



***“Do former students of CSPE have a higher level of active and participatory citizenship than individuals who did not take CSPE?”***

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## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>ACCI:</b>	Active Citizenship Composite Indicator.
<b>CSPE:</b>	Civic, Social and Political Education.
<b>DES:</b>	Department of Education and Skills.
<b>EU:</b>	European Union.
<b>NCCA:</b>	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
<b>SPSS:</b>	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.
<b>TD:</b>	Teachta Dála (Member of Parliament)
<b>UK:</b>	United Kingdom.
<b>US:</b>	United States.

## Introduction

Civic education in the classroom has been an ever present in Western societies since the classical era in Athens. Since then, civic education as an agent of political socialization, has attempted to instil the political values a society sees as appropriate for their children. In classical Athens the responsibilities of the citizen were paramount. The rights of the citizen dominated civic education courses in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the decline in political participation and knowledge of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, civic education began to stress both rights and responsibilities. In the West this is widely termed active and participatory citizenship.

The civic education course CSPE has been a mandatory course for Irish students in the junior cycle in post-primary school since 1997. The primary aim of CSPE is to foster active and participatory citizenship. Before the former Fianna Fáil led government left office it produced a report stating that resources for CSPE and a new leaving cycle course in civic education should be introduced to stem the apathetic political tide in Ireland (Taskforce on Active Citizenship Report 2007). The current Irish government have decided to shelve this agenda and when the new junior cycle is rolled out in September 2014 it will reintroduce CSPE as an optional subject. At a point when the Irish civic education course is being downgraded, I ask the question do former students of CSPE have a higher level of active and participatory citizenship than individuals who did not take CSPE.

The main research question is broken down in to four sub questions which will go to answering the overall question. These questions are as follows;

1. Are former students of CSPE more active in the world of formal politics than individuals who did not take CSPE?

2. Are former students of CSPE more active in the world of informal politics than individuals who did not take CSPE?
  
3. Are former students of CSPE more active in their local community than individuals who did not take CSPE?
  
4. Are the values that active and participatory citizenship are built on, more strongly held by former students of CSPE than individuals who did not take CSPE?

The structure of this paper is as follows. The literature review will include a section on political socialization, civic education, civic education in Ireland and measuring active citizenship. The section on political socialization will place civic education in its wider theoretical setting. I will discuss the field of political socialization and how this area of research has evolved since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Different agents of political socialization have been theorised to have the dominant effect on the political outlook and actions of the individual. The role of education as agent of political socialization is discussed.

The evolution of the role of a civic education will then be addressed. The theoretical underpinnings of a civic education will be accentuated with empirical research to stress the importance given to it. The aims of CSPE will be discussed and how these aims can be correlated to Hoskins (2006a) and Hoskins et al (2006b) work on measuring active citizenship.

The methodology section will explain the research methods employed. Quantitative research was used in the form of a survey where indicators for active and participatory

citizenship were derived from the literature on CSPE (NCCA 2005) and the work of Hoskins (2006a) and Hoskins et al (2006b). The formation of the population of interest and how the survey was implemented and analysed will also be examined.

The research findings section has six subsections. There will be a socio-demographic segment followed by five sections analysing the results of different parts of the survey. These are the Political Life Dimension, the Civil Society Dimension, the Community Participation Dimension, the Democratic Values Dimension and a Political Socialization piece.

The research findings will be followed with a conclusion and an appendix which includes the survey instrument used to gather data on active and participatory citizenship.

# **Literature Review**

## **Political Socialization**

Political Socialization theory asserts that “the values and assumptions people hold about politics are acquired” (Shively: 2008) and that these values and assumptions are acquired through different agents of political socialization. These agents include parents, the immediate family, peers, the media, political and external events at all levels (local, national and global) and, of particular relevance to this research, education. The popularization of political socialization theory from the 1950’s through to the late 1970’s was fuelled with the rise in interest of behavioural psychology and an increasing understanding that political behaviour was learned. During this period the field of political socialization was dominated by American academics. At various points in the research different agents of political socialization, while all being deemed to be relevant to the political values and attitudes an individual acquires, have been deemed to be more influential than others. The earlier research initially found that the transmission of political values and attitudes from parents and the immediate family to the individual had a high positive correlation. Overtime, due to more rigorous and extensive research, the evidence of this relationship diminished as other agents of political socialization were found to have a more significant effect on the political values and attitudes of the individual. Specifically the role of peers, the media, political and external events and the role of education were beginning to be given a greater weight as agents of political socialization. At the end of the 1970’s, the field stagnated, but in the last two decades the field of political socialization has enjoyed a rebirth (Niemi and Hepburn 1995).

## *The Family*

At the end of the 1960's, the relative importance of the family as an agent of political socialization began to be questioned. Up to this point though there existed a wide range of literature to suggest that the family had the influential effect on the political attitudes and values of an individual. A summary of existing political socialization literature by Hyman (1959) concluded that there were high transmission rates of political attitudes from parents to children. Hyman states "Foremost among agents of socialisation into politics is the family" (Hyman 1959:69). A study conducted by Maccoby et al (1954) interviewed 339 people aged 21-24 directly after the 1952 US presidential elections. The authors found that the political preferences of the individuals being interviewed were significantly more in line with their parents than other people in their lives. Research conducted by McClosky and Dahlgren (1959) added additional weight to the body of work supporting the dominance of the immediate family in the political socialization of individuals. The study found that "the indoctrination, retention, or shift of party loyalties is significantly related to, and often determined by, family and other primary bonds" (McClosky and Dahlgren 1959:776).

Beginning in the mid-60's the evidence for the transmission of political values and attitudes between the individual and their immediate family started to be eroded. Jennings and Niemi (1968) conducted an inquiry on the transmission of political values from parents to adolescent children. The study evaluated interviews of 1669 seniors in high school spread across 97 schools. Either one or both parents of the adolescents interviewed were then interviewed and the distributions of the child and parent or parents political attitudes were then compared. The authors found that the previous models of political socialization of the individual which put the immediate family at the forefront were in need of serious retooling. Findings suggested that the transmission of party preference were positive and significant, but not to the extent that previous research had suggested. This particular finding was an

exception and “The data suggest that with respect to a range of other attitude objects the correspondences vary from, at most, moderate support to virtually no support” (Jennings and Niemi 1968:183). A later article conducted by Connell (1972) reviewed the political socialization literature, including the literature reviewed by Hyman, finding that many of the studies which found high positive correlations between the political attitudes of individuals and their immediate families were methodologically unsound. Connell concluded, in line with Jennings and Niemi (1968), that the transmission of party preference was positive and statistically significant but that all other political attitudes showed small or statistically insignificant transmission rates. A study by Friedman et al (1972) found similarly that while party preference between the individual and the family seem to be positive, the transmission of other political attitudes was negligible. Further research throughout the 1970’s continued in support of the thesis that the immediate family as an agent of political socialization was relevant but not as influential as previous studies had suggested. Niemi and Sobieszek (1977) captured this emerging consensus vividly when stating “Young people are indeed reflections of their parents; however, they are pale reflections, especially beyond the realm of partisanship and voting” (Niemi and Sobieszek 1977:218).

### ***Peers, Media and Events***

At the point where the immediate family as the dominating agent of political socialization began to be questioned, other agents were being introduced to the field and have since that point become established. The effect of peers, the media and political and external events have all been theorised to be important agents of political socialization, with like the immediate family, finding mixed empirical results. Coleman (1961) and the Presidents (US) Science Advisory Council (1972) theorised that the relationship between peers and the youth

culture which emanates from it played a significant role in the development of political attitudes and behaviour. Chaffee et al (1976) concluded that the mass media was a vital source of political information and development for young people and had replaced the parent as the major source of political learning. During this intense period of research major political and external events had occurred. The assassination of John F. Kennedy, the Cold War, the war in Vietnam and the Watergate scandal were all types of events which were theorised to have had a profound effect of the political values and attitudes of young people. This hypothesis was confirmed (Jaros and Kolson 1974) and today it seems almost obvious that major political and external events have as significant a part to play as an agent of political socialization as parents, education, peers and the media.

### ***Education***

The role of education as an agent of political socialization has been viewed through two perspectives. The first is through specific civic education courses which currently aim to foster active and participatory citizenship. This perspective will be addressed later in the piece. The second perspective is the effect of a general formal education on the transmission of political values and attitudes to the individuals who pass through them. In the West this of course is, increasingly, almost everyone in a population between the ages of approximately 5 and 18 (Dawson and Prewitt 1969).

