

# **Civic Education: The Role of History and the Social Sciences in a Civil Society**

**Lynn R. Nelson  
Purdue University**

**And**

**Frederick D. Drake  
Illinois State University**

History has a powerful capacity as an integrative discipline to help students understand the relationships of people, space, and time. Some eighty years ago, historian Carl Becker noted the discipline's value as more than scientific when he stressed its moral value and potential to liberalize the mind.<sup>1</sup> For citizenship education, history has the potential to provide a "furniture of the mind" for citizens participating in a democracy.<sup>2</sup> A rich fund of history has the potential to provide the basis for judgement on the part of a thoughtful individual. An immersion in history forces the individual to reject simplistic answers to issues of the past and problems of the present. Today, Becker's differentiation between history's scientific and moral values has become clouded. Both the positivistic view of history and the relativistic view of history have come under close scrutiny to a public that often scorns the discipline as confused because they do not understand how historians create knowledge. To the public the debates among historians become internecine wars with little foundation of knowledge being established. For individuals who already hold strong preconceptions and want to justify their worldview, fragments of history can be woven to support their preconceptions. History, then, could become a weapon to focus on past wrongs and to highlight current injustices. Thus, for citizenship education, history has the potential to provide thoughtful judgement; but it can also become a powerful political instrument both to unite people and to inflame passions against national and ethnic groups.

Our paper concerns the recent democratic efforts of the Democracy Advancement Center in Riga, Latvia to foster citizenship education in the Republic of Latvia, a nation which occupies a small space along the Baltic Sea and has a people whose composition is approximately 57% Latvian and 34% Russian. As we were writing this paper we thought of historical comparisons of what happens to minorities in national histories. For example, we considered Northern Ireland with about one-third of the population learning British history and students questioning why. Or in the United States where for years we had very little women's history or African American history and people wanted to know why. In Latvia, we have a situation in which a small republic has an opportunity to write its own history. What kind of history will it write? What kind of history will be taught in Latvian schools – both Latvian and Russian?

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Becker, *Dial* 59 (September 2, 1915): 148.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Gagnon, "History's Role in Civic Education: The precondition for Political Intelligence," 241-262. Reprinted from Chapter 1 and Appendix in Education for Democracy Project, American Federation of Teachers, *Democracy's Half-Told Story* (Washington, D.C., 1989), 15-22 and 160-172.

In 1997, we became involved in CIVITAS: An International civic Education Program that works with nations that have restored their independence in Eastern Europe and Russia. The Republic of Latvia is one of the nations working with Civitas, and we have worked with the Democracy Advancement Center in Riga, Latvia to promote civic education in their schools and republic over the last two years.

Civitas leaders believe there is an opportunity to develop an international cross-cultural consensus on the central meaning of democracy and democratic citizenship. It focuses on a framework for teaching citizenship. Civitas stresses that it is important for citizens to know the distinctions between liberal democracy and illiberal democracy. Civitas also believes that citizens should be familiar with the morphology of democracy and the infrastructure of democracy.<sup>3</sup> Civitas takes issue with the view of Francis Fukayama who wrote in *The End of History and the Last Man* that liberal democracy had won supposedly in 1989 and suggests that it is now time for a new universal direction of history that emphasizes humankind's need for recognition and dignity.<sup>4</sup> Civitas does not believe democracy will take place in every part of the world; it suggests, in regard to Fukayama, that the "jury is out regarding liberal democracy as the end-point."<sup>5</sup> Civitas also challenges Samuel P. Huntington's definition of democracy, which emphasizes "elections, open, free, and fair" as the essence of democracy, and that the world's major civilizations must be seen as remaining separate in their central values and institutions, including political values and arrangements.<sup>6</sup> Liberal democracy, Civitas points out, includes much more than voting in elections. Particularly, Civitas stresses beliefs in respect for individual rights and limited government as important attributes that add richness and distinction to a definition limited to voting in elections. Nor does Civitas believe that rejection of liberal democracy in non-western portions of the world will continue indefinitely.

The Democracy Advancement Center in Riga has taken the lead in civic education. While history provides a furniture of the mind for civic education, the DAC has chosen to organize its work around a curriculum project linked to the efforts of Civitas. The curriculum, called *Project Citizen*, is issues-oriented rather than history-oriented. Civitas is a political science organization, not an organization emphasizing history. Civitas has a social sciences approach to issues rather than building a narrative history. This decision to adopt *Project Citizen* may be very wise at this point in time because *Project Citizen* has already achieved success in the United States and it would be very difficult, even unwise and impossible to help the Latvians write their national history. Our experiences, then, describe the implementation of the issues-oriented *Project Citizen* in Latvia and the problems associated with the fragmentation of history in the Republic of Latvia.

