

TOCQUEVILLE'S *DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA*:  
A MODEL FOR COMBINING TEACHING AND RESEARCH

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## ABSTRACT

Are the requirements of teaching and research so very different? The goals of teaching include imparting information to students and guiding their acquisition of knowledge about various subjects. The goals of research are similar, but the information and knowledge gained in one's inquiries are shared with professional peers. The forum for teaching is the classroom; the forum for presenting research is the professional association meeting and the professional journal. One of the primary challenges that the teacher and researcher face is determining the appropriate degree of the depth of the inquiry to share with one's students and one's professional peers.

One way to combine teaching and research successfully in the field of political science is to find works that raise more questions than they answer. One such work is Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. I intend to discuss in my paper how Tocqueville's book goes beyond introducing students to American government and America's democratic features and makes them think about democracy and the people who participate in it. In the same vein, the book raises many questions with respect to democracy in general and democracy in America in particular, thus lending itself as a fertile source for the researcher as well. I will include specific recommendations of topics within the work that meet the requirements of teaching political science in the classroom and conclude with why these issues are of concern to us as citizens in this democracy in America.

Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*:  
A Model for Combining Teaching and Research

*Introduction*

The conference theme of the 2003 meeting of the Western Political Science Association encourages participants to reflect on how teaching and research might better support one another.<sup>1</sup> In the course of one's tenure as a graduate student, there are two transitions that must take place that are directly related to teaching and research. First, one begins the transition from learning in the classroom to teaching; second, one begins the transition from conducting research and writing papers for one's professors to writing for a larger scholarly audience. These objectives of teaching and writing work well together in graduate school because the topics of one's research and writing are usually based upon what is being taught in the classroom. This convenient nexus comes to an end upon leaving the academy. In most instances, the demands of teaching and all of the responsibilities that come along with them fill every waking moment and research is done during one's spare time, breaks, or summers.

Ideally there is overlap and similarity between the subject matter of one's teaching and research, but the difficulty is that teaching requires a wide breadth of knowledge, whereas research requires a sharper focus and a more narrow scope of inquiry. One way to combine teaching and research successfully is to incorporate works in the classroom that raise more questions than they answer. If a teacher actively engages students in learning by assigning readings that encourage students to ask their own questions, there is a greater likelihood that the goal of educating the students will be achieved. With respect to research, a well-chosen work on

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1. "The Synergy Shibboleth – Combining Research and Teaching," Western Political Science Association 2003 Annual Meeting, March 27-29 Hyatt Regency Denver, Colorado, Bill Haltom, Chair. Original title: Combining Teaching and Research: Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*.

the syllabus provides an avenue for the teacher to engage in research while fulfilling the obligations of teaching. It also provides students with the opportunity to begin to conduct their own research.

One such work in the category of raising more questions than it answers is Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. There are several reasons why Tocqueville's work is so attractive and I will explore them more fully in this paper. One of the most prominent reasons why Tocqueville himself is such an engaging figure is that his works cut across scholarly disciplines. In the introduction to a selection of Tocqueville's letters on politics and society, the editor describes Tocqueville as follows: "As a scholar, however, he fits no modern category neatly. As a political scientist who wrote an enduring analysis of American politics, the nineteenth century's finest French historian, a precursor of the modern sociologist, and a practical politician elected to the Chamber of Deputies and appointed foreign minister of France, Tocqueville offers something for everyone."<sup>2</sup> While I intend to limit my remarks to Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, it is worth noting that Tocqueville was one of those rare individuals who actively participated in the politics of his day, wrote knowledgeably about the past and present, and ventured to make predictions about the future.<sup>3</sup> He thus has much to teach students of political science and of American government and also provides a great opportunity for research that will serve to

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2. *Selected Letters on Politics and Society*, trans. James Toupin and Roger Boesche (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 1.

3. Tocqueville's other published works in English translation include *Journey to America*, ed. J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959); *Journeys to England and Ireland*, ed. J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence and J. P. Mayer (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1968); *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, ed. Francois Furet and Francoise Melonio, trans. Alan S. Kahan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); *Recollections*, ed. J. P. Mayer and A. P. Kerr, trans. George Lawrence (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1971); *Selected Letters on Politics and Society*, trans. James Toupin and Roger Boesche (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

advance learning. My paper is divided into two parts. The first part takes up the topic of teaching Tocqueville and Tocqueville as teacher, and includes a summary of the major parts of the book; the second part addresses Tocqueville's work as a source of research.

