's political

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landscape and even its collective identity. Many of these events have focused on ethnicity-related issues. When radical right politicians, such as Le Pen, come to Toulouse, more than 20 000 people take part in "anti-hate" protests. Coalitions of unions, students, migrants, left-wing organizations, and various other NGOs mobilize to fight discrimination. While this political opposition to xenophobia is significant, the lack of support for integration has been equally important. When pro-integration rallies are organized by migrant rights' groups, less than 200 people have attended.[7]

Thus, the city's political condition demonstrates why the French republic has failed to integrate ethnic minorities. First, labor market specialization has led to socio-economic marginalization. In order to respond to these problems, the French state has developed a *Contrat de Ville*, or city contract, which has created programs aimed at neighborhood development rather than ethnic integration. This strategy has created policy walls around the residents of poor neighborhoods and economic bridges are not being created with other areas of the city. The isolation of these segments of the population is further completed by a lack of political representation, unresponsiveness on the part of local and national officials, and weak support from other segments of the non-governmental sector. Unlike the United States, the French system has become a victim of its own insulation of public officials. Moreover, the almost blind defense of republicanism at the local and national levels has shifted the responsibility for integration from the state back to the individual. Hence, like the United States, France is now characterized by informal obstacles to ethnic integration related to market exclusion and political isolation that have been constructed in the name of French democratic principles. Some members of ethnic minority groups who cannot overcome these difficulties and live on the edges of France's large metropolitan areas have become outraged and, because they lack instruments to compete in post-modern economies as well as channels for the expression of their political voices, violence has erupted and riots occur all too frequently in France's main cities. Urban revolts have become so common in France that, in the days following the 2005 urban violence, many observers asked: "Can this violence be considered typically French or can it potentially erupt in other European states?" The following analysis of Italian integration politics will address this question.

Social Integration and Democracy in Italy

The contradictions that mark Italian politics have fascinated scholars since the beginning of the Republic at the end of World War II. Seeming paradoxes exist in most arenas of Italian politics and society, often reflecting social, cultural, and economic cleavages that date back many centuries (see Koff & Koff, 2000). Italian immigration politics have followed this pattern. Scholars of immigration have correctly noted that Italy, in its short history as an immigration state (since the early 1980s), has been characterized by neither a tradition of intolerance nor one of integration. Even though most Italians condemn xenophobia and racism, tension between citizens and immigrants clearly marks Italian society. Moreover, immigration has evidenced many of the above-mentioned problems that characterize the Italian political system, such as bureaucratic inefficiency, lack of trust in the government, the north–south divide, and the fragmentation of the non-governmental sector.

Much has been written on anti-immigrant reactions in Italy. Most of these works focus on the cultural and structural changes caused by Italy's shift from an emigration to

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an immigration state in the 1980s and 1990s. These studies examine public attitudes (Bonifazi, 1999; Balbo & Manconi, 1992), government reactions (Calavita, 2004; Papademetriou, 1996), and political parties, and social movements (Watts, 2000; Della Porta, 1999) at the national level. However, scholars of immigration to Italy, and Italian politics in general, have accurately noted that regional differences are fundamental in Italian society. Differences in local cultures and levels of economic development have created substantial sub-national variance in Italian responses to immigration (Koff, 2006; Pugliese, 2000). Unlike most European countries, xenophobic reactions have often been linked to regional identities rather than nationalism. This is reflected in the positions taken by the political parties of the right on the immigration issue. Whereas the nationalist *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN), whose support is concentrated in the poorer south, has backed away from xenophobic, anti-immigrant platforms at the national level, the northern-based, ethno-regionalist *Lega Nord* has made immigration a central aspect of its political activity. Declarations against immigrants by the Lega's populist leader, Umberto Bossi, have been so strong, that he has been reproached for "going too far" by his right-wing coalition partners (Casa della Libertá), most notably Silvio Berlusconi, the leader of *Forza Italia* (FI), and the former prime minister.