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<sup>3</sup> Charles F. Bahmueller, "A Framework for Teaching Democratic Citizenship: An International Project," *The International Journal for Social Education* 12 (2) (Spring/Summer 1997): 101-112.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Fukayama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Charles F. Bahmueller, "A Framework for Teaching Democratic Citizenship," 111.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The West: Unique, Not Universal," *Foreign Affairs* 75 (November/December 1996): 28-46; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1996); and Samuel P. Huntington, *The third Wave: Democratization in the late Twentieth Century* Norman, Oklahoma, 1991.

## An Overview of Problems Facing the Republic of Latvia

Our paper summarizes to this point in time the recent efforts of the Democracy Advancement Center in Riga, Latvia, in concert with international partners, to initiate programs in civic education in Latvian schools. Additionally, our paper raises somewhat troubling questions regarding the future of democratic education in the republic: Will the Latvians through schools and other social institutions be able to provide a civic education for democracy? Will a civic education for democracy be able to overcome the residual effects of Marxist civic education? Will a pedagogy for democratic citizens – a pedagogy which involves discussion among students based upon a variety of readings and sources of information – be able to displace the traditional lectures associated with “scientific socialism?”

The Republic of Latvia, situated on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea and bounded by Estonia to the north, Lithuania to the south, and Russia and Belarus to the east, has an area of about 25,000 square miles (about 64,600 square kilometers).<sup>7</sup> It has a population of approximately 2.7 million people, with over 850,000 living in Riga, 118,00 in Daugavpils, and 98,000 in Liepaja.<sup>8</sup> In the nation, roughly 57% of the population define themselves as Latvians, 34% as Russians, 4.5% as Belarussians, 3.5% as Ukrainians, 2.3% as Poles, and 1.3% as Lithuanians. The ethnic composition varies throughout the country. For example, in Riga approximately 36% of the people are Latvian with Russians comprising 44% of the population. In Daugavpils, Latvians comprise only 13% of the population and 70% of the people are ethnic Russians.<sup>9</sup> Geographically, the Gulf of Riga and the Daugava River are the entrepote to the Russian, German, and Scandinavian trade. Latvia's location on the Baltic is both its blessing and its curse. Rich in natural resources from its forests and the ocean, it has lured conquering peoples throughout the ages to establish trading posts and occupy its region.

A national history of Latvia might well include as a narrative theme the cosmopolitan nature of Latvian society since the medieval period. Early in their history Livonians experienced a decentralized government and were “a tempting target to ambitious neighbors because of its strategic location.”<sup>10</sup> Historically, Latvia has known invaders from the middle part of the twelfth through twentieth centuries. Russians, Teutonic knights, Poles, and Swedes seized opportunities and took their turn to control all or a portion of Latvia until the 1700s. Under Russian rule until the end of World War I, Latvia declared its independence on November 18, 1918. In 1922, following World War I and the Russian Revolution, Latvians wrote a constitution that provided for a parliamentary system of representative government. With the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 Latvia no longer enjoyed independent status, and it experienced German and Soviet occupation of its people, land, and resources until 1991 when Latvians reasserted their

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<sup>7</sup> World Bank, *Latvia: The Transition to a Market Economy* (Washington, D.C., 1993), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Guntis Stammers, *Latvia Today* (Riga, 1995), 9; Andrejs Plakans, “Democratization and Political Participation in Postcommunist Societies: The Case of Latvia,” in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds., *The Consolidation of Democracy in East-Central Europe* (Cambridge, England, 1997), 249 as found in John J. Patrick and Valts Sarma, “Civic Education and the Advancement of Democracy in Latvia,” *The International Journal of Social Education*, 2; and [http://www.latnet.lv/info\\_Latvia/people.html](http://www.latnet.lv/info_Latvia/people.html); and <http://www.dpu.lv/Regional/latgale.en.html>

<sup>9</sup> Andreis Plakans, *The Latvians: A Short History* (Stanford, 1995), 189 and Guntis Stammers, *Latvia Today*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Andrejs Plakans, *The Latvians: A Short History*, 23.

independence of Russia. By September 1991, Latvia gained international recognition as a sovereign nation and restored democratic rule under its 1922 constitution. A recent study of Latvia emphasizes that the “continuity of interwar democracy” was fundamental in the 1980s and 1990s “for restoring national pride and a consciousness of the value of self-rule among the Latvian people.”<sup>11</sup>

What follows in our essay is a description of our impressions concerning Latvia’s experience in civic education for democracy. First, we summarize the importance and nature of democratic civic education. Second, we describe our impressions of a recent visit we had to Latvia. During our visit we discussed issues concerning teaching for democratic citizenship with members of the Democracy Advancement Center. And third, we raise problems, particularly historical, that Latvians will be forced to confront as they engage in a democratic experience.