*Part I: Teaching Tocqueville - Tocqueville as Teacher*

Tocqueville and his companion Gustave de Beaumont spent nine months traveling throughout the Eastern portion of the United States and Canada. They arrived on May 9, 1831 in Newport, Rhode Island and traveled through New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Quebec, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, finally returning to France on February 20, 1832.<sup>4</sup> The reason for their journey to America was to study penal reform in America, but Tocqueville later wrote in a letter to a friend:

The penitentiary system was a pretext: I took it as a passport that would let me enter thoroughly into the United States. In that country, in which I encountered a thousand things beyond my expectation, I perceived several things about questions that I had often put to myself. I discovered facts that seemed useful to know. I did not go there with the idea of writing a book, but the idea for a book came to me there.<sup>5</sup>

Tocqueville and Beaumont published *On the Penitentiary System in the United States and Its Application to France* in January 1833. Tocqueville published the first volume of *Democracy in America* in 1835 and the second volume in 1840.<sup>6</sup>

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4. In 1997-98 C-SPAN retraced Tocqueville's journey and published a book and companion video. *Traveling Tocqueville's America: Retracing the 17-state tour that inspired Alexis de Tocqueville's political classic Democracy in America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

5. *Selected Letters*, p. 95. The letter dated January 1835 was written to Louis de Kergorlay.

6. All quotations in this paper are from the Mansfield translation of Tocqueville's work. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). The specific page references are to this translation, but each

The very title, *Democracy in America*, indicates the vast subject that Tocqueville is studying. Tocqueville explains in the introduction to the first volume the reason why he is pursuing such an inquiry: “the same democracy reigning in American societies appeared to me to be advancing rapidly toward power in Europe.” Tocqueville was witness to the democratic revolution sweeping France. In the introduction he also recounts historical events that led up to the revolution and expresses both hopes and fears about its future. He is concerned that the movement towards democracy has been “abandoned to its savage instincts” and questions whether it is possible “to instruct democracy.” Tocqueville looks to America for a specific reason: “I wanted to find lessons there from which we [the French] could profit.” His intent was neither to praise nor advocate, but understand. “I confess that in America I saw more than America; I sought there an image of democracy itself, of its penchants, its character, its prejudices, its passions; I wanted to become acquainted with it if only to know at least what we ought to hope or fear from it.”<sup>7</sup>

His manner of presenting such a monumental undertaking is from the ground up, so to speak. The first chapter is a description of the landscape of America, the oceans, the rivers, and the forests, as well as the inhabitants who preceded the Europeans. The subsequent eight chapters in part one of volume one are a methodical presentation of the governing bodies that Tocqueville saw in America, beginning with the origins, the people and the institutions. He gives his reasons for such a presentation in the second chapter.

Examine the infant even in the arms of his mother; see the external world reflected for the first time in the still-obscure mirror of his intelligence; contemplate the first examples that strike his eye; listen to the first words that awaken the sleeping powers of his

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note begins with the volume, part, and chapter reference. There are other translations currently available and my aim in this paper is to offer ready access to Tocqueville’s text.

7. Tocqueville, I.Introduction, pp. 3, 7, 13.

thought; finally, attend the first struggles that he has to sustain; and only then will you understand where the prejudices, habits, and passions that are going to dominate his life come from. The man is so to speak a whole in the swaddling clothes of his cradle.<sup>8</sup>

Tocqueville recognizes the unique opportunity present in the study of America. “America is the only country where one has been able to witness the natural and tranquil developments of a society, and where it has been possible to specify the influence exerted by the point of departure on the future of states.”<sup>9</sup> The point of departure (the title of the second chapter is “On the Point of Departure and its Importance for the Future of the Anglo-Americans”) for America is the settlement of the country by emigrants. Tocqueville takes into account the reasons why the emigrants came to America and their beliefs, varying levels of education, past experiences, and hopes. He also contrasts the differences between those who settled in the North and the South, and in particular those who settled in New England. There are two ideas in particular that Tocqueville focuses on in the second chapter: the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom. The freedom to practice one’s religion was the reason why many came to America, but this private motivation manifested itself in the public sphere as well through laws and the manner in which the people governed themselves and organized their governing bodies. Township government is described as “that fertile seed of free institutions” and township independence “still forms the principle and the life of American freedom.” This summary does not do justice to the rich insights in the second chapter, but these ideas are important for understanding the work as a whole. As Tocqueville explains, “those who read this book will therefore find in the present chapter the seed of what is to follow and the key to almost the whole work.”<sup>10</sup>

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8. Tocqueville, I.1.2, pp. 27-8.