Many goals of formal education have been theorised. Among them are the goals of social efficiency, which sees the role of the school as a tool to produce the human capital needed for a structured economy. Another is the goal of social mobility, which sees education as a consumer good which is to be leveraged for social attainment. The goal of democratic equality sees the school as a place where a vision of the better society can be engendered

(Labaree 1997). What all of these goals have in common is the transmission of cultural norms and expectations associated with membership in society. These acquired social skills are regarded as necessary for the prevalence of the relatively stable democratic societies with which we have become accustomed. This theoretical perspective suggests that formal education is essential as an agent of political socialization.

Education as an important process in the socialization of political attitudes and values coincided with the questioning of the dominant discourse of the immediate family. Hess and Torney concluded that “the public school is the most important and effective instrument of political socialization in the United States” (Hess and Torney 1967:221), while Dawson and Prewitt (1969) also found positively for formal education teaching political values and attitudes. Banks and Roker (1994) demonstrated how the educational experience can play a significant role in the political socialization of the individual. Surveys and interviews of political values and attitudes were administered to school girls aged 15-18 in a private school and a public school in the north of England. Both schools drew from a similar demographic while also having almost identical exam performance. Parents were also surveyed and interviewed so as to control for their political attitudes. Clear differences occurred between the students of the schools, with the girls from the private school showing a higher level of interest in politics, a more positive attitude towards the political process, a much greater knowledge of the institutions of government and a significantly higher likelihood of future political activity. The authors concluded that when other agents of political socialization were controlled for, the role of education plays an important role in the political attitudes and values of the individual as shown by the statistically significant divergence between both research groups.

Dee (2004) conducted a more recent study on the civic returns to a general education. Dee concluded “that educational attainment, both at the post-secondary and the secondary

levels, has large and independent effects on most measures of civic engagement and attitudes” (Dee 2004: 1717).

Hoskins et al (2008) conducted a study on formal education and its impact on active citizenship behaviour. Using a large sample including 19 European countries from the 2006/2007 European Social Survey, the authors ran regressions and found that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between a formal education and active citizenship. Specifically the authors found that “the number of years in education of the respondent is positively and significantly correlated with an individual’s engagement in Protest and social activities, being a member of a political party and voting” (Hoskins et al 2008: 19). This study was one of the largest conducted to date to test the relationship between a general education and political attitudes and values and is important in displaying the relevance of education as an agent of political socialization.

Political Socialization theory is a vital research area which allows a more in-depth understanding of how an individual’s political attitudes and values evolve. As this field has matured over the past 70 years, academics are increasingly coming to the conclusion that all the agents which affect the individual are relevant, that none play a significantly more important role than the others and that controlling for the effects of the others can be attempted but is a very difficult process. As levels of political participation consistently decrease and cynicism in the political process is on the rise in the West, this leaves policy makers with the task of reversing this tide so as to secure social cohesion and democratic legitimacy. This task can be addressed through various avenues but the most practical one for the policy maker and a commonly explored method is through the educational system and specifically through a course on civic education.

## **Civic Education**

The specific goals of a civic education change in different time periods and in various places. In classical Athens the role of a civic education was to socialize children to the responsibilities of a citizen and impress upon them the primary importance of this to sustaining a democracy. This republican education has been repeated many times and most memorably in the decades following the French and American revolutions. In the majority of Western states during the 20<sup>th</sup> century a civic education was one founded on ideas of liberalism and the rights of the citizen. Participation with the formal institutions of government was encouraged but not demanded. In the last 20 years an ever increasing concern has developed with the decreasing levels of political participation in Western populations and with the minimal engagement of the young. This democratic legitimacy concern has been coupled with the movement from more traditional to modern societies. Homogenous communities have been replaced with ethnically, culturally and attitudinally diverse societies. Both issues have fuelled the emergence of a new form of civic education which tries to develop an active and participatory citizen. Both republican and liberal schools are employed. The rights of the individual and the collective are embraced while emphasising the responsibility of an individual to be active within the collective for a society to flourish (Heater 2004).

Crick (1999) in *The Presuppositions of Citizenship Education* furthers the argument and elaborates on the views of why a civic education is an important condition for free societies. The first view that Crick addresses is what are the risks associated with a society, where a proclivity for active citizenship does not exist. Maybe there has not been a tradition of active citizenship in this particular state or maybe there has not been a civic education in school which may create a disposition for active citizenship. Either way, in times of

economic crisis or conflict where an active and engaged citizenry is needed to assuage these problems no support or engagement is forthcoming from a passive, disengaged citizenry. In less extreme times what might occur is an alienated youth which are then more actively engaged or certainly more disposed to anti-social behaviour. The other view that Crick illustrates is a 'calmer view' and one maybe more pertinent. As citizens, in our day to day lives politics cannot be avoided. Especially in Western liberal states, every part of our lives is in some way related to decisions that come from political institutions and particularly the government. What political institutions and governments can and cannot do is informed by the structure of the political institutions and peoples beliefs. Therefore as politics cannot be avoided, an understanding of the political institutions that shape our lives and how we can shape these institutions (through active and participatory citizenship) is essential. As such a civic education is necessary for a free society where the space between the state and the individual is one where informed citizens can come together to shape society (Crick 1999).

The civics course which was introduced in Britain at the turn of the millennium was largely shaped by the work of Crick in civic education. It embraced a course based on an understanding of the political and legal institutions of the country and how an individual could engage in civil society to shape it. It recommended a fundamental understanding of the concept of active citizenship but also learning by doing, getting actively engaged in the community that the school is situated. This same learning methodology was the approach of CSPE in Ireland. The course methodology and aims then of both the UK and Irish approach are based in theories of citizenship as an active and participatory one and are informed by civic education theory in the manner of Cricks (Crick 2002 & 2007).

In the Irish context little empirical work exists to test the relationship between a civic education and any resulting affect on levels of active and participatory citizenship. The Irish Taskforce on Active Citizenship, motivated by the worrying decrease in the participation of

Irish citizens in representative politics and by the changing nature of Irish society and what that may mean to social cohesion, produced a report outlining the methods it felt would increase active and participatory citizenship. One of the reports key findings was that education is a vital component in ensuring an active and participatory citizenship and one recommendation was to “strengthen the status and role of the CSPE programme in the junior cycle and introduce a citizenship programme as an exam subject at senior cycle” (Taskforce on Active Citizenship Report 2007:21).

Further empirical studies have been completed assessing the returns to active and participatory citizenship from a civic education. For the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the seminal study carried out by Langton and Jennings (1968) was referenced to summarise the lack of statistically significant findings on the relationship between a civic education and returns to political attitudes and action. More recent attempts to measure this relationship have coincided with the increased rhetoric and availability of civic education courses and there is now an increasing amount of academic literature to suggest that a significant positive relationship is to be found. Denver and Hands (1990) used data derived from surveys on political attitudes and participation across 154 schools and colleges in England and Wales. The authors measured the difference in attitudes and participation in 16 and 17 year olds who take politics as an A level course and those who do not. The study found that students who took this civic education course were significantly more knowledgeable about politics, in terms of institutions, issues and ideology and were more likely to talk about and participate in politics. As these courses were optional, one issue encountered by the authors was the likelihood that students with a predilection for this behaviour would choose a politics course. This methodological issue was overcome by comparing the students over two years. The authors found that as the amount of civic education increased, the knowledge and

participation of the politics students also enlarged thus confirming a return to a course in civic education.

Simon and Merrill (1998), Galton (2001), Morgan and Streb (2002) and Ruget (2006) are further empirical studies which have found a positive relationship between civic education courses and returns to levels of active and participatory citizenship. These studies have seen a shift away from the mixed and negative empirical results of the past. The researchers for all these positive studies stress however the difficult nature in controlling for other agents of political socialization. The authors also concede that this movement towards a positive relationship is embryonic and further more extensive studies will be needed to explore the effects of a civic education.

