

**INFLUENCE OF THE PARTY IDEOLOGY SHIFT**  
**ON POLITICAL APATHY**

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## Abstract

The central aspect of the thesis is dedicated to party ideology and how a change in ideology of the parties measured, in their Manifestos and electoral programs, influences party apathy or results in a lower turnout. All of the theoretical and empirical researches in this work show that: First, the political apathy is not a strictly conceptualized political term and also refers to non-participation as well as low turnout. Second, there are various factors and determinants that influence political apathy, although that the exact effects of these factors remain unknown, and third the party ideology shift is already mentioned as a variable that influences political apathy or low turnout, but so far it is not adequately investigated by scholars.

This thesis constructs two Multi Level Logistic Models and two Linear Regressions to test the influence of the party ideology shift on the individual as well as party level. The results from the MLM models and regressions provide enough evidence to support the hypothesis that the influence of the party ideology shift produces political apathy. Nevertheless, while the crucial variables are marginally or highly significant, variables and intercepts have low values, which show that these models have low explanatory power, although this is expected as a result of the fact that nonvoters are around 8% of the sample. The lack of significance in the second regression model, supports the claim that political parties will not necessarily lose votes as a result of the apathetic behavior of their past supporters. Besides, some limitations of the research, the thesis contributes to the solving of the puzzle of political apathy or low turnout.

## Introduction

The topic of this thesis is the phenomenon of political apathy and reasons for its appearance. It will focus on political parties and how their behavior influences political apathy in voters. The central aspect of the thesis is dedicated to party ideology and how a change in the ideology of the parties, measured by their Manifestos and electoral programs, influences party apathy or lower turnout. This thesis will focus mainly on global democratic party' systems and will analyze the main political parties of these countries and their ideology shift in the last two cycles of parliamentary elections. Parliamentary elections will be focused on because they provide the most adequate information about the change of party ideologies or programs.

The problem with low voter turnout in Europe is very prominent. The last parliamentary elections in Romania confirmed that this trend has taken on even larger dimensions. In general, Romania is good example of the continuous decline of this turnout during last two decades. From a record of 86.18% in the first post-communist elections 1990 to the lowest turnout of 39.26% in the last Elections 2008<sup>1</sup>, a very clear pattern of permanent decrease of the voters on elections has emerged. Other cases in Europe do not have such clear patterns as Romania does, but when the analysis over time is made, it can be confirmed that apathy is a common phenomenon in the modern world, worthy of a scholar's analyses. These trends can only justify the need for research focusing on the reasons of the phenomenon of political apathy, but this paper is focused on the individual and party level, and not on the state level.

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<sup>1</sup> For more see The Romania political System: After the Parliamentary Elections of November 30, 2008 publ. in Studia Politica nr 1/2009 <http://cristianpreda.ro/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/partide.pdf>

Despite the fact that the issue of low turnout has been investigated by many scholars, this issue has not been studied significantly in the way this research has approached it. Although many factors have influenced political apathy or low turnout, the originality of this paper is that it focuses on party ideologies and how ideology shift influences voter's turnout. Many scholars have researched voting behavior, but few of them have focused on political programs or ideological shifts.

This aspect of political apathy is especially important in Central and Eastern Europe <sup>2</sup>(CEE) because during the transitional period political parties were inconsistent in their ideology, and generally were oriented according toward voters' preferences. After the first wave of "nationalistic and liberal romanticism," the economic issues became the central aspect of parties' electoral programs, along with EU integration. Nevertheless, database limitations create the sample and the number of the countries included, so several CEE countries are jointly analyzed with all other countries and conclusions are drawn in general.

The low turnout, or the political apathy understood through low turnout, is one of the most investigated phenomena in the field of political science. The factors or variables included in the explanation of this phenomenon can be classified in three large groups: a socially deterministic group (ethnocultural), a group focusing on the party and personality (institutional) and a rational choice model which claims that voters make their decisions on the basis of their perception of maximizing the profit, choosing between going to vote for some political party or acting apathetic.

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<sup>2</sup> Czesnik, Mikolaj. 2009 in his paper "Voter Turnout and Europe-related Policies in Post-communist Europe" explains this phenomenon. For more see <[http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p362970\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p362970_index.html)>

All of the theoretical and empirical investigations show that political apathy is not a strictly conceptualized political term, referring to non-participation as well as low turnout. Therefore this paper, when explaining the phenomenon of political apathy refers to this low turnout as a form of measurement. (Deluca 1995), Secondly, research indicates there are various factors and determinants that influence political apathy, and that the questions of how these factors influence political apathy are still debated. Finally, the party ideology shift is already considered to be a variable that influences political apathy or the low turnout.

This thesis is based on previous work in the field and will construct a quantitative model which will attempt to measure how political ideology shift influences political apathy on the individual and party level. This thesis not claims that the ideology shift will decrease the support of the party on aggregate level, but that some old voters will abandon their support of the party as a result of feeling alienated because the party may not be representing their interest anymore.