### **The Nature of Democratic Education**

For the past two decades educational reformers have tried to reinstate the civic role that a liberal education must play to nurture the development of a democratic society. In the United States, conservative and liberal scholars in higher education and educators in elementary and secondary schools are realizing the importance of returning civic education to its place as the primary goal of public and private schools. A recent publication, *Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education*, reminds us that our schools need “to promote civic competence, civic responsibility, and the widespread participation of youth in social and political life of their communities and the nation.”<sup>12</sup> The global reinvigoration and spread of democracy has spurred international civic education, and educators throughout the world at all levels are now giving prominence to the importance of theory and practice of democracy and the teaching and learning of principles and practices of citizenship in constitutional democracies.<sup>13</sup> Thoughtful educators in Central and Eastern Europe recognize the fragility of their new democratic systems and seek ways to educate citizenry toward a democratic disposition. A.E. Dick Howard, a University of Virginia constitutional scholar, summarizes what is at risk in Europe and elsewhere. “No democracy – established or emerging – can take liberty for granted.” Howard writes, “Witnessing the making of constitutions in the emerging democracies is an occasion for probing the nature and meaning of rights, the means of their enforcement, and the habits of mind that keep those rights alive.”<sup>14</sup>

*Civitas* informs us that “civic education in a democracy is education in self-

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<sup>11</sup> Rasma Karklins, *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy: The Collapse of the USSR and Latvia* (Washington, D.C., 1994), 75.

<sup>12</sup> Charles N. Quigley and Charles F. Bahmueller, (eds), *Civitas: A Framework for civic Education* (Calabasas, CA, 1991), 1.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, John J. Patrick, “Global Trends in Civic Education for Democracy,” *ERIC Digest* (January 1997: 1-2; Laura A. Pinhey and Candace L. Boyer, (eds.), *Resources on Civic Education for Democracy: International Perspectives* (ERIC, 1997); and Stephen L. Schechter and Natalya Voskresenskaya, *The Active Civics Classroom: Ideas and Practices for Teaching Civics in Russia* (In Press, Washington, D.C., 1998).

<sup>14</sup> A. E. Dick Howard, “Toward Constitutional Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe,” in *Building Civic Education for Democracy in Poland*, eds. Richard C. Remy and Jacek Strzemieczny (Washington, D.C., 1996), 184.

government.”<sup>15</sup> Self-government entails active participation in self-governance, not passive acquiescence in the actions of others. In *Civitas*, the authors remind us of Aristotle’s admonition, “If liberty and equality . . . are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost.”<sup>16</sup> Aristotle’s words reflect the belief that democratic ideals are approximated when every member of the political community shares in the activities of government. Citizens are members of the political community and citizenship in a democracy involves membership in the political body. However, that membership requires responsibility. One aspect of that responsibility is knowledge of democratic government, political issues, and an understanding of national history. Sidney Hook, educational philosopher, eloquently captures the nature of education for democratic citizenship in the United States. His framework is appropriate to the newly independent republics of Eastern Europe, including Latvia. He writes that civic education is:

. . . the intensive study and understanding of American political institutions, especially the system of self-government, its values, its *relevant history* [italics added], its problems, burdens, and opportunities; its challenges and alternatives, in short the theory and practice of free and open democratic society as it has beendeveloped in the United States.<sup>17</sup>

Charles Bahmueller, an author of *Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education*,<sup>18</sup> comments that “Eastern European philosophers resurrected and refurbished the idea of civil society in the late 1970s and early ‘80s.” Bahmueller continues, “these thinkers could conceptualize civil society as a new arena of independent, imaginative ethical thought and action uncorrupted by the state.”<sup>19</sup> The importance of a civil society, an idea whose origin is traceable to 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century political philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke,<sup>20</sup> moves the purposes of civic education beyond the description of the mechanics of representative government.

There is a degree of variation in the definition of civil society. Fundamentally, civil society is a way of life that is discovered directly in peoples’ daily lives with each other. Manners and politeness are at the forefront of a civil society. These qualities enrich the lives of all within the society and grow out of an understanding that they are a necessity for the well-being of ourselves and society. No matter how much an individual proclaims freedom their lives are embedded in a social context in which their actions affect individuals around them. Civil society provides the capacity for self-government beyond the opportunity to cast a vote in an election. It requires a disposition that recognizes self-interest in a social context. It motivates the individual to join with others in voluntary groups to maintain and improve society.