Anti-immigrant activity in the Italian party system reflects two distinct paradoxes which have created friction within the right-wing coalition. First, unlike anti-immigrant reactions in many other advanced industrial states, nativist positions in Italy cannot be explained by socio-economic factors. The success of the Lega, due in part to the presence of elevated anti-immigrant sentiments, is concentrated in Italy's north-eastern regions where the local economies are strong and most in need of immigrant labor. Even though many small industrial factories would close without the influx of migrant workers, many independent businessmen have supported the Lega and its xenophobic rhetoric, and actions for cultural reasons, as the Lega Nord filled a structural void in the party system that attracted devout Catholics in the region when the old Christian Democratic party disintegrated following the *tangentopoli* corruption scandals of the early 1990s. This has alienated *Forza Italia* (FI) to a certain extent, due to its position as a centrist party which represents many business interests.

Second, due to the presence of the Vatican, religion has been a prominent aspect of the immigration debate and the Lega has vociferously attacked Islam. In a recent special issue of *Quaderni Padani*, a Lega affiliated journal, an editorial condemned that religion as one of the "three worst diseases in history" along with communism and imperialism. Statements such as these have created much friction within the Catholic Church and they have led to official criticism of the Lega from Italy's center-right Catholic parties, the *Cristiani Democratici Uniti* (CDU), and *Centro Cristiano Democratico* (CCD), which are also members of the center-right coalition. The presence of these seeming contradictions (1) elevated nativist positions in regions most in need of immigrant labor, and (2) the alienation of the Lega from the Catholic Church due to its virulent anti-Islam, pro-Catholic positions, would suggest that cultural rather than structural variables best explain Italian nativist responses to immigration.

In terms of the politics of integration, Italy's policy strategies have proven incoherent in many ways. Like other policy arenas, immigration has been confronted in terms of emergencies. When large numbers of clandestine migrants arrive in waves, the national government temporarily confronts the immigration issue. When immigrants perpetrate highly publicized crimes, local and regional governments raise security to elevated positions

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on the government agenda. When immigrants are the victims of racist attacks, local authorities decry the lack of integration programs and the lack of support for them in the national government. Instead of firmly captivating the immigration agenda, Italian responses in terms of integration strategies often follow public opinion and media attention.

Regionally, integration strategies vary significantly. In the wealthy north-east, where labor-intensive industries are dependent on both skilled and unskilled immigrants, regional governments have invested in housing programs and job training. In the north-west, where many cities, such as Milan and Turin, have felt the growth of migrant involvement in criminal activities, government policies have focused on crime prevention. In the center regions, such as Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna and Umbria, left wing traditions have influenced government responses. In these "progressive" regions, integration strategies include health care, migrant political representation and intercultural education. Finally, the southern regions have not established coherent integration programs, despite central government funding which has, until now, been returned unused due to a lack of consensus on what types of strategies should be instituted. Rather than xenophobia, this trend indicates inefficiency.

The outcome of this ineffective and unresponsive policy-making system has been the development of a strong response to immigration by the non-governmental sector. NGOs from both Catholic and left-wing traditions have been the backbone of the Italian integration effort. In the south of Italy, they have met clandestine migrants upon their arrival and provided food, shelter, and even basic services such as temporary employment contracts. In the center and north of Italy, NGOs have adopted expanded definitions of "integration," and established projects that are much more holistic than governmental ones. Whereas official integration strategies normally focus on housing, jobs, health care, and crime prevention, NGOs are active in these arenas, as well as in education, cultural mediation, political mobilization, and social rights. Unfortunately, their activity has permitted the government to disengage and back away from any responsibility in the field of integration politics. The importance of such NGO work and the irresponsible positions that many government officials have adopted in response to this activity can best be illustrated through the following discussion of integration politics in the city of Florence.

Florence and the Politics of Immigration

Florence is a city of art, music and culture known throughout the world. Moreover, it has a political tradition that is also renowned. In the past, names such as Machiavelli, Savonarola, Medici, Guelfe, and Ghibellina marked the political landscape. In recent times, the city's political thought was illuminated by Giorgio La Pira, the progressive Catholic Mayor during the 1950s and 1960s who bestowed the city with an "internationalist" vision of politics.

La Pira's vision for the city included two major characteristics of the local political culture: progressive Catholicism and left-wing ideals. In fact, while Florence is a city of the left, it cannot be considered communist. Despite the prevailing egalitarian ideology, the Christian Democratic Party maintained power in the city until its implosion through political corruption in the early 1990s. Now the city is ruled by the center-left (*Democratici di Sinistra*) who remain loyal to local traditional values related to humanism.