9. Tocqueville, I.1.2, p. 28.

10. Tocqueville, I.1.2, pp. 29, 40.

Tocqueville's presentation is by no means a dry recitation of historical facts and description of institutions, but a lively and engaging account that is due in large part to the emphasis that he places on the people who participate. The participants are as important as the institution of democracy itself; they are the democracy. Before any discussion of political institutions, He devotes two chapters (volume one, chapters three and four) to the people in an inquiry into the social state and the principle of the sovereignty of the people after the chapter on origins. He not only gives a description of the democratic social state of Americans, but he also gives reasons why this is the case by recognizing the equality that was present among the emigrants and the estate laws that were established. The reason why the social state of the people is so important is because of its effect on "the laws, customs, and ideas that regulate the conduct of nations." He devotes a chapter to the principle of the sovereignty of the people because of its prominence in America. It is not hidden or sterile, Tocqueville observes, but it manifests itself in a variety of ways including in the mores of the people and their laws and is spread freely. He explains how the sovereignty of the people became so prominent, underscoring the fact that those who would normally fight such a move (the upper classes) recognized that any struggle against it was not possible and therefore joined in putting into effect "the new order." The result is that "society acts by itself and on itself," primarily through self-government.<sup>11</sup>

Before I continue a further review of the contents of Tocqueville's work, I would like to comment on Tocqueville as a teacher. His book is long and he offers lengthy explanations to make his points, but once students discover how Tocqueville approaches the study of America and democracy, they are more readily engaged in the study. I suggested above that the approach is from the ground up. Beyond the fact that he begins with a description of the geography of

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11. Tocqueville, I.1.3, p. 45; I.1.4, pp. 53-55.



America, he also sees the people at the base or at the foundation of the political institutions in America. In his discussion of political institutions he begins with the township, the most basic form of government and that which is closest to the people. Once he has established what serves as the basis of the democracy in America, he then builds upon it; the remainder of volume one is a discussion of the township, the county, the state, and finally the federal government. He thus moves from what is closest to the people, or the governing body in which they play the greatest role, to what is farthest removed from the people, or the governing body in which their elected representatives legislate on their behalf.

The discussion of the various types of governing bodies in the United States takes a variety of forms. For example, he describes the origins of the township, its size and powers, but perhaps most importantly he explains how it gives citizens an opportunity to learn how to govern themselves and thus become habituated to participation in governing themselves. Tocqueville understands the county not so much as a political entity, but rather as a judicial center and a central authority for the administrators. He sees it as forming an intermediate power between the government and the plain citizens.<sup>12</sup> The township and the county thus have different interests, but they exist simultaneously.

Tocqueville presents his discussion of the state by breaking down the legislative and executive powers. Also included in this chapter is a section on the political effects of administrative decentralization in the United States. He provides a full description of the role that a central power plays in a government and its advantages and disadvantages, but it is the political effect that he finds striking. “In the United States the native country makes itself felt everywhere

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12. Tocqueville, I.1.5, pp. 66, 76.

. . . The inhabitant applies himself to each of the interests of his country as to his very own.”<sup>13</sup>

There are three separate discussions of centralization in chapter five, but the observation that each citizen has a particular interest in the country seems to be the culmination of what Tocqueville has to say on the subject. The thrust of the chapter is thus two-fold: on the one hand he is explaining the governing structure; on the other hand he is explaining how the lack of centralization prevents the citizen from becoming removed from having an interest in his own country.