This investigation's starting assumption is that political parties shift their ideology or programmatic position in an attempt to maximize their profit, i.e. to increase the number of votes that the party wins during the elections. But, this party ideology shift has its price. The shift of ideology by the party can cause apathetic behavior in some party supporters or voters which, as a result of ideological change of the party, will lose the interest in voting and thus cause a decrease in participation during elections. This investigation seeks to measure and confirm the shift over two time periods and to show patterns on the individual level as well as on the aggregate (party) level. Therefore one of the variables that are used come from individuals who reported non-participation in the last elections, yet voted for the party on the previous elections. The Manifesto

of that party for these elections has different scores, which confirm that there is an ideological or programmatic shift.

From the research questions two main hypotheses can be developed:

***H1** The ideological shift of political parties will cause a political apathy on individual level among past supporters of the parties*

***H2** The party ideology shift will not always cause a decrease of the votes on the party level. The ideology shift on the party level can also result in a better electoral result for the party.*

As already mentioned, the purpose of this paper is to measure the influence of the ideology shift on political apathy on the individual and aggregate (party) level. The individual level can be defined as the way in which the ideology shift influences the voting behavior of the individuals. Does the ideology shifting influence individuals to decide not to participate in the elections as a result of the change of the positions of the party that he supported? On the aggregate level, the paper investigates whether the ideology shift of the party influences the votes of that party won in the elections. Therefore, two different statistical models will be used for two different levels. The first hypothesis, which looks at the influence of the ideology shift on individual level, will be tested with Multi Level Modeling (Mix Effects or Hierarchical) (MLM), and for the second hypothesis look at the aggregate level, Regression will be used.

Multi Level Model is a statistical model applied to data collected at more than one level, in order to elucidate relationships. (Luke 2004) It has been developed during the past several decades, appearing under different names: Hierarchical Linear Models (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002), Random coefficient models (Longford, 1993) Mixed –effects models (Pinheiro and Bates, 2000)



as well as multilevel models. Their goal, as Luke stressed, is to predict the values of some dependent variable based on a function of a predictor variable on multiple levels. The model that I construct, measures the political apathy on the individual level as result of the ideology shift at the party level. The model will include two levels: the individual level and the party level. Therefore this modeling is the most appropriate model to measure the effect of the ideology shift on the individual level but also to include the effects on the party level. Additionally, to test the first hypothesis on party level separately, and to support the second hypothesis and, two linear regressions will be developed.

This thesis is relevant because it attempts to add another dimension to the overall investigation of the phenomenon of political apathy or low turnout. The majority of the previous academic papers were focused on the socio-demographic characteristics of the voters and how they influenced the turnout. Other articles have also researched the political and economic factors as variables that can affect turnout. The genetics are also investigated as a variable that can explain the voting behavior of the voters, but the political ideology or party programmatic shift is not treated adequately. Therefore, this thesis will aim to find the relation between this variable and turnout, thus explaining the patterns of this relationship. Its purpose is to find if there is a strong correlation between these variables, if this variable effects only in one direction, or if it is possible that the ideology shift could increase the support of the party, without any loss of support. Exactly, the thesis offers specific approach, incorporates two different databases and analyzes this phenomenon in aspect of two time distances, therefore giving a new aspect to the incorporation of the party ideology as a variable. This thesis does not investigate party ideology, but its shift between two electoral cycles and the effect of this shift on political apathy.

The thesis is structured into introduction, three chapters and conclusion. The Introduction offers a brief review of the topic of research and introduces the model, theoretical framework and methodology. The first chapter describes the phenomenon of political apathy with a literature review of the previous work in this field. This chapter looks to explain the non-participation and non-voting as forms of Political apathy. This chapter also reviews the literature surrounding the influence of party ideology on voting behavior and presents the literature that examines phenomena similar to the ones detailed in this paper. The second chapter discusses the methodology and with a through explanation of the model and operationalization of the variables. The third Chapter presents analyses of the data and interpretation of results. At the end, conclusions are drawn, the research is summarized, limitations of the research are presented and recommendations for further research are offered.

# 1 Political Apathy – Theoretical framework and factors that influence this phenomenon

## 1.1 *The Phenomenon of Political Apathy: What is Political Apathy – Theoretical Imprecision*

A substantial debate exists in the literature on democratic theory concerning the implications of Political Apathy for the legitimacy and stability of democratic systems. On one hand, theorists favoring citizen participation have argued that higher levels of turnout reflect and encourage political legitimacy and citizen support. On the other hand, theorists concerned about democratic stability have pointed to the often undemocratic values of the less educated, and the high levels of turnout in such unstable systems as Weimar Germany which resulted in the establishment of the totalitarian and undemocratic Nazi regimes<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, a very brief look at the turnouts in the modern democracies shows the existence of one significant problem connected with elections. All argumentations that favor political apathy as being useful for democracy can not deny that a historical overview of the turnouts in elections throughout the last fifty years, especially in the USA