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Despite these political characteristics, the integration of non-EU migrants has been problematic for many years. Economically, Florence's different economic sectors that include employment opportunities in tourism, industry, and services, have facilitated incorporation. In fact, immigrant unemployment is the city is lower than the overall unemployment rate (11% compared to 12%[8]). Moreover, Florence has one of the highest concentrations of immigrant entrepreneurship in all of Italy.

The problem of ethnic integration in Florence is related to the city's social fabric. Non-EU immigration is a new phenomenon in the city as flows from countries such as China, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Poland and Senegal began in the late 1980s. In the 1990s, migrants began coming from Eastern Europe, mainly from Romania and Albania. Since 1990, the local population has dealt with issues related to the integration of these new residents without coherent government intervention as a guide. During that year, the atmosphere in the city surrounding immigration was very tense. Local merchants were protesting against the presence of Senegalese peddlers who were selling their goods without permits. A group of businessmen organized a "March of Undefended Citizens" that focused on the question of immigration. In response to this outburst, the local government did nothing and took no political position on the issue. As a result, the climate surrounding immigration in the city worsened and eventually, a group of young Florentines attacked Senegalese migrants during a *Carnevale* celebration, sending many of them to the hospital. Since then, immigration has been one of the most intensely debated issues in local politics.

In fact, the 1990 attacks on immigrants created a situation that could best be described as chaotic. Because local authorities took no strong public position, non-governmental organizations filled the political vacuum and confiscated the immigration agenda. On one hand, groups of the Left and Catholic centre rallied around notions of human rights and ethnic integration. Trade Unions, NGOs, political parties combined to create a policy network around the issue of immigration which included service provision, the creation of political forums, legal assistance, housing, job training, and political representation. Of the almost thirty NGOs active in local immigration politics, eighteen began their activities within three years after the 1990 attacks.

Similarly, anti-immigrant movements created networks in an effort to publicize the threat "that immigration poses to the city." Right-wing parties, such as *Alleanza Nazionale* and *Lega Nord*, grass roots organizations, and economic groups such as *Confindustria* and *Lega degli Imprenditori*, have organized rallies and public meetings in opposition to immigration that have at times, attracted hundreds of participants. Like the radical right in France, their slogans focus on issues related to security and quality of life in the city. These themes have also been highly publicized in *La Nazione*, the city's newspaper which often portrays immigration questions negatively.

The local government has done little to control the energy of migration debates. The regional and provincial governments have created consultative bodies on immigration and the City has an Immigrant Office within its social service system, but these measures have proven ineffective due to a lack of political backing amongst local officials. For example, during his first election campaign, the city's current mayor, Leonardo Domenici's, first actions included the firing of the director of the city's immigrant office who was one of the most recognizable and respected actors in local immigration politics, the passage of anti-Gypsy/Roma statutes and the strengthening of powers that City police could use to apprehend clandestine immigrants (these last two measures were later repealed by judges who deemed them "unconstitutional").

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Within this atmosphere, periodic violence against immigrants has erupted in the city. Most recently, the local Chinese population has become the target of increased antagonism. What is interesting about this situation is that economic integration has occurred. Unlike the above-cited cases of Durham and Toulouse, where ethnic marginalization contributed to social tension, Florence's immigrant community is characterized by significant employment, housing integration and political activity in official channels.

The ethnic tensions in the city have occurred because local officials have abdicated their responsibilities in the field of immigration politics. Immigrants are economically integrated but they remain marginalized socially. Successful immigrant entrepreneurship has created serious tensions with local businessmen who perceive newcomers as sources of unfair competition. This claim is particularly pointed at the Chinese, Florence's largest immigrant community, because local industrialists claim that they enjoy an unfair advantage due to the importation of cheap labour. Thus, they have mobilized and utilized their political influence to attempt to combat recent migration.