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<sup>15</sup> Charles N. Quigley and Charles F. Bahmueller, (eds.), *Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education* (Calabasas, CA, 1991), 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> As quoted in Charles N. Quigley and Charles F. Bahmueller, (eds.), *Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education* (Calabasas, CA, 1991), 3.

<sup>18</sup> Charles N. Quigley and Charles F. Bahmueller, (eds.), *Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education* (Calabasas, CA, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> Charles F. Bahmueller, “Civil Society and Democracy Reconsidered,” 15.

<sup>20</sup> Charles F. Bahmueller, “Civil Society and Democracy Reconsidered,” 13.

While some proponents include governmental and economic activities within the definition, others choose to define civil society as voluntary participation in non-governmental organizations. John J. Patrick has given careful consideration to the concept of civil society. Working in consort with Latvian educators, Patrick defines civil society as:

. . . the complex network of freely formed voluntary associations, distinct from the formal governmental institutions of the state, acting independently or in partnership with state agencies. Apart from the state, but subject to the rule of law, civil society is a public domain that private individuals create and operate.<sup>21</sup>

Patrick links the concept of civil society to Latvian (and other's) education. He writes that students "must know the concept of civil society, assess the activities of civil society organizations, and connect their knowledge of civil society to other core concepts in the theory and practice of democracy." Patrick adds that "if our students would be equipped for responsible citizenship in a constitutional democracy, then they must develop the civic skills and virtues they need to participate effectively in civil society organizations."<sup>22</sup> He further notes that free democratic governments rely "upon both a vibrant civil society and a market-oriented economy." Patrick recognizes the importance of freedom of exchange in a market economy. He joins an economy organized by markets with democracy and a civil society. He writes, "Freedom of exchange at the market . . . is regulated by the rule of law, which prevails in all spheres of democratic civic life."<sup>23</sup>

Drawing upon the preceding ideas we propose that Democratic Civic Education in Latvia should consist of five components which in turn should be included in curriculum materials written for teachers and students and teacher education programs:

1. Civic education programs must develop students' knowledge of the Latvian Constitution, laws, and the structure and operations of the Latvian government.
2. Civic education programs should include courses in Latvian history.
3. Latvian civic education must develop in students a sense of "civil society" through the participation in learning activities and participation in the Latvian society.

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<sup>21</sup> John J. Patrick, "Civil Society and the Worldwide Surge of Democracy: Implications for Civic Education," in Laura A. Pinhey and Candace L. Boyer, eds., *Resources on civic Education for Democracy: International perspectives* Yearbook No. 2 (ERIC, 1997), 23.

<sup>22</sup> John J. Patrick, "Civil Society and the Worldwide Surge of Democracy: Implications for Civic Education," in Laura A. Pinhey and Candace L. Boyer, eds., *Resources on civic Education for Democracy: International perspectives* Yearbook No. 2 (ERIC, 1997), 28.

<sup>23</sup> John J. Patrick, "Principles of Democracy for the Education of Citizens in Former Communist Countries of Central and Eastern Europe," in Richard C. Remy and Jacek Strzemieczny, eds., *Building Civic Education For Democracy in Poland* (Washington, D.C., 1996), 6-7 and David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford, 1987), 13.

4. Latvian civic education must include economic education focusing on the functioning of markets and the relationship between governmental policies and the operation of markets in a capitalist or mixed economy.
5. Latvian civic education must develop on-going programs for teacher education and curriculum development in all areas mentioned in the above points, 1-4.

### **Efforts of the Democracy Advancement Center**

The Democracy Advancement Center (DAC) serves to augment Latvia's transition to democracy and reinforce Latvia's relationship to Europe and the West. The American Latvian Association, a branch of the World Federation of Free Latvians, founded and supported the DAC in 1993. Now in its fifth year, the DAC has worked cooperatively with Civitas: An International Civic Education Exchange Program, which is administered by the Center for Civic Education and supported by the United States Department of Education and the United States Information Agency. Recognizing the opportunity to share ideas on civic education, Civitas linked the DAC to the Social Studies Development Center at Indiana University,<sup>24</sup> which has a reputation for its leadership in citizenship education.

