



Educating Democracy: Alexis de Tocqueville and Leadership in America

Brian Danoff

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Revisionist analysis of the role of strong leadership in democracies, drawing primarily upon the work of Alexis de Tocqueville.

Do strong leaders inevitably undermine democracies? Drawing upon the insights of Alexis de Tocqueville, Brian Danoff offers a compelling, revisionist analysis of the role of leadership in democratic societies. Rather than focusing on effectiveness or character to assess the quality of leaders in democracies, Tocqueville suggests that great democratic leaders are those who educate, elevate, and empower their fellow citizens; certain types of leadership enhance rather than diminish self-rule. Danoff then enriches and expands Tocqueville's perspective through the ideas of American theorists and statesmen such as Woodrow Wilson, Abraham Lincoln, and the Antifederalists. Timely and necessary, this book sheds new light on both Tocqueville and on the role of leadership in American democracy.

"...this is an important and even a courageous book ... In an age when political talk often extols dead certainties, this recognition of the complexity inherent in democratic life is refreshing." — H-Net Reviews (H-Education)

"An intelligent book on Tocqueville is always welcome. Danoff's book ... is thoughtful, knowledgeable, sensible and rigorous. It is also highly provocative. To his great credit ... Danoff, like Tocqueville himself, argues persuasively that a good democrat is a moderate democrat and that a good democracy requires a traditional moral foundation. That alone makes his book well worth reading." — Teachers College Record

Brian Danoff is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Miami University in Ohio.

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