## **Civic Education in Ireland**

Civics as a post-primary school subject was first introduced in Ireland in 1966 by then minister for education Donagh O'Malley. This version of a civic education, based around the institutions of government, largely remained in Ireland until 1996. At this point a pilot syllabus of CSPE was then introduced to 139 schools which led to the subject being formally added to the junior cycle (the first three years of post-primary school) by Niamh Breathneach, the minister for education. Beginning in 1997 CSPE became a mandatory subject for all first year students with the first examination of this course taking place by the year 2000 (NCCA 2005). Beginning in 2014 a new junior cycle will be rolled out by the DES which will return CSPE in post-primary schools to a non-mandatory subject while still largely keeping the syllabus employed in the previous sixteen years (DES 2012).

### ***The Aims of CSPE***

The core aim of the CSPE curriculum is to foster active participatory citizens. The fundamental aim of CSPE then has six aims derived from this which are to be approached through an “active exploration and study of citizenship at all levels in the context of contemporary social and political issues” (NCCA 2005:2). The first aim is to engender an awareness of a student's life in terms of the civic, social and political and create an understanding of how important an active and participatory citizenry is to the country and the student's communities. The second aim of CSPE is to develop the tools which will allow students to engage in society as active and participatory citizens, while also understanding how to act responsibly in the individual roles they may take on in a democratic society. The third aim is to develop students with the confidence to make a difference as a socially literate individual within a society. The fourth aim of the curriculum is to encourage students to

engage with other people and cultures in a positive, imaginative and empathetic manner. The fifth aim of CSPE is to allow students appropriate critical thinking skills which are founded in a value system based on human rights and responsibilities. The sixth aim of the CSPE curriculum is to develop an understanding and knowledge of the processes of political, social and economic decision-making taking place at all levels of society (NCCA 2005:2).

The DES along with the NCCA clearly, like many developed countries, have in the last twenty years moved away from a civic education based solely on representative democracy and the institutions of government. This shift has been to a civic education where the fostering of an active and participatory citizenship is its primary objective. The aforementioned move has been mirrored at the EU level with an increase in active participatory citizenship seen as central tenant to the major European policy goal of addressing social cohesion. This vision for the European polity is set at Brussels, while each member state can set about achieving it in their own way. This strategy for increased active and participatory citizenship was laid out by the European Commission who then invited academics to propose definitions and then measurements of active and participatory citizenship. This invitation was duly accepted by Hoskins et al (2006b) who developed a framework and indicators for measures of active citizenship (Hoskins et al 2006b & 2009).

## Measuring Active Citizenship

In 2005 the European Commission's Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning instigated a research report called 'Active Citizenship for Democracy', with the aim of defining and creating measures of active citizenship. The primary aim of this research report was framed around the major European Union policy agenda of addressing levels of social cohesion within the European Union. The framework, definitions and indicators, with which Hoskins et al (2006b) derived a composite indicator of how to measure active citizenship, are based on recommendations which emerged from Hoskins (2006a) research report coordinated by the European Commission's Centre for Research and Lifelong Learning. The composite indicator is the Active Citizenship Composite Indicator. The following definition of 'Active Citizenship for Democracy' emerged from the research report (Hoskins 2006a):

*"Participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violence in accordance with human rights and democracy".*

It is clear from this definition of active citizenship, that participation encompasses a much broader sensibility and cannot be understood purely through formal representative political modalities. While the traditional avenues of political participation are included, voting and membership in political parties, this definition includes a much more diverse arena of activities with a guiding ethical foundation. The scope of participation can encompass cultural, social and environmental activities, one-off issue politics, responsible consumption, community based groups or social media activism. It can occur at the local, national, European and international levels. Active citizenship informed by this definition is grounded on the principle of human rights and the rule of law and therefore leads to the exclusion of extremist activism based on violence or intolerance.

Hoskins (2006a) conceptualised active and participatory citizenship by formulating the definition of 'Active Citizenship for Democracy'. Measurable and distinctive elements of this definition were identified in order to operationalize this concept of active and participatory citizenship. Four measurable and distinctive elements were created and were termed 'dimensions of active citizenship'. These dimensions included participation in a Political Life dimension, a Civil Society dimension, a Community dimension and a Values dimension. Each of the four dimensions included sub-dimensions and basic indicators which were principally influenced by the European Social Survey. The dimension of participation in Political Life is one based around conventional and popular ideologies of politics. The indicators for this dimension are ones which indicate participation in representative democracy. Examples of these are voting or membership of a political party. The Civil Society dimension is constructed using indicators which represent political non-governmental action. This can include indicators where citizens with shared interests can collectively act for change without participating through typical representative democratic channels. The dimension of participation in Community Life is based around citizens participating in actions which are less overtly political and that are specifically orientated towards the community. The dimension of Values includes indicators which are founded in the ethos of active and participatory citizenship. This ethos is one based on democracy, human rights, the rule of law and cultural diversity. The four dimensions collectively comprise 63 indicators and the ACCI is constructed from this.

## **Methodology**

The objective of this research project was to gauge the impact of a mandatory civic education course, specifically CSPE. Were the aims of this course achieved? Do the individuals who have taken this course have higher levels of active and participatory citizenship than individuals who did not?

### ***Research Methods***

For this research project I employed quantitative methods. Schutt defines quantitative methods as “methods such as surveys and experiments that record variation in social life in terms of quantities” (Schutt 2012:16). The question of whether to use quantitative, qualitative or a mixed methods approach depends on the type of research which is being undertaken. Quantitative methods are most often employed when the motives for the research are descriptive, explanatory or evaluation. Qualitative methods can be used for all these research types but is most commonly used for exploratory research. The research I carried out is evaluation research. Evaluation research is “research that describes or identifies the impact of social policies or programs” (Schutt 2012:15). As such I felt a quantitative approach using surveys was the most appropriate methodology for the research project.

The other rationale for using quantitative methods in the mode of a survey was due to research which found a definition of active and participatory citizenship in the literature of Hoskins (2006a) and Hoskins et al (2006b and 2009) which was conceptualised in the same manner as the literature on CSPE (NCCA 2005). This definition was then operationalized

into four distinct dimensions, with which the six aims of CSPE can be obviously correlated. I will go through this process later in a section on the survey design. These four dimensions comprise of 63 indicators. These 63 indicators are used to derive the questions I used in the survey and furthered my rationale for using quantitative methods through survey.

### ***Survey Instrument***

Survey research is a popular method of obtaining information for social research due to three key features. Surveys, when constructed and sampled correctly, can be versatile, efficient and generalizable. Surveys are versatile as they can ask questions on almost any topic, while also enabling social scientists to draw on survey results for research which was not the intended objective of the survey. For example, many social scientists use large sample surveys from institutions such as the European Commission to further research with which the survey was not intended. Survey research can take many forms including mail, email or telephone making the survey the most versatile form of gathering information for social research. Efficiency as a feature of survey research is founded by the fact that relative to participant observation, interview and other forms of social research, the survey is usually cheaper, collects data from more people and is less time consuming. Generalizability is often the goal of a social scientist. Surveys as a research method, when properly designed and sampled, lend themselves to drawing conclusions based on a sample to a population (Schutt 2012).

The survey I employed was a cross-sectional survey, where data was collected at one point in time from a sample selected from a larger population of interest. The survey consisted of six sections. The last section was a demographic section. The penultimate section was a ranking question on the agents of political socialization, specifically asking

respondents to state which agents if any they felt had affected their current political values and actions. The first four sections were derived from Hoskins (2006) operationalization of the concept of active and participatory citizenship and will go to answering the four sub questions in the introduction. The results obtained from these questions will go to answering the overall research question. Hoskins constructed four dimensions comprising 63 indicators which were used to construct the ACCI. I decided these indicators and dimensions were an appropriate operationalization of the six aims of CSPE. For example the Dimension of Values includes indicators which are considered at the core of active and participatory citizenship. This ethos is one based on democracy, human rights, the rule of law and cultural diversity. The fifth and sixth aims of CSPE are as follows;

*“encourage students to apply positive attitudes, imagination and empathy in learning about, and encountering, other people and cultures”* (NCCA 2005:2)

*“enable students to develop their critical thinking skills in agreement with a system of values based in human rights and responsibilities”* (NCCA 2005: 2)

The four other aims of CSPE which were discussed in the literature review are as closely correlated with the other three dimensions which Hoskins has derived from the concept of active and participatory citizenship. I named the four sections; Representative Democracy/Political Life Dimension, Protest and Social Change/Civil Society Dimension, Community Participation Dimension and Democratic Values Dimension. The 63 indicators which encompass the four dimensions in Hoskins literature were at the core of the questions which I developed for this survey. Indicators on trade unions were removed as I felt these were not relevant to current Irish society. Indicators on social and community groups were grouped together and questions on social media were added to the indicators as I felt that

social media is increasingly used as a medium for people to engage in active and participatory citizenship

When constructing the questions for the survey I followed the methodological guidelines of Babbie (1990) and Schutt (2012). The majority of the questions are closed-ended questions with mutually exclusive and exhaustive response choices. Likert scales were employed for all of the questions on the ‘Democratic Values Dimension’ section. Section five, named Political Socialization, is a ranking question asking respondents to rank the agents of political socialization discussed in the literature review.