Our introduction to Latvian civic education began in February, 1997<sup>25</sup> when Dr. John J. Patrick, Director of the Social Studies Development Center and the ERIC Clearinghouse for the Social Studies at Indiana University, invited us to meet with a delegation of Latvian civic educators. The delegation, led by Guntars Catlaks and Valts Sarma of the Democracy Advancement Center in Riga, included professors and teachers. Our role was to exchange ideas regarding history education, economic education, and assessment of student learning. We came away from this meeting with an initial understanding of the issues facing Latvian civic educators: a multi-ethnic state, shortages of curricular materials, teachers whose world-view understandings of society are grounded in Marxist ideology, and schools that commonly divide the student population along ethnic divisions. Our initial visit with our Latvian colleagues was quickly followed by programs on the campuses of Purdue University and Illinois State University. At Purdue, seminars centered on the preparation of civic educators in a large American university with courses divided between a School of Education and a School of Liberal Arts. At Illinois State University, the History Department assumes the primary responsibility for the preparation

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<sup>24</sup> Center for Civic Education, Civitas: An International Civic Education Exchange Program, <http://www.civiced.org/international.html>

<sup>25</sup> While we may have had some general knowledge about the Baltic region and Latvia, we quickly realized how history textbooks in the United States have largely overlooked the countries and peoples who inhabit the Baltic sea coastline. The paucity of information in textbooks about the Baltic states is noted by Gordon R. Mork who notes that we may "lose track of the smaller states and peoples entirely." His assessment of U.S. textbook treatment may be found in Gordon R. Mork, "The Baltic Region in U.S. Western Civilization Textbooks," *Teaching History* 17 (Spring, 1992): 11. Mork's essay in *Teaching History* was accompanied by another paper written by Silvia Oispuu. Her essay, "Teaching History in Estonia, Yesterday and Today," had been presented to the International Society for History Didactics at Leck, Germany, September 9-12, 1991. The Oispuu and Mork essays were published together in *Teaching History* under the heading "The Baltic States: History and History Education."

of history and social science teachers and emphasizes that the discipline of history provides an important framework for citizenship education.

In August, 1997, we were part of a United States delegation led by John Patrick. Our work in Latvia spanned ten days. We arrived in Riga on August 18 and departed on August 28. Those days were filled with meetings and, most importantly, opportunities for informal conversation. Both the meetings and conversations contributed to the issues facing Latvian educators as they confront the dilemmas associated with citizenship education.

From August 18 to August 28, 1997, we had an opportunity to discuss issues associated with citizenship education in Latvia. In the five years of its existence, the DAC has had three directors, Rusins Albertins, Guntars Catlaks, and Valts Sarma.<sup>26</sup> The DAC arranged meetings for us with university and public school administrators and teachers. University visits included meetings with the Rector, Professor J. Zakis, and faculty from the University of Latvia and the Rector, faculty, and students from the Liepaja Pedagogical University. Professor Daina Bara of the University of Latvia arranged our meeting with the Rector and faculty at Latvia's leading academic institution. The issues discussed in these meetings included the change to instruction in the Latvian language required by the University of Latvia in Riga, the education of civic educators in the departments of history, economics, and education, and the need for curriculum materials in the schools. In Liepaja, we met with a large delegation of teachers in a local school. Arijs Orlovskis, a professor at Liepaja Pedagogical University and a director of a local branch of the Democracy Advancement Center, organized this meeting. Professor Orlovskis had established a library containing civic education materials translated from English into Latvian. Teachers raised several issues, which centered on the shortage of curricular materials for teacher preparation and students, the high dropout rate for male students, and the large number of students that teachers worked with every day. The sentiments of these teachers were repeated in a meeting with administrators and teachers held at Hanza High School in Riga. The principal of the school and his two female administrative assistants generously spent several hours with our delegation. Following a tour of the building, we discussed the issues he and his assistants faced. Their central concern regarding teachers was the issue of low salaries and heavy teaching loads in terms of classes taught and number of students in those classes. Teachers were compelled to teach additional classes or seek additional employment if they were to make a living wage. Almost equal in importance is the shortage of curriculum materials for students in civic education. The lecture method of instruction is the traditional teaching strategy in Latvian secondary schools. However, the strategy depends on a teacher possessing a wealth of knowledge, an ability to organize and present materials in an interesting manner, and student attentiveness. The 1991 revolution in Latvian politics and government was not accompanied by a revolution in the knowledge and disposition possessed by teachers. Latvian political education prior to 1991 consisted primarily in Marxist political-economic theory. Teachers, without new books and other curricular materials, revert to what they were taught prior to 1991.