The remaining chapters of part one in the first volume take up discussions of judicial power, political judgment, and the federal constitution. Tocqueville chooses to devote a separate chapter to the judiciary because of its great political importance. He explains how the judiciary functions and the role of the Constitution in their rulings. Tocqueville gives a particular meaning to political judgment: “the decree that a political body, temporarily vested with the right to judge, pronounces.” He contrasts the practice and use of political judgment in the United States with France and England and finds that it is more a preventive measure as well as a moderated and regular power.<sup>14</sup> Although Tocqueville calls his discussion of the federal constitution “a rapid glance,” it is a lengthy chapter in which he gives a history of it, examines each branch of government and its unique features, and offers his assessment on its advantages.

Tocqueville does not give titles to the two parts of volume one, but does give a brief introduction to the second part in which he contrasts the two parts of volume one in the following way. The focus of the first part is on the institutions, the written laws, and the current forms of political society in the United States as reviewed above. He recognizes that these

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13. Tocqueville, I.1.5, p. 90.

14. Tocqueville, I.1.6, p. 93; I.1.7, pp. 100, 103, 104.

institutions can be destroyed or modified by the sovereign power of the people, thus he devotes the second part to understanding how this power proceeds. In Tocqueville's words: "what are its instincts, its passions; what secret springs drive it, slow it down, or direct it in its irresistible advance; what effects its omnipotence produces, and what future is in store for it."<sup>15</sup> This second part is very rich in its content because Tocqueville addresses those issues and practices that go to the heart of American democracy including parties, freedom of the press, political association, the omnipotence of the majority and the response to the tyranny of the majority, the advantages of democracy, and how the democratic republic is maintained. He concludes part two of volume one with a chapter that speculates on the probable future of the three races that inhabit the United States. Space does not permit a discussion of each chapter, but these chapters are written in such a way that they can be assigned as individual readings in a course to generate discussion of a particular issue or to add another point of view to an ongoing discussion in the classroom. For example, the role of the majority is central to the notion of democracy, but is the majority always right. If not, what safeguards or remedies can be put in place to prevent the majority from abusing others who have a differing opinion.

The format of volume two of *Democracy in America* differs from that of volume one. It is divided into four parts and each part has a title that indicates the general subject matter addressed. They include 1) Influence of Democracy on the Intellectual Movement in the United States, 2) Influence of Democracy on the Sentiments of the Americans, 3) Influence of Democracy on Mores Properly So-Called, and 4) On the Influence that Democratic Ideas and Sentiments Exert on Political Society. Again, space does not permit a full discussion of the parts or chapters, but particular themes can be drawn upon and used effectively in the classroom. For

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15. Tocqueville, II.Introduction, p. 165.

the most part Tocqueville introduces new topics, but he also returns to themes that he introduces in the first volume thus allowing for assignments from both volumes. One example of this is associations. In the second volume Tocqueville broadens the discussion to include both civil and political associations, assesses their usefulness, and explores the relation between associations and newspapers. What is consistent throughout this second volume is the interplay between the social and the political, in other words the influence of one on the other. Whether the topic is American democracy or democracy in general, discovering the influence of the political on the behavior and comportment of the people seems to be one of Tocqueville's goals in writing such a work.

I specifically chose to title the first part of this paper "Teaching Tocqueville - Tocqueville as Teacher" because the teaching of Tocqueville can take a variety of forms and Tocqueville has much to teach the students of his work. Whether *Democracy in America* is incorporated into an American Government course, or in a modern political science course as representative of the precursors of modern social science and political sociology, or in a comparative government course in a study of democracy, it lends itself to stimulating both teacher and student to engage in discussion and inquiry. Tocqueville's work has the great virtue of taking students beyond the nuts and bolts of American Government and engaging them to think about democracy and the people who participate in this democracy. In many respects he makes democracy come alive. The way that he has structured his book gives the teacher the freedom to use it in its entirety or draw upon specific parts based upon the subject matter being addressed in class. Any standard American Government textbook is easily supplemented by readings from Tocqueville on a variety of topics. The basic course in American Government is also broadened by reference to

Tocqueville's observations on the workings of democracy and the influence it has on how people conduct their lives.