### ***Population of Interest***

A population is “The entire set of individuals or other entities to which study findings are to be generalised” (Schutt 2012: 136). The population of interest then is people who have, and have not taken CSPE. But further refinements are made to the population of interest for the purpose of the sample with the rationale to follow. In Ireland the subject of CSPE has been mandatory since 1997. Therefore I required individuals of at least 30 years of age as very few schools up to that point had CSPE. As such these individuals would have a high probability of having not done the course. Anybody below the age of 30 would have taken the course as by this time it was mandatory. I sampled 10 men and 10 women between the ages of 27-30 who had taken the subject CSPE while in post-primary school. I also sampled 10 men and 10 women between the ages of 30-33 who had not taken the subject CSPE while in post-primary school. The rationale behind this choice of sample subjects was that they are roughly in the same period of the life-cycle. Meaning that there will be little difference between the two groups relative to job status, being single or married, having children or not. In short, both cohorts will have roughly the same type of lifestyle and time to devote or not to

being active and participatory citizens. Individuals between the ages of 27-33 can be categorised in the same generation and are susceptible to the same generational effects. For example Irish citizens under the age of forty have been disproportionately affected by the banking bailout and succeeding austerity measures. Individuals between the ages of 27-33 have been exposed to the same period effect. The period effect is assumed to cut across all generations and the life-cycle (Niemi & Sobieszek 1977 and Niemi & Hepburn 1995). In short there should be little difference between Irish citizens aged 27-33 and as such a large simple random sample from the specified group could be considered generalizable only to that population but would be a significant step in answering the question of whether former students of CSPE have a higher level of active and participatory citizenship than individuals who did not take CSPE.

The survey mode employed while conducting this survey was self-administered. Through convenience and snowball non-probability sampling I was able to obtain 40 respondents from the population in question willing to take the survey. This survey mode can be costly on resources, specifically time, however response rates are often very good with not a lot of questions being skipped. Mail as a survey mode was not available to me. It is relatively cheap and does not use up a lot of time however response rates can be low, people can be slow in getting back to you and may skip questions more often. For the purposes of the survey, I carried out self-administered surveys which made the best use of the resources I had available, got an excellent response rate and did not have to wait for people to post the survey back.

As stated the sampling procedure employed involved convenience and snowball non-probability sampling. Certain people from the population of interest were in classes I attended, my place of work, friends and family. These respondents introduced me to other individuals who could then take the survey, which is snowball sampling. These forms of

sampling procedure are non-probability sampling as the respondents were in no way selected randomly from a sampling frame and all individuals from the population of interest did not have the same probability of being chosen. Probability sampling entails obtaining the sampling frame and employing a system where the sampling units chosen have an equal probability of been chosen. If proper techniques are employed, for example systematic random sampling, the sample may have similar characteristics to the population and results may then be representative. Employing the non-probability sampling methods I used mean that the findings cannot be considered generalizable to the population, but was the best available option as there was limited financial resources and time sensitivity (Schutt: 2012).

I fielded a pilot of the survey with three members of the research project module, three colleagues in work and an editor of a Law review journal. Motivations for this were to obtain feedback on the clarity and formulation of the survey. This informed me whether any questions need to be altered and whether the pilot respondents found the layout of the survey easy to navigate. Feedback I received from the pilot respondents was positive. Some constructive feedback motivated me to change the wording on several questions and simplify the wording for the question on agents of political socialization. All these issues were rectified due to the fielding of the pilot survey (de Vaus 2005).

### ***Data Analysis***

On completion of the surveys the answers given by respondents were uploaded on to a statistical software package. Before this could occur the survey instrument had to be coded as predominantly software packages use numerical data (Babbie 1990). The majority of the questions were answered using yes/no and were coded with 1 or 2. The questions which were

answered using Likert scales were coded from 1-5. The ranking question on agents of political socialization was answered numerically and therefore did not have to be coded.

The statistical software package I used was SPSS. I first had to input the information for each question or variable. When the entire list of variables was completed the coded data from the surveys could then be entered on SPSS. When the data from the surveys was entirely entered on SPSS, each entry had to be rechecked for errors before any analysis of the data could begin.

### *Ethics*

No ethical concerns arose during the conducting of the surveys. All respondents were over the age of 18. All respondents freely agreed to take the survey and were informed that at any point they could stop doing the survey and did not have to answer any question that the respondent did not want to answer. The respondents were informed that no specific identifying data would be on any survey, that their survey would be not shown to anyone else apart from this researcher and that a copy of the special topic with which their data helped complete would be available to the respondent on request (Schutt 2012).

## Research Findings

### *Socio-demographic Variables*

The entire sample consisted of 40 (100%) Irish nationals who all attended post-primary school in Ireland. By design the sample consisted of 20 (50%) females and 20 (50%) males. The age breakdown of the sample are as follows; 3 (7.5%) respondents were age twenty-seven, 5 (12.5%) were age twenty-eight, 8 (20%) were age twenty-nine, 7 (17.5%) were age thirty, 5 (12.5%) were age thirty-one, 6 (15%) were age thirty-two and 6 (15%) respondents were thirty-three (missing data = 0).

*Table 1: Respondents Highest Level of Education*

Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
Some Primary	1	2.5
Leaving Certificate	6	15
Diploma/Certificate	8	20
Primary Degree	11	27.5
Postgraduate/Higher Degree	14	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

The sample breakdown of the respondent's highest level of education attained to that point can be observed in Table 1. The majority of the sample, 25 (62.5%) have completed either a primary or postgraduate/higher degree. The remaining respondents breakdown into 8 (20%) having attained a diploma or certificate, 6 (15%) of the respondent's highest level of education attained is the Leaving Certificate with 1 respondent having completed some primary education (missing data = 0).

The sample breakdown for father's highest level of education achieved are as follows; 3 (7.5%) respondent's fathers highest level of education was some primary, 4 (10%) was primary level or equivalent, 8 (20%) completed as far as the intermediate level , 12 (30%) completed the Leaving Certificate, 4 (10%) was diploma/certificate, 2 (5%) was a primary degree, 4 (10%) was a postgraduate/higher level degree, 1 (2.5%) had no formal education while 1 (2.5%) respondent did not know what level of education their father completed (missing data = 0).

The sample breakdown for mothers highest level of education can be read from Table 2 (missing data = 0).

*Table 2: Mothers Highest Level of Education*

<b>Mother's Highest Level of Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Don't Know</b>	1	2.5
<b>Some Primary</b>	2	5
<b>Primary or Equivalent</b>	2	5
<b>Intermediate/Junior/Group Certificate</b>	12	30
<b>Leaving Certificate</b>	11	27.5
<b>Diploma or Certificate</b>	7	17.5
<b>Primary Degree</b>	5	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

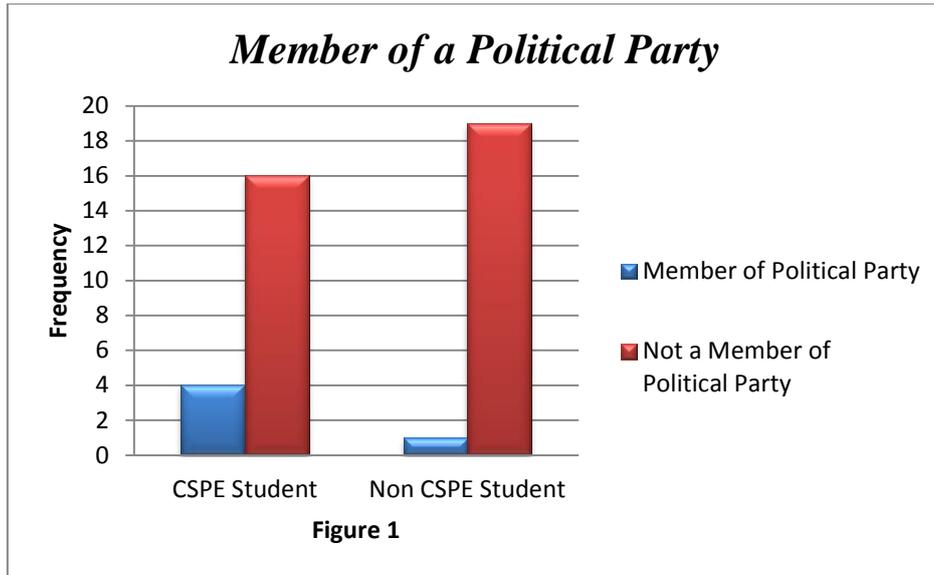
The sample breakdown for the respondent's present principle status is as follows; 36 (90%) of the respondents are currently working for payment or profit. Of the remaining 4 respondents, 2 (5%) are currently unemployed and 2 (5%) of the respondents are presently in education.