During our visit to the Hanza high school we had the opportunity to observe a workshop

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<sup>26</sup> John J. Patrick and Valts Sarma, "Civic Education and the Advancement of Democracy in Latvia," *The International Journal of Social Education* (In press, Summer 1998): 8-9. At the time of our visit to Latvia, Gunatars Catlaks was the Director (1994-1997) of the DAC. He has since taken a leadership position at the Soros Foundation Office in Riga. Valts Sarma, who was an assistant to Catlak, is now the Director of the DAC.



for teachers. Vija Rudina, Deputy Principal of Aizkraukle Secondary School, conducted the workshop with fifty teachers. Rudina, who had been part of the original Latvian delegation that had visited Indiana University, Purdue University, and Illinois State University, was instructing teachers in cooperative learning strategies. We noted that of fifty teachers in the workshop only one teacher was a male. This disproportion symbolizes the problems endemic in Latvian education among both its teaching and student population.

Of primary concern to Latvian educators is the high dropout rate of males prior to the completion of secondary school. The school authorities believe the availability of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs combined with a relatively low value placed on education results in this high dropout rate. While this situation may affect the employment future of these young men, it most certainly results in a diminished knowledge base in history and government. In other words, it raises the question as to whether the high citizen participation rate, as measured by voter participation immediately following independence, will be sustained by the next generation of young Latvians.

### **Project Citizen**

*Project Citizen* involves students in the creation of a public policy to address a concern they have. The concern may be defined in local or national terms. In order to create this policy students must engage in inquiry through which they assess the quality of information and use warranted information in order to create their policy. Students working with their teachers are involved in the following process: First, they identify a problem for study. Second, they gather information from a variety of sources. Third, they examine alternative solutions. Fourth, they develop their own public policy. And finally, they develop a plan for action. Students create a four-panel poster along with a portfolio of their writings and information. They present orally their proposal to a panel of judges selected from the community. The judges listen to the presentation of the students and ask follow-up questions. At the conclusion, students reflect back on their policy within the framework of the constitution and laws of the country.

*Project Citizen* is a social science approach to citizenship education. Its goals are both in terms of social science content and in pedagogical process. It seeks to enhance students' knowledge of economics, political science, and other social sciences as they apply knowledge to the creation of a social policy. Of equal importance is the changing role of the teacher from being the dispenser of knowledge through lecture to that of being a collaborator and mentor in social science research. While history is not at the forefront, it does serve as a key source of knowledge informing students of the antecedent conditions that led up to the problem. At this point in the initial stage of teacher education, the DAC has introduced *Project Citizen* into the Latvian language<sup>27</sup> and has intended it for forms six, seven, and eight.

### **Problems for Latvian Civic Education**

The establishment of democratic education programs in schools is a very difficult task. In the United States our own research indicates that civic education courses – history,

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<sup>27</sup> *We the People . . . Project Citizen* (Calabasas, 1996, 1997) and *Projekts Pilsonis* (Riga, 1998).

government, economics – are frequently viewed by school administrators, parents and students, and even teachers themselves as being relatively unimportant when compared to mathematics, sciences, and courses in vocational subjects.<sup>28</sup> If this is true in a country united for over two hundred years under a republican government, civic education in Latvia – a country whose history in the twentieth century is marked by the establishment of a republic in 1922 and the “interruption” of that government by the occupation from 1940 to 1991 and the ethnic divisions that accompanied that occupation – faces a far more difficult task. Recent experiences in the Baltic republics stirred the emotions and opportunities for democracy, but the nature of Latvia’s location on the Baltic Sea, its legacy of foreign occupation that spans centuries, and the influx of a multi-ethnic population will make it difficult for Latvia to sustain its democratic impulses

Paul Gagnon gives history a special role in civic education. Gagnon argues convincingly that history, especially shared historical experiences, provide a “judgment”<sup>29</sup> for civic education. He further determines that historical knowledge is the precondition for political intelligence, that it provides a furniture of the mind.<sup>30</sup> Gagnon, a professor of history at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, has worked extensively for the National Council for History Education (NCHE) in the United States. He and others on the commission of NCHE have helped teachers organize the content of history around Vital Themes and Narratives, and they have helped in the instruction of history by identifying as entry points into the past historians’ habits of mind.<sup>31</sup>

History, undoubtedly, lays a foundation of knowledge for civic education. In the process it poses an intriguing question: What kind of knowledge will prevail? Carl Becker asserted some 80 years ago that the value of history was less scientific than moral. Becker wrote: “[B]y liberalizing the mind, by deepening the sympathies, by fortifying the will, history enables us to control, not society, but ourselves – a much more important thing.” Noting the potential to history, the eventual president of the American Historical Association observed that history “prepares us to live more humanely in the present and to meet rather than to foretell the future.”<sup>32</sup> Becker also pointed out in the 1930s while president of the AHA that history is “the *memory* of things said and done.”<sup>33</sup> He demanded an imaginative reconstruction of the past on the part of the historian. Of concern, especially to civic education, is what “imaginative reconstruction” will emerge as Latvian history.