Tocqueville as teacher is an apt description because in his study of democracy and of America, he makes an effort to teach what he has learned and observed. His reference in the introduction to instructing democracy includes a variety of perspectives.<sup>16</sup> Reanimating its beliefs, purifying its mores, regulating its movements, substituting the science of affairs for its inexperience, and having knowledge of its true interests for its blind instincts are the first ideas that he mentions. Tocqueville teaches students of his work that democracy is more than a political form of government or a way of organizing the affairs of a people, but rather it touches every aspect of their lives, from the most public display of political behavior to the most intimate of relations between family members and neighbors. He extends the boundaries of the definition of democracy when he references such things as beliefs, mores, movements, affairs, and interests. He is speaking simultaneously to the individual and to the people. He is directing his comments to people living in America who are living in the democracy that he is observing, to people living in France who are on the verge of being thrust into a more democratic way of life than they had ever embraced, and to other peoples who may someday introduce democracy in their country.

In the paragraph on instructing democracy he also includes adapting government to time and place and modifying it according to circumstances and men. Not only does Tocqueville expand the definition of democracy, he also suggests that one size does not fit all, so to speak. Every community, every country, every nation has its peculiarities, unique traits, and varying customs and traditions. Tocqueville entitled his work *democracy in America*, but upon careful

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16. Tocqueville, I. Introduction, p. 7.

reading one realizes that there are two distinct subjects that he addresses in his work: democracy in America and democracy itself.<sup>17</sup> There are variations in the democracies that people establish, as well as practices that are generated out of the prior history of the people that will influence the shape that democracy will take and may well determine whether it will be successful.<sup>18</sup>

Tocqueville recognizes this and prompts the reader to pay far closer attention to the nuances of the people and which features of democracy are best introduced to a society.

Tocqueville is thus a teacher who can successfully expand the horizon of the student by making a case for the strengths of democracy, while pointing out the challenges and dangers of democracy. I now turn to the second part of this paper and take up the theme of *Democracy in America* as a source of research.

### *Part II: Democracy in America as a Source of Research*

Research in any field begins with an inquiry or a question; *Democracy in America* is a work that prompts the reader to ask many questions. Whether the questions are with respect to democracy in general or democracy in America in particular, the book is a fertile source for

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17. For example, Tocqueville is clearly focusing on America in the chapter entitled “What are the Real Advantages that American Society Derives from the Government of Democracy” (I.2.6) whereas in the last sections of the chapter entitled “On the Principal Causes Tending to Maintain a Democratic Republic in the United States” (I.2.9) he takes up the question, Would laws and mores suffice to maintain democratic institutions elsewhere than in America? Another example of his more general discussion of democracy is found in the chapter “On the Principal Source of Beliefs Among Democratic Peoples” (II.1.2). Finally, Tocqueville states “the political constitution of the United States appears to me to be one of the forms that democracy can give to its government; but I do not consider American institutions the only ones or the best that a democratic people should adopt.” (Tocqueville, I.2.6, pp. 220-1).

18 An example of what Tocqueville is suggesting with his emphasis on the origins of a people is in Robert Putnam’s book *Making Democracy Work*. He devotes a chapter to the history of Italy to find an answer to the question, Why are some communities better able than others to manage collective life and sustain effective institutions? He contrasts the social patterns of northern Italy with those of the south that have developed over hundreds of years and finds that past experiences have a very strong and lasting influence on the people. Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), chapter 5.

research and writing. The book as a whole can serve as the starting point for research, but there are also several specific topics such as political science, religion, women, and democracy that can serve as the basis for further research and writing because of their prominence in the current debates of political scientists.

*Political Science.* Tocqueville's work can launch the student into the study of modern political science because his work is a foreshadowing of the advent of the sociological influences that became more pronounced in the discipline as the twentieth century unfolded. As a source of research, his work can provide a variety of insights into the development of political sociology and the changing face of political science itself.

The origins of political science are traced back to the ancient Greeks. Works such as Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* can serve as starting points for debates about politics, but the direction of the discipline over the centuries has taken many turns. Tocqueville's book provides an opportunity for students to have before them an example of how the social fabric of a people is woven into the political fabric of a nation. Robert Putnam calls Tocqueville's work "the most illustrious example of the sociocultural tradition of political analysis."<sup>19</sup>

While it may be difficult to label Tocqueville—political scientist, sociologist, political sociologist, historian, politician—he is looked upon as a forerunner of sociology and his work is representative of early contributions to the field of political sociology.<sup>20</sup> One of the primary

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19. Putnam, p. 11.