### ***Representative Democracy/ Political Life Dimension***

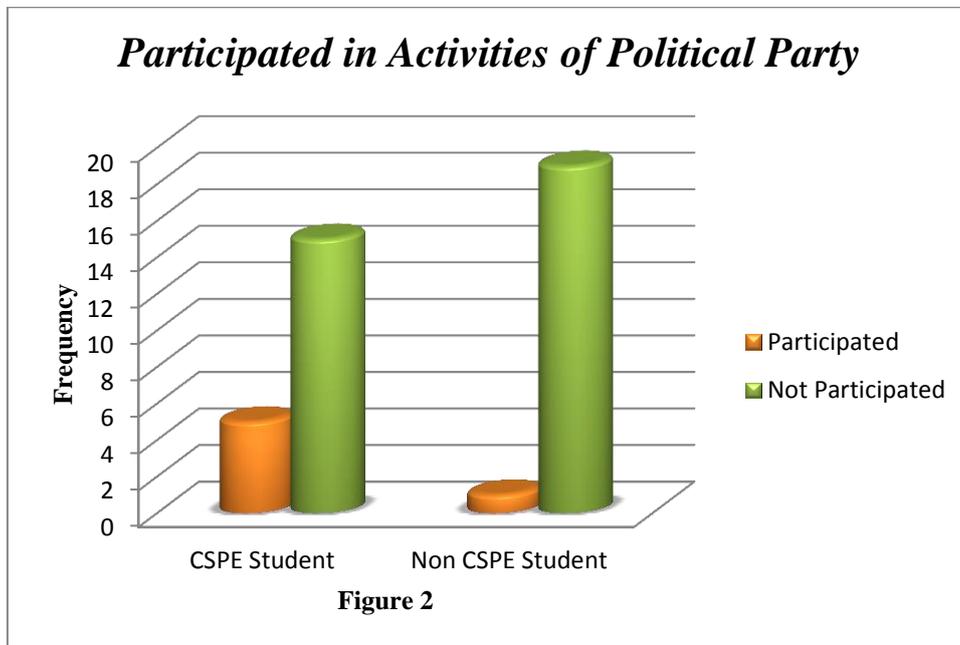
The Political Life Dimension as described by Hoskins et al (2006b) is one based around conventional and popular ideologies of politics. In the aims of CSPE, active and participatory citizenship extends beyond this popular ideology but still places a significant emphasis on a citizen taking part in the usual modalities associated with representative politics (NCCA 2005). I employed 7 indicators for the Political Life Dimension. These were used as the dependent or response variables. The independent or explanatory variable was whether or not the respondent had taken the subject of CSPE during the period that they attended post-primary school. The results from this section will be used to answer whether former students of CSPE are more active in the world of formal politics than individuals who did not take CSPE.

The sample breakdown for whether or not a respondent is currently a member of a political party are as follows and can be read from Figure 1; of the respondents who had taken CSPE, 4 (20%) were currently a member of a political party while 16 (80%) were not. Of the respondents who did not take CSPE, 1 (5%) was a currently a member of a political party while 19 (95%) of the respondents were not (missing data = 0).

The second indicator in the Political Life Dimension is whether an individual donated money to a political party over the last twelve months. Of the respondents who had taken CSPE, 5 (25%) answered positively while 15 (75%) had not. Of the respondents who had not taken CSPE, 3 (15%) had donated money to a political party in the last twelve months while 17 (85%) had not (missing data = 0).

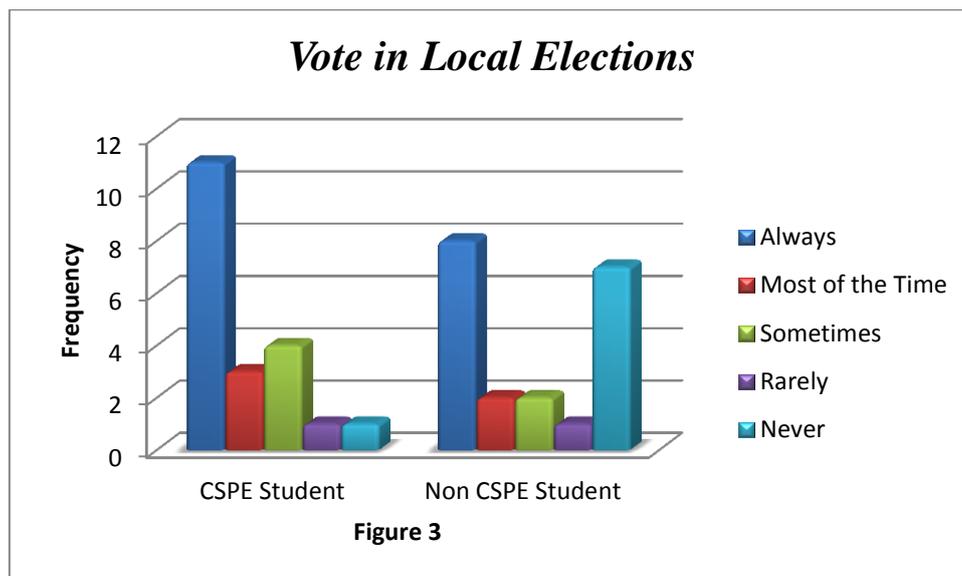


Reading from Figure 2, past students of CSPE were 5 times more likely to participate or volunteer in the activities of a political party in the last twelve months.

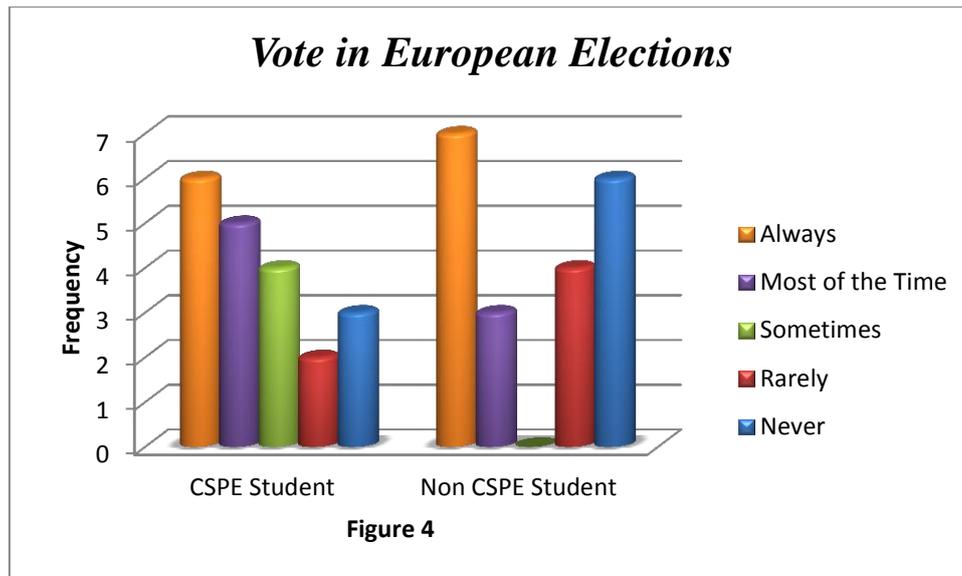


Respondents who had taken CSPE were nearly twice as likely to follow a political party or TD on social media. 9 (45%) former students of CSPE responded positively to this question while 5 (25%) of the respondents who had not taken CSPE followed a political party or TD through social media (missing data = 0).