In a recent paper presented in Washington, D.C. to the National Council for History Education, William H. McNeill reminds us that in the West we tend to learn and teach history

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<sup>28</sup> Lynn R. Nelson, Frederick D. Drake, and Anne Pooler, “Earthquake in South Dakota: Does the Controversy Surrounding National Standards Matter?” *The New England Journal of History* 53 (Winter 1996-97): 22-32 and Lynn R. Nelson and Frederick D. Drake, “Secondary Teachers’ Reactions to the New Social Studies,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 22 (Winter 1994): 44-73.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Gagnon, “Why Study History?” *Atlantic Monthly* (November 1988): 43-44.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Gagnon, “History’s Role in Civic Education: The precondition for Political Intelligence,” 241-262. Reprinted from Chapter 1 and Appendix in Education for Democracy Project, American Federation of Teachers, *Democracy’s Half-Told Story* (Washington, D.C., 1989), 15-22 and 160-172.

<sup>31</sup> See Paul Gagnon and the Bradley Commission on History in Schools (eds.), *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education* (New York, 1989), 25-27.

<sup>32</sup> Carl Becker, *Dial* 59 (September 2, 1915): 148.

<sup>33</sup> Carl Becker, *Everyman His own Historian* (New York, 1935), 235.

as part of identification formation. McNeill notes that history “got into the classroom to make nations out of peasants, out of localities, out of the human raw material that existed in the countries of Europe and in the not so very United States as well.”<sup>34</sup> Traditionally, national histories have served this purpose.

History exposes us to changing interpretations and simultaneously provides a foundation and usefulness which forces us as a community – national and global – to think through the acts of remembrance. Events in Latvia during the 1980s and 1990s resurrected Latvian *memories* of the past and served to inspire Latvians in their democratic experience. Those who demonstrated on 14 June 1987 by marching to the Freedom Monument in the center of Riga, for example, remembered the past injustices of Stalinist terror. Patriotic fervor and identity ignited the Latvian people’s commitment to become a nation. That moment in time captured how democracy held meaning and helped bring together an ethnic community that was concerned over human and civil rights, religious freedom, the environment, and defense against the abuse of state power.

Political suppression held a firm grip on Latvia for over fifty years, and once the fear dissipated, autonomous and civil political activity flourished. Voluntary associations and “citizens’ committees” contributed to separate the Baltic states from the Soviet Union and to end Soviet rule in Latvia and its neighbors, Estonia and Lithuania. The activism and popular enthusiasm for Latvian independence demonstrated that Latvia possessed important characteristics of a civil society, an idea so essential to a liberal democracy. Yet, a liberal democracy must be distinguished from two other models of democracy, a populist democracy and a social democracy. A populist, or communitarian, democracy stresses participation of its citizens in a constant interaction with the elected legislature. The public good is emphasized in a populist model of democracy. In a liberal democracy the primary emphasis is for a limited government to protect the rights of the individual rather than emphasize public good. A social democracy, unlike a liberal democracy, encourages an active, strong government to bring about the good of the public by way of regulations.<sup>35</sup> Latvia has tendencies toward a populist democracy with the parliament supreme over the other two branches of government. Critics of this democratic model caution against populist democracy because of its predisposition to majority tyranny.<sup>36</sup> The implications for protecting minority rights, particularly Russians in Latvia, are enormous.<sup>37</sup>

Democratic development in Latvia and all of Central and Eastern Europe, for that matter, has spurred an interest in an old idea -- the importance of a civil society. The existence of civil society, that is the idea that voluntary associations serve to mediate the power of the state,

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<sup>34</sup> William H. McNeill, Symposium at the Library of Congress, March 1-2, 1996, as reprinted in *Occasional Papers of the National Council for History Education, Inc.* (September 1996): 1.

<sup>35</sup> The authors have used the ideas of John J. Patrick and David Held to distinguish three models of democracy. See John J. Patrick, “Principles of Democracy for the Education of Citizens in Former Communist Countries of Central and Eastern Europe,” in Richard C. Remy and Jacek Strzemieczny, eds., *Building Civic Education for Democracy in Poland* (Washington, D.C., 1996), 6-7 and David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford, 1987).

<sup>36</sup> John J. Patrick, “Principles of Democracy for the Education of Citizens in Former Communist Countries of Central and Eastern Europe,” 11.