20. See for example the discussions in Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, vol. 1 (New Brunswick, N. J.: Transaction Publishers, 1998-1999) and Randall Collins and Michael Makowsky, *The Discovery of Society* (New York: Random House, 1972).

concerns of political sociology is “an analysis of the social condition making for democracy.”<sup>21</sup>

Tocqueville’s approach is one that is readily accessible to the researcher because he is discussing real events and real people. For example, a prominent theme in political sociology is class conflict and consensus. Whereas Karl Marx focused on conflict, Tocqueville proposed a different solution in *Democracy in America*: “[He] was the first major exponent of the idea that democracy involves a balance between the forces of conflict and consensus.”<sup>22</sup> Tocqueville’s work is well-suited to a study of conflict and consensus because he describes the various civil and political institutions that are present in many different forms in America and that serve a variety of purposes, including teaching citizens how to participate in the political process and perhaps more importantly keeping a check on both the majority and a government that could become tyrannical and threaten the liberty of the people.

This is just one example of how Tocqueville’s work can serve as a source of research in the field of political science. The discipline of political science is so broad that a work such as *Democracy in America* that is representative of a fundamental shift in the direction of political science (i.e. the influence of sociology and the transition to political sociology), serves as a useful point of beginning in research. It provides a jumping off point, so to speak, that allows the researcher to embark upon further inquiries that can proceed from Tocqueville’s analysis or challenge it.

*Religion.* Religion is a prominent theme throughout *Democracy in America*. From the earliest chapters when Tocqueville is seeking the motivations of the first emigrants (“the Puritans sought a land so barbarous and so abandoned by the world that they might yet be permitted to live there

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21. Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960), p. 21.

22. Lipset, p. 24.



in their manner and pray to God in freedom”) to the description of the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom (“two perfectly distinct elements that elsewhere have often made way with each other, but which, in America, they have succeeded in incorporating somehow into one another and combining marvelously”), Tocqueville provides an analysis of how religion played a formative role in the founding of America and the rise of its institutions.<sup>23</sup> In the chapter that he devotes to the principal causes tending to maintain a democratic republic in the United States, he devotes a section to religion as a political institution and the role it plays in maintaining the American’s democratic republic.<sup>24</sup> His discussion goes further still as he explores topics such as how, in the United States, religion makes use of democratic instincts and how religious beliefs at times turn the souls of American toward immaterial enjoyments.<sup>25</sup>

Tocqueville’s discussion of religion is two-fold: the influence of religion on politics and the influence of politics on religion. His analysis gives the researcher an opportunity to examine religion from both points of view and consider the impact of religion on the individual and on society at large. With respect to the question of the necessity of religion, some have interpreted Tocqueville as suggesting that it is dependent upon the type of political institutions that are in place: “Tocqueville, conversely, saw that the need for religious belief grew in direct proportion to political liberty. The less coercive and dictatorial the political institutions of a society became, the more it needed a system of sacred belief to help restrict the actions of both the rulers and the ruled.”<sup>26</sup> This interpretation prompts one to ask if there is a correlation between the necessity of

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23. Tocqueville, I.1.2, p. 32; I.1.3, p. 48.

24. Tocqueville, I.2.9, pp. 275-7.

25. These are titles from volume 2 of *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville, II.1.5, pp. 417-424 and II.2.15, pp. 517-521.

26. Lipset, p. 28.

religion and the type of political institution under which the people live. The topic of religion in Tocqueville's work provides a variety of points of view for the researcher to pursue this inquiry and others.

*Women.* The participation of women in the political process and their roles in society at large have been topics of discussion since the ancient Greeks and remain so today. Aristotle in *The Politics* states: "both children and women must necessarily be educated looking to the regime, at least if it makes any difference with a view to the city's being excellent that both its children and its women are excellent. But it necessarily makes a difference: women are a part amounting to a half of the free persons, and from the children come those who are partners in the regime."<sup>27</sup> A similar sentiment is expressed about women from a time period and culture dramatically different from that of Aristotle and is quoted by Bernard Lewis in his recent book on the Middle East, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*. He quotes the nineteenth century Ottoman writer Namik Kemal, whom he identifies as one of the leaders of the Young Ottoman:

Our women are now seen as serving no useful purpose to mankind other than having children; they are considered simply as serving for pleasure, like musical instruments or jewels. But they constitute half and perhaps more than half of our species. Preventing them from contributing to the sustenance and improvement of others by means of their efforts infringes the basic rules of public cooperation to such a degree that our national society is stricken like a human body that is paralyzed on one side.<sup>28</sup>

These two statements on the importance of women in society and their roles and contributions may be more reflective of theoretical arguments or calls for change rather than being representative of the actual practice of their respective societies, but Tocqueville's remarks on

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27. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1260b 14-20.

28. Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and the Middle Eastern Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 70.

women are based upon his observations during his travels and can readily be drawn upon when undertaking an inquiry into women in America and women in a democracy.

Tocqueville devotes several chapters to the general topic of the influence of democracy on the family and more specifically on the education of girls, on the equality of men and women, and the role of women in a democracy based upon what he saw in America during his travels.<sup>29</sup> To highlight how democracy influences the behavior of the citizenry Tocqueville frequently contrasts democracy and aristocracy.<sup>30</sup> For example, in the chapter devoted to the discussion of democracy and the family he points out how the relationship between the father and the son differs in an aristocracy. In the former a son has far greater independence and as he matures he assumes a place next to his father, rather than remaining subordinate to him. This is not to suggest that there is a lack of respect. On the contrary, Tocqueville asserts that their relations are “more intimate and milder.” By contrast, in an aristocracy there is always a greater formality present because of the rank of the father that is superior to his children and because of the place of the individual children with respect to their inheritances and their rank in society. To sum up, Tocqueville makes the following observation: “Democracy loosens social bonds, but it tightens natural bonds. It brings relatives together at the same time that it separates citizens.”<sup>31</sup>

This same political analysis is carried over with respect to the question of women. In the first chapter devoted to the topic, “Education of Girls in the United States,” he refers to an earlier

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29. Tocqueville, 2.3.8-12.

30. A good example of Tocqueville’s use of the contrast between democracy and aristocracy with respect to political topics is in the chapter “What are the Real Advantages that American Society derives from the Government of Democracy,” especially the section “On the general Tendency of the Laws.” Tocqueville, I.2.6, pp. 221-24.

31. Tocqueville, II.3.8; pp. 561, 563. The latter comment about the separation of citizens is taken up in the chapters devoted to a discussion of individualism in democratic countries II.2.2-4.

passage from volume one of *Democracy in America* in which he explains that he considers mores to be one of the great general causes of the maintenance of a democratic republic in the United States.<sup>32</sup> He gives the following reason for reminding the reader of his earlier observation about mores: “There have never been free societies without mores, and as I said in the first part of this work, it is woman who makes mores. Therefore, all that influences the condition of women, their habits, and their opinions has great political interest in my eyes.”<sup>33</sup> Tocqueville’s examination of women covers all facets of her life: her education, her life at home as a young woman, and her relations with men with respect to the question of equality and marriage. Similar to the relations between father and son, democracy has a pronounced effect on how a woman lives her life, how she is regarded, and the choices that are available to her. All of this in turn effects the democracy itself, given that mores is central to the maintenance of the democratic republic in the United States and that women play such a prominent role in making mores.

Tocqueville concludes his discussion with the following statement on women: “if one asked me to what do I think one must principally attribute the singular prosperity and growing force of this people, I would answer that it is to the superiority of its women.”<sup>34</sup> This is a very strong assessment of the role of women and one that provokes much thought. Regardless of the direction that the researcher chooses to take with respect to women and their role in society, Tocqueville offers his observations and analysis again against the backdrop of democracy and demonstrates how the political influences the social, which can supplement the researcher’s inquiries.

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32. Tocqueville, I.2.9, p. 274. Tocqueville defines mores as the whole moral and intellectual state of a people (p. 275).