By withdrawing from direct confrontations with small but powerful actors, such as merchants and industrialists, City and Provincial authorities permitted the non-governmental sector to polarize immigration debates. This is typical of many issue arenas of Italian politics where public distrust of authorities, non-governmental mobilization, and strong ideological convictions have impeded the creation of partnerships for the solution of policy problems. Even within the pro-integration camps, Left-wing and Catholic organizations refused to collaborate throughout the 1990s and cooperation has only begun in the last few years. For this reason, one can point to signs of progress but long-term solutions have yet to be developed as local actors focus on responses to short-term crises, much like Italian national authorities. As long as this strategy is followed, immigration debates will remain charged, and integration politics will rest fully in the informal sector, undermining their overall legitimacy. Thus, like in France and the United States the main obstacles to recognized membership for migrants in the local community remain informal ones linked to the structure and content of local power rather than a lack of formal rights.

Conclusions

The foregoing analysis openly questions whether too much local democratic participation can hinder ethnic integration. The reflections presented have significant policy implications. By choosing local cases that mirror national democratic models, the article attempts to illustrate the impact of integration strategies on minorities in ethnically mixed cities. The empirical evidence provided by these studies indicates that democratic discussions, especially those taking place at the local level, do not always facilitate integration. In fact, when models of democracy are defended as ideologically dogmatic structures within these debates instead of being forwarded as means for individual participation within society, they become authoritarian and consequently betray democratic principles on which corresponding political systems have been constructed.

Many opponents of multiculturalism, defined as ethnically explicit strategies to integrate minority communities, claim that minorities wish to change traditional notions and models of citizenship. It is often argued that ethnic diversity poses a challenge to democratic systems because of the introduction of questions related to cultural recognition and national identity. In France, this criticism of ethnic minorities has been tremendously

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contentious, especially since the 2005 urban unrest. In the United States, the recent tension surrounding Mexican immigration has raised this issue through allusions to "Mexifornia" and the "inability of Mexicans to integrate (see Huntington, 2004)." The cases discussed in this article demonstrate that urban integration and ethnic mobilization are not challenges to traditional democratic systems. Instead, minorities fight for access to existing models of democracy. While the majority of public and academic attention in these debates is focused on the formal recognition of ethnicity, this article argues that the key mechanism that inhibits the integration of minorities is the informal structure and exercise of power in local and national political systems.

In the three cases presented above, ethnic minorities are not challenging democratic practices in urban contexts. Instead, they seek access to the socio-economic and political systems that govern the communities in which they live. In Durham, African Americans formally participate in local politics through civic organizations, political parties and interest groups. Nonetheless, education represents the key to socio-economic integration due to the city's recent market transformation and, thus far, African-Americans have faced difficulties due to informal racial segregation and unequal school systems. Thus, many members of this community remain marginalized.

Similarly, the two European cases demonstrate mobilization by minorities aimed at accessing democratic systems rather than challenging them. In Toulouse, residents of the *Grand Mirail*, an ethnically mixed neighbourhood, have not mobilized against the French Republican model. Instead, political and social unrest in this group of neighbourhoods has targeted informal barriers to integration within this model, especially geographic and socio-economic segregation. Residents are isolated due to a lack of structural channels for interaction with local government officials and representatives of the non-governmental sector in other areas of the city. Moreover, socio-economic opportunities are often limited by discrimination that is not recognized by authorities, and therefore, it is not addressed.

Finally, Florence represents a very interesting case. Migrants are socio-economically integrated and geographically distributed throughout the city, thus avoiding concentrations in poor neighbourhoods. Despite these positive opportunity structures, immigrants remain marginalized socially and politically and ethnic tensions persist. This would suggest that socio-economic exclusion is not the only informal barrier that obstructs the integration of ethnic minorities in local contexts.

The description of local politics presented above illustrates that the Florentine model of democracy is based on civil society and political participation. As mentioned above, many NGOs in Florence have created a network to defend the rights of migrants. This network, however, demonstrates that civil society is not just a question of quantity, but also one of quality (see Koff, 2005). The non-governmental sector in Florence is significantly paternalistic as it has traditionally excluded migrants from political participation and decision-making. One representative of a migrant rights organization recently stated: "They do not know what is good for them. That is why we need to fight for their rights"[9]. Migrants in Florence have enjoyed socio-economic integration, characterized by employment and access to housing. However, they have not found access to the political system that dictates the terms of local notions of citizenship and democracy. Until migrants are treated as actors, they will remain political objects rather than local citizens, despite their socio-economic incorporation.