Three questions were asked of the respondents in reference to whether they vote in local, national and European elections. Figure 3 shows that in local elections a much higher percentage of past CSPE students are likely to vote in local elections with 2 (10%) responding that they rarely or never vote in local elections. 9 (45%) of respondents who had not taken CSPE answered that they rarely or never vote in local elections (missing data = 0).



In national elections a similar trend was observed while in European elections the divergence between former CSPE students and individuals who did not take CSPE is less apparent. This can be observed in Figure 4.



When conditioned on whether the respondent was a former student of CSPE, all the indicators for the Political Life Dimension suggest that a past student of CSPE is likely to be more active in the world of formal politics than a respondent who did not take CSPE in post-primary school.

***Protest and Social Change/Civil Society Dimension***

The Civil Society Dimension as described by Hoskins et al (2006b) is based on indicators which represent political non-governmental action. This type of active and participatory citizenship is underscored in the aims of CSPE when engagement is stressed as including political action and knowledge which include but go beyond representative politics (NCCA 2005). I engaged 13 indicators for the Civil Society Dimension. The results from this section will be used to answer whether former students of CSPE are more active in the world of informal politics than individuals who did not take CSPE.

When asked if respondents had contacted a politician in the last twelve months 8 (40%) former CSPE students responded they had and 12 (60%) that they had not. 5 (25%) respondents who had not taken CSPE answered positively while 15 (75%) responded they had not contacted a politician in the last twelve months. A similar result was obtained when respondents were asked if they had signed a petition in the last twelve months which can be observed in Figure 5 (missing data = 0).

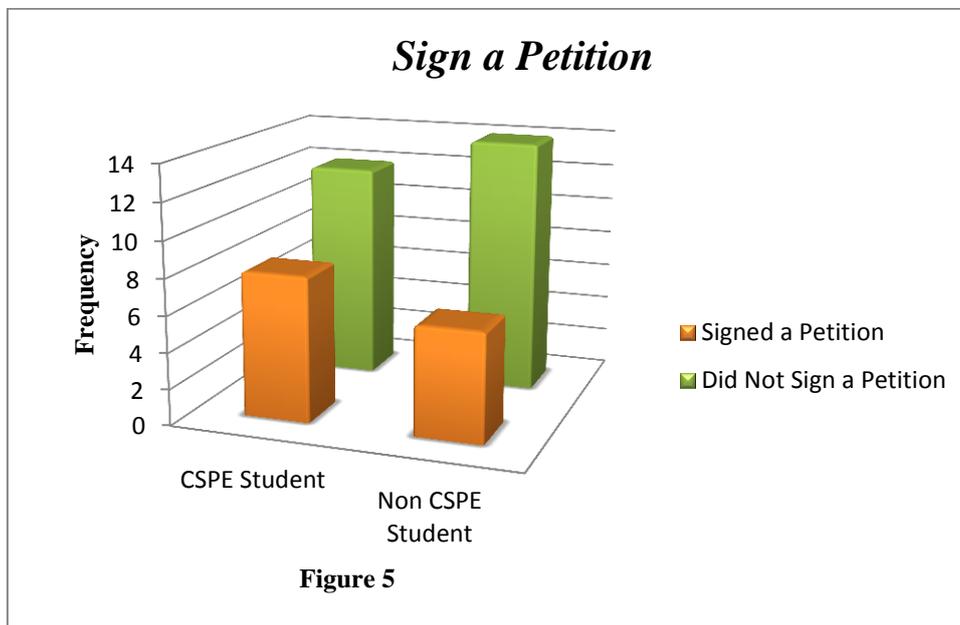
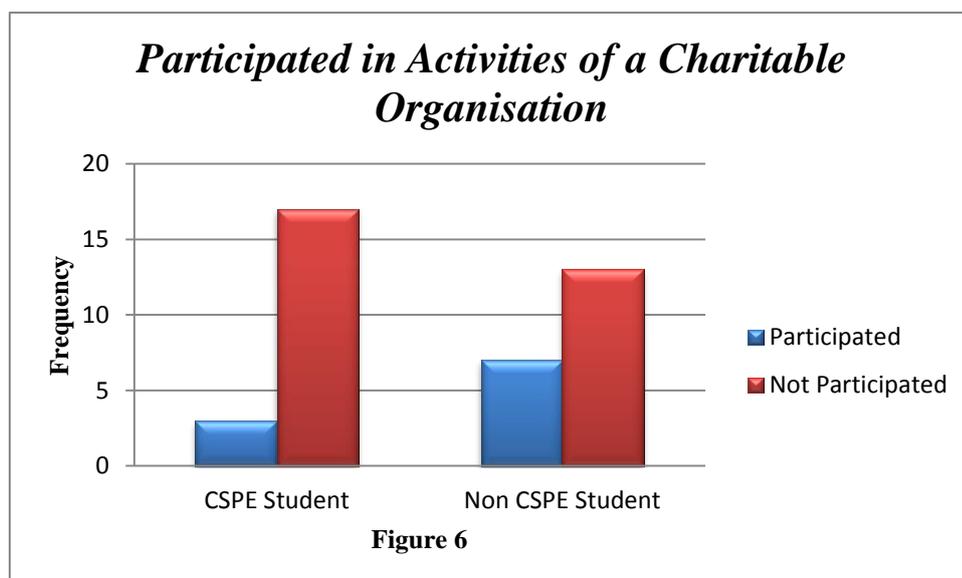


Table 3 presents the results to whether a respondent had boycotted the consumption of a product on ethical grounds in the last twelve months.

*Table 3: Boycott Product on Ethical Grounds*

Column1	Boycotted Product		Did Not Boycott Product	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
CSPE Student	2	10	18	90
Non CSPE Student	5	25	15	75

When respondents were asked if they had donated money to a human rights or charitable organisation in the last twelve months, across both cohorts the highest positive response to any survey question was returned. Overall 31 (77.5%) respondents answered positively while 9 (22.5%) of the respondents answered that they had not donated money to a charitable or human rights organisation in the last twelve months. Of the previous CSPE students 14 (70%) had donated money while 17 (85%) of the non CSPE students had donated money. Non CSPE students were more likely to have participated in the activities of a human rights or charitable organisation. These results are presented in Figure 6 (missing data = 0).



Having found that non CSPE students were more likely to both donate money and participate in the activities of a human rights or charitable organisation this researcher then found that former CSPE students were considerably more likely to engage with this type of organisation on a social media platform. Of the 20 former CSPE students 9 (45%) followed a human rights or charitable organisation on social media while 5 (25%) of the respondents

who did not take part in CSPE were following an organisation like this on social media (missing data = 0).

Four Questions were asked of the respondents in relation to their current engagement with environmental groups. These questions asked the respondent about membership, donations, participating in activities and social media engagement. For all the questions positive responses from both cohorts were low, however on all questions former CSPE students answered more positively than individuals who had not taken CSPE while in post-primary school. Of the 20 respondents who had not taken CSPE none were a member of an environmental organisation, 3 (15%) of former CSPE students were, or had participated in the activities of an environmental organisation, 2 (10%) of former CSPE students had (missing data = 0).

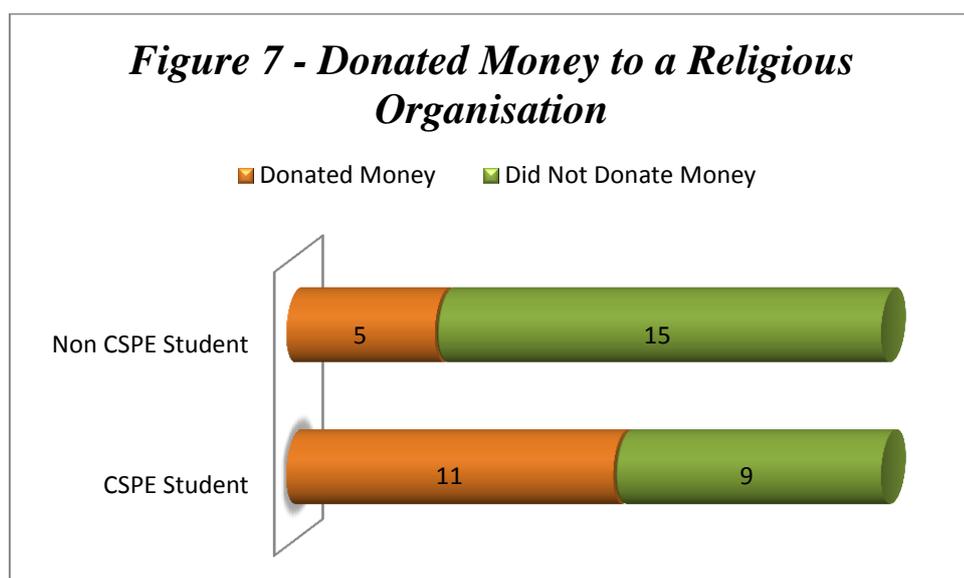
When conditioned on whether the respondent was a former student of CSPE, nine out of the thirteen indicators for the Civil Society Dimension suggest that a past student of CSPE is likely to be more active in the world of informal politics than a respondent who did not take CSPE in post-primary school. The four other indicators showed higher response level for respondents who had not participated in CSPE in post-primary school.