33. Tocqueville, II.3.9, p. 563.

34. Tocqueville, II.3.12, p. 576.

*Democracy*. There is a vast amount of literature on democracy currently being written in the field of political science. There are a number of ways to approach the topic from Tocqueville's presentation, but one approach that goes to the core of his work is by focusing on the themes of equality and freedom. These themes are a constant part of the debate that the author is carrying on in the work against the backdrop of democracy. From the opening line of the work, the theme of equality is at the forefront:

Among the new objects that attracted my attention during my stay in the United States, none struck my eye more vividly than the equality of conditions. I discovered without difficulty the enormous influence that this primary fact exerts on the course of society; it gives a certain direction to public spirit, a certain turn to the laws, new maxims to those who govern, and particular habits to the governed.<sup>35</sup>

Yet in the introduction to the second volume, Tocqueville seems to want to amend a misimpression with respect to the role of equality.

I must warn the reader right away against an error that would be very prejudicial to me. In seeing me attribute so many diverse effects to equality, he could conclude that I consider equality to be the unique cause of all that happens in our day. That would be to suppose that I had a very narrow view . . . I only wanted to bring out the extent to which equality has modified the one and the other.<sup>36</sup>

One explanation why Tocqueville clarified his views on equality is because there may be a tension between freedom and equality that the author highlights in his work and which prompts one to question if Tocqueville yearns for freedom over equality.<sup>37</sup> For example in the chapter entitled "Why Democratic Peoples Show a More Ardent and More Lasting Love for Equality than for Freedom" he highlights several differences between equality and freedom. These

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35. Tocqueville, I.Introduction, p. 3.

36. Tocqueville, II.Notice, p. 399.

37. It is the spirit of freedom and the spirit of religion that Tocqueville discussed at length in the second chapter of volume one that contains "the key to almost the whole work." Tocqueville, I.1.2, p. 29.

include the contrast between the short term goods of equality and the long term goods of freedom, the observations that freedom is not attached to one social state or only in a democracy whereas equality is the dominating fact in democratic centuries and that one tends to have a passion for equality versus a natural taste for freedom.<sup>38</sup> Tocqueville also speaks of nothing more prolific in marvels than the art of being free and nothing harder than the apprenticeship of freedom.<sup>39</sup> The discussion of freedom and equality leads one to inquire about the end of government. Is it incumbent upon government to protect freedom and to guarantee equality? How is this best accomplished? Is there necessarily a tension between the two or can both be had simultaneously?

Again, Tocqueville's work raises more questions than it answers. Tocqueville's discussion of equality and freedom and the relationship of one to the other raises many questions for all citizens. The researcher can pursue the topic in many ways: from the point of view of civil rights; affirmative action debates; the rights, duties, obligations, and privileges of citizens; the role of government with respect to the equality and liberty of the citizen, to name a few. A wealth of possibilities exists.

### *Conclusion*

My effort in this paper has been guided by the conference theme of how teaching and research might better support one another. I suggested at the beginning that one way to combine teaching and research successfully is to find works that raise more questions than they answer and proposed Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* as one such work. By providing an overview of Tocqueville's work I have tried to demonstrate how his work can be taught and suggested that

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38. Tocqueville, II.2.1, pp. 481-2. See also for example II.1.8, II.3.1, II.4.1 for further discussions of equality and freedom.

39. Tocqueville, I.2.6, p. 229.

the author is also attempting to teach his readers about democracy. His work is a rich source of research topics in that nearly 170 years have passed since its publication and in many instances the observations that Tocqueville makes and the analysis that he offers continues to be topics of current debate. The role of religion in a democracy, the tension between liberty and equality, the role of the majority in a democracy, the role of civil and political associations in the lives of the citizens are a few of the many topics that Tocqueville discussed at length in his work that continue to provoke inquiry.

These issues are of concern to citizens in this democracy in America because the liberty and the freedoms present in America are not foregone conclusions. There are challenges to the democracy that Tocqueville described with such awe and admiration, and in some cases fear. In the classroom, students who learn about democracy, its sources, and its strengths and weaknesses are better able to participate as citizens. They can make effective use of their education outside the walls of the institution. Researchers have in Tocqueville a source of observations and analysis that was offered generously. As Tocqueville himself observed in his discussion of the omnipotence of the majority, “only foreigners or experience can make certain truths reach the ears of the Americans.”<sup>40</sup> Tocqueville can serve as a teacher to the student who is just beginning to study democracy, as a source of inspiration for the researcher, and as a sparring partner for those who wish to engage him and challenge his ideas about democracy and democracy in America.

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40. Tocqueville, I.2.7, p. 245.

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