For these reasons, this article asks whether open democratic discussions can be detrimental to minority integration in ethnically mixed cities. In response, the empirical

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evidence suggests that an orthodox defence of particular ideological models of democratic systems can actually betray the values that they were created to implement. The cases above demonstrate that many actors attempt to maintain the status quo in ethnically mixed cities by strictly adhering to established models of citizenship and democracy. Consequently illiberal practices that maintain the status quo and contribute to minority social exclusion are often cloaked in the guise of "upholding democratic traditions" of decentralization or Republicanism. This has created regimes in many advanced industrial states that can best be defined as authoritarian democracies. While formal minority rights have been expanded, as have anti-discrimination policies, the United States and Europe have witnessed a trend against affirmative action and other pro-integration strategies. Thus, ethnic integration discourse at the national and supranational (EU) levels is rarely translated into policy solutions locally, which have converged around a least common denominator: most cities enact strong anti-racism programs but they do not go so far as to promote ethnic integration. This strategy is quite reactive rather than proactive and the resulting vacuum permits radical political camps (such as radical parties, politically driven interest groups, gangs of youths, etc.) to determine the focal points of local integration agendas. As a result, this work suggests that decentralization is not necessarily the key to improving social integration in ethnically-mixed cities. Local actors are nearer to urban residents and supposedly more reactive to their political needs. They are also however, susceptible to political pressures that prevent them from taking strong stands in moments of crisis and presenting long-term visions to local populations concerning minority integration.

Returning to the 2005 urban unrest in France, one of the biggest questions asked in the national media following the riots was: "Why was there no violence in Marseille?" In response, most analysts pointed to Marseille's unique character among French cities. Experts cited the following characteristics which attenuated the potential for interethnic violence: immigrants and ethnic minorities are informally recognized and accepted as part of the social fabric of the city; elected officials cultivate informal communication networks with ethnic minorities; and through these networks, ethnic minorities have effectively mobilized within institutionalized political channels.

These elements make Marseille one of the least "republican" cities in France. Of course many republican traditions are strong in Marseille. However, the city has been recognized for its practical approach to solving informal problems related to social integration. Unlike most other major French cities, Marseille was not affected by the 2005 urban unrest because it has addressed informal barriers to social integration related to power with practical policy solutions that many purists would consider "unrepublican." Such policy compromises may "betray" national democratic traditions, but they significantly contribute to the maintenance of democratic ideals, such as equality, justice, and the common good at the local level. They also represent the difference between an intelligent defence of democratic principles and the creation of authoritarian democratic dogma.

Many European states are proposing devolution in the field of minority integration politics. The U.S. model still firmly supports unmitigated decentralization. These trends have thrust cities into important roles in national and even international integration discussions. They have also exposed local officials to tremendous public pressure in the fields of integration politics. The cases presented in this work suggest that city governments need support from above if they are to successfully promote social and ethnic integration.

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Multi-level governance is the only way to promote democratic values and protect local officials from unmediated populism. Decentralization offers a great deal of potential but also much risk. Many national officials are currently utilizing this approach to avoid responsibility in the field of integration politics, in many cases abandoning local authorities when ethnic tensions arise. Increased autonomy at the local level brings heightened responsibility and therefore greater danger that local citizens will contest minority integration programs through both formal and informal channels. Formal barriers to integration have been addressed in most advanced industrial states. However, decentralization has increased the significance of informal obstacles. These barriers can only be overcome through concerted efforts at different levels of government. By spreading responsibility for ethnic integration, a system of checks and balances can be successfully created, spreading responsibility, so that local leaders will not have to face populist pressures alone.

Notes

1. Statement made at meeting: Les Emeutes en France 2005: Considerations Europeennes, organized by CLERSE, Universite de Lille 1, Lille, France, January 2006.
2. Official census data from the United States Census Bureau, INSEE (France), and ISTAT (Italy).
3. United States Census Bureau. Available at www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race.html
4. North Carolina State Data Center. Available at http://census.state.nc.us
5. STEP Task Force. Official Report, 1993.
6. *Ibid*.
7. Author's participant observation.
8. Proveditorato Provinciale del Lavoro (2000) Official Statistics.
9. Personal Interview conducted by author.

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