<sup>37</sup> Discussion Forum, “The Russians in the Baltic Republics: Strangers in Their Own Homes,” *New Times* (24.90): 31-34 and “Is It Easy to be a Russian in Riga?” *Nre Times International* (February, 1993): 7-9.

prevent the atomization of the individual, and provide meaningful communities for individuals to formulate and accomplish their purposes,<sup>38</sup> is important for democracy in Latvia as elsewhere to thrive. The establishment of Latvia as a sovereign, independent state in 1991 was merely a beginning to the formation of Latvia as a civil society. A recent study of Latvia reports that “grass-roots” political activism flourished in Latvia in 1987 and beyond and that it is “crucial for the transition from a Communist system.”<sup>39</sup> Civil society is both a precondition and dimension of a democracy that flourishes.

In the past decade, Latvia has taken steps to establish its independence, restore its democratic Constitution of 1922, and affirm its transition to a democracy in its government, society and culture. Along with nationhood that proclaims a belief in democracy comes the responsibility to create democratic citizens. Alexis de Tocqueville admonishes all of us in his work, *Democracy in America*, that “among democratic nations, each new generation is a new people.”<sup>40</sup> Merely to establish statehood does not guarantee that the state will initially be democratic nor that the state will continue as a constitutional democracy in the future. Education, while not a guarantee for democracy, is certainly necessary to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of citizens.

The fragile nature of democracy is difficult to maintain even in societies defined by the maintenance of democratic institutions over a long period of time. However, it is even more problematic in societies where democratic institutions have never existed or have been interrupted over a long period of time. This problem is exacerbated when teachers have no experience with the content nor the instructional methods associated with education for democracy; it is even more problematic if citizens lose patience with their democratic experience in a market system. The Democracy Advancement Center (DAC) in Latvia has recognized the conjunction between “well-educated citizens and democratic well being” and has determined “that reform of the curricula and teaching methods of their schools is at least as important as restoring their 1922 Constitution and reconstructing their political system.”<sup>41</sup> New civic education programs under development, such as the Democracy Advancement Center in Latvia, have a formidable task before them. In the ruins of communism, with its shattered economy, distorted values, and tainted institutions, democracy is neither simple, guaranteed, nor is it at all clear the shape democracy will take in light of the changing conditions in Latvia and Eastern Europe. Additionally, the postmodern critique of democratic institutions and practices may prove to alter the civic education program, which is currently founded on the Enlightenment principles of a liberal democracy. The direction that democracy takes in Latvia is yet to be decided; the curricular and pedagogical reform efforts of the Democracy Advancement Center will require herculean efforts.

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<sup>38</sup> While we have provided own definition of civil society, several scholars have considered this idea thoughtfully and in depth. See a summary of definitions of civil society in Charles F. Bahmuller, “Civil Society and Democracy Reconsidered,” in Laura A. Pinhey and Candace L. Boyer, eds., *Resources on Civic Education for Democracy: International Perspectives Yearbook No. 2* (ERIC, 1997), 11-21.

<sup>39</sup> Rasma Karklins, *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy*, 83.

<sup>40</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* as quoted in Albert Shanker, “Education and Democratic Citizenship: Where We Stand,” in Laura Pinhey and Candace L. Boyer, eds., *Resources on Civic Education for Democracy: International Perspectives* (ERIC, 1997), 5.

<sup>41</sup> John J. Patrick and Valts Sarma, “Civic Education and the Advancement of Democracy in Latvia,” *The International Journal of Social Education*, 8.

## Abstract

History has a powerful capacity as an integrative discipline to help students understand the relationships of people, space, and time. For citizenship education, history has the potential to provide a "furniture of the mind" for citizens participating in a democracy. A thorough understanding of history is necessary for an individual to exercise judgment in analyzing political issues. An immersion in history forces the individual to reject simplistic answers to issues of the past and problems of the present. While history provides a furniture of the mind for civic education, it also has the potential to raise animosities among national and ethnic groups. This paper examines the recent democratic efforts of the Democracy Advancement Center in Riga, Latvia to foster citizenship education in the Republic of Latvia. The Democracy Advancement Center in Riga has taken the lead in civic education and works closely with Civitas, an international organization promoting democracy through political science education. The DAC has chosen to organize its work around a curriculum, *Project Citizen*, which is issues-oriented rather than history-oriented. This paper summarizes to this point in time the recent efforts of the Democracy Advancement Center in Riga, Latvia, in concert with international partners, to initiate programs concerning content and pedagogy in Latvian schools.

Dr. Lynn R. Nelson is the Director of the James F. Ackerman Center for Democratic Citizenship at Purdue University and is an Associate Professor of Social Studies Education.

Dr. Frederick D. Drake is the Director of the Undergraduate Program in History and Social Sciences Education at Illinois State University and is an Assistant Professor of History.