### ***Community Participation Dimension***

The Community Participation Dimension as described by Hoskins et al (2006b) is based on an understanding that an active and participatory citizen engages with their community and in local activities and organisations which are not overtly political. The literature of CSPE conceptualises citizen engagement in the same manner. CSPE aims to foster active and participatory citizenship within students who will then first engage in their

community in activities which are not obviously political (NCCA 2005). I employed 9 indicators in the Community Participation Dimension. The question progression followed a similar pattern as some of the Civil Society Dimension questions. The respondents were asked whether they were a current member, had donated money or had volunteered in the activities of a religious organisation, a sports organisation or any other voluntary community organisation. The results from this section will be used to answer whether prior students of CSPE are more active in their local community than individuals who did not take CSPE.

For the three questions relating to a religious organisation former CSPE students were more likely to engage on all levels. When asked whether the respondent was currently a member of a religious organisation 8 (40%) of former CSPE students responded positively while 2 (10%) of non CSPE students responded positively. 11 (55%) of the students who had taken CSPE at post-primary level had donated money to a religious organisation in the last twelve months while 5 (25%) of the non CSPE respondents had donated money. This result is presented in Figure 7 (missing data = 0).



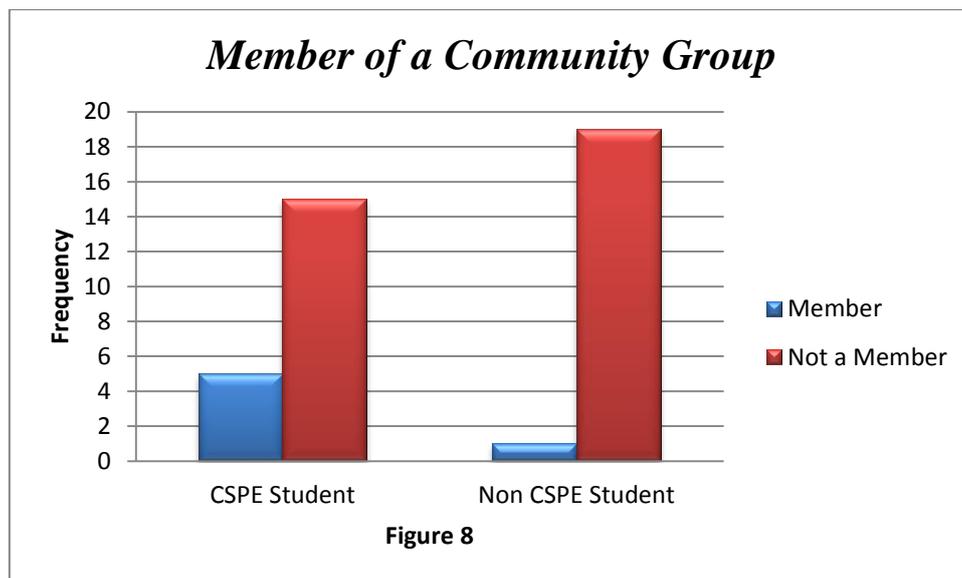
For two of the questions relating to a sports organisation past CSPE students were more likely to engage. 11 (55%) of the former CSPE students were currently members of a sports organisation while 9 (45%) of the respondents who had not taken part in CSPE were currently members of a sports organisation. 12 (60%) of the CSPE cohort had participated in the activities of a sports organisation in the last twelve months while 10 (50%) of the non CSPE cohort had taken part in the activities of a sports organisation in the same time period. The question relating to moneys donated to a sports organisation in the last twelve months produced the same result for both cohorts. 8 (40%) of each group sampled had donated money to a sports organisation in the last twelve months while 12 (60%) had not (missing data = 0).

The questions relating to engagement with any other voluntary community group produced similar results. The question on moneys donated yielded identical results from both groups in the sample. 7 (35%) of both groups had donated money while 13 (65%) had not donated money to another type of voluntary community group. The results for whether a respondent had participated in the activities of another voluntary community group are produced in Table 4.

*Table 4: Participated in Voluntary Community Group*

	Participated		Not Participated	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<b>CSPE Student</b>	8	40	12	60
<b>Non CSPE Student</b>	5	25	15	75

When asked whether a respondent was currently a member of another voluntary community organisation former CSPE students were five times more likely to be a member. 5 (25%) of former CSPE students were currently members while 1 (5%) of non CSPE respondents were currently a member of another voluntary community group. The findings are presented in Figure 8 below (missing data = 0).



When conditioned on whether the respondent was a prior student of CSPE, seven out of the nine indicators for the Community Participation Dimension found that a former student of CSPE is likely to be a more active in their local community than a respondent who did not take CSPE in post-primary school. The two remaining indicators yielded exactly the same results for both sets of respondents.

### ***Democratic Values Dimension***

The Democratic Values Dimension as described by Hoskins et al (2006b) is the founding ethos of active and participatory citizenship. It is based on democracy, the rule of law, human rights and cultural diversity. All the aims of CSPE are conditioned on a democratic society while the fifth and sixth aims of CSPE are as follows;

*“encourage students to apply positive attitudes, imagination and empathy in learning about, and encountering, other people and cultures”* (NCCA 2005:2)

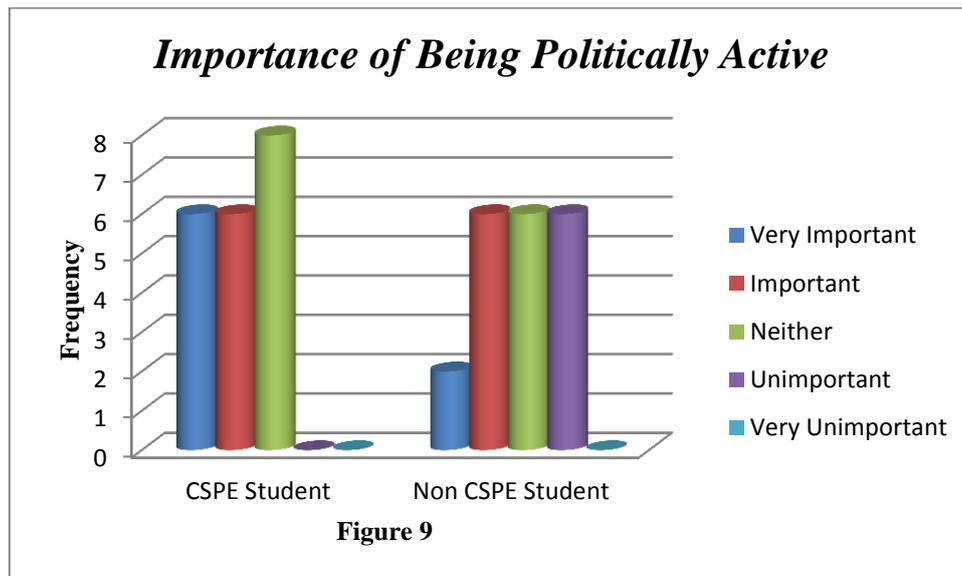
*“enable students to develop their critical thinking skills in agreement with a system of values based in human rights and responsibilities”* (NCCA 2005: 2)

I employed 11 indicators for the Democratic Values Dimension. The first 5 were questions using Likert scales with 5 possible responses and were based on democratic values and the rule of law. The next six questions also used Likert scales with 5 possible responses and were based on human rights and cultural diversity. The results from this section will be used to answer whether the values that active and participatory citizenship are built on are more strongly held by former students of CSPE than those who did not take CSPE.

When respondents were asked how important they thought it was for a citizen to vote, 19 (95%) of the CSPE cohort answered very important or important. 16 (80%) of the non CSPE cohort answered very important or important. When respondents were asked how important they thought it was for a citizen to develop their own independent opinion 19 (95%) of the CSPE cohort answered very important or important while 16 (80%) of the non CSPE cohort answered very important or important.

Figure 9 displays the responses yielded from the sample when asked how important they thought it was for a citizen to be politically active. 12 (60%) of the respondents who

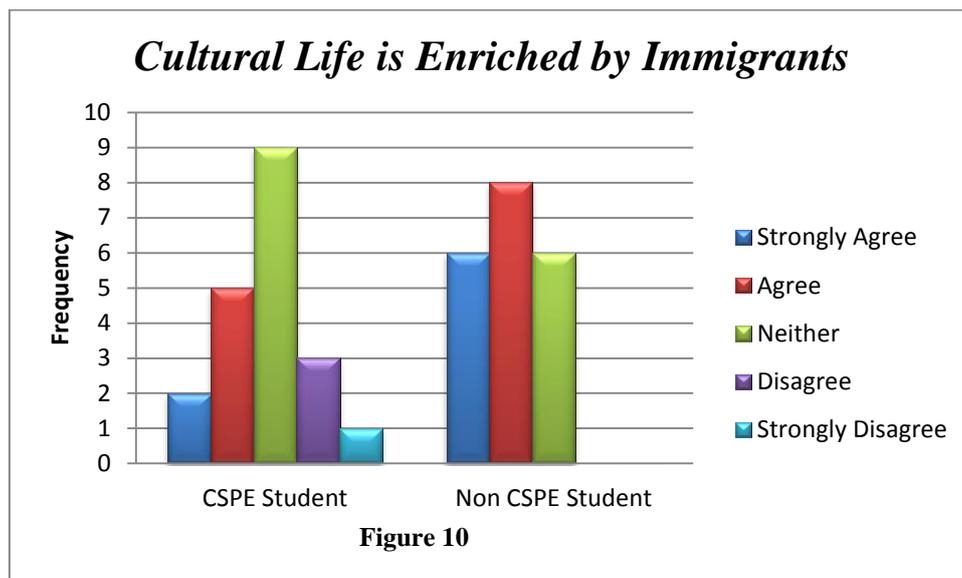
participated in CSPE in post-primary school thought it was either very important or important while none of the CSPE cohort thought being politically active was unimportant or very unimportant. Of the non CSPE cohort 8 (40%) thought being politically active was very important or important while 6 (30%) thought it was unimportant (missing data = 0).



Of the five indicators representing democratic value and the rule of law the former CSPE students answered more positively than the non CSPE cohort within the sample.

Of the six indicators representing human rights and cultural diversity the results yielded from the sample presented a very different picture. When asked if immigrants should have the same legal rights as citizens, 8 (40%) of the CSPE cohort answered strongly agree or agree. 11 (55%) of the non CSPE cohort responded with strongly agree or agree. When asked if immigrants should be allowed become citizens of Ireland, 12 (60%) of the former CSPE students answered strongly agree or agree while 13 (65%) of the respondents who had not taken CSPE answered strongly agree or agree (missing data = 0).

Figure 10 displays the responses yielded from the sample when respondents were asked if cultural life in Ireland is enriched by immigrants. 7 (35%) of the CSPE cohort strongly agree or agree while 14 (70%) of the non CSPE cohort strongly agree or agree (missing data = 0).



When conditioned on whether the respondent was a prior student of CSPE, five out of the eleven indicators for the Democratic Values Dimension were weighted more positively toward the part of the sample who was a student of CSPE. Five out of the eleven indicators were weighted more positively toward the respondents who had not taken CSPE in post-primary school while one of the indicators yielded the exact same result for both groups within the sample. The results suggest there is little difference between former CSPE students and those who did not take CSPE regarding overall strength of the founding values of active and participatory citizenship. Former CSPE students place a higher regard on democratic values than their non CSPE counterparts, while the latter place a higher regard on cultural diversity.

### ***Political Socialization***

The respondents were asked to rank different agents of political socialization from 1-6, depending on how significant the respondent felt it was to affecting their political outlook and actions. This question was not set as an indicator of active and participatory citizenship, however the results will be provided cumulatively and conditioned on whether the respondent took CSPE as a subject in post-primary school. The results below only reveal the sample respondent's choice in which agent of political socialization they felt had the most significant effect on their political outlook and actions.

### ***Cumulative Ranking of Agents***

From the total sample, parents as an agent of political socialization was positioned first with 20 (54.1%) respondents ranking it number one. Education was ranked number two with 10 (27%), peers ranked number three with 3 (8.1%), media ranked number four with 2 (5.4%) and both immediate family and the external events ranked fifth with 1 (2.7%) respondent ranking each agent number one (missing data = 3).

### ***CSPE Ranking of Agents***

From the part of the sample answered by students who had participated in CSPE in post-primary school, parents as an agent of political socialization was positioned number one with 14 (70%) respondents ranking it first. Education was ranked number two with 5 (25%) and was peers ranked number three with 1 (5%) respondent ranking it as the number one agent of political socialization (missing data = 0).

### ***Non CSPE Ranking of Agents***

From the part of the sample answered by students who had not participated in CSPE in post-primary school, parents as an agent of political socialization was positioned number one with 6 (35.3%) respondents ranking it first. Education was ranked number two with 5 (29.4%), peers and the media ranked number three with 2 (11.8%) respondents ranking each agent as most important and both immediate family and external events ranked fourth with 1(5.9%) respondent ranking each agent as the number one agent of political socialization (missing data = 3).

## Conclusion

This research project attempted to assess whether the primary aim of CSPE is achieved. Do former students of CSPE have a higher level of active and participatory citizenship than individuals who did not take CSPE? This question was deconstructed into four sub questions which correlated to the four main sections of the survey. The first three sub questions were conclusive in that former CSPE students are more active in formal politics, informal politics and their local community than their non CSPE counterparts. The fourth sub question found mixed results with former CSPE students placing a higher weight on democratic values while individuals who did not take CSPE placed a higher import on cultural diversity in Ireland. Overall, from this sample, former students of CSPE did have a higher level of active and participatory citizenship than individuals who did not take CSPE. Of the 40 indicators employed in the survey to measure active and participatory citizenship, 28 indicators yielded higher positive results for former students of CSPE, 9 indicators yielded higher results for the non CSPE cohort while 3 indicators yielded exactly the same results for both. Both CSPE and non CSPE respondents rated parents and education respectively as the most important agents of political socialization which is in conjunction with the political socialization literature.

This research project found specifically that former CSPE students in this sample have higher levels of active and participatory citizenship than sample respondents who did not take CSPE. These results are not generalizable as the sampling method employed was non-probability sampling and the sample size was too small at n=40. This author however believes that the formulation of the population was creative and methodologically sound. It was based on political socialization literature and tried to control for other agents of political

socialization by assessing the life-cycle effect, generational effect and the period effect (Niemi & Sobieszek 1977 and Niemi & Hepburn 1995).

### ***Politics: Present and Future(s)***

This research comes at an interesting time in Irish society. As a typical Western state, long term levels of decline in political participation and knowledge are not unusual. This is particularly prevalent among the young. Eight years after the Taskforce on Active Citizenship stated resources for CSPE should be increased and a leaving cycle CSPE extension course introduced, the current government have decided to make CSPE an optional subject. On one level this seems counter-productive given the long term decline in levels of political participation and increase in academic literature to suggest positive returns to a civic education. The social efficiency goal has, it seems, come to dominate the democratic equality goal when the minister for education consistently speaks of how students should be shaped and adapt for an economy and when a mandatory civic education course is made optional.

I personally agree with the recommendations of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship based on the research carried out on this project. There is however an academic opportunity to be realised from the ministers decision. From September 2014 there will now be a large population of children of the same age who will take CSPE and who will not. A properly designed longitudinal research project could significantly add to the academic research on civic education and education as an agent of political socialization. There is a dearth of literature and research on these topics in Ireland and as such the reintroduction of CSPE as an optional subject could provide excellent political and sociological academic research opportunities in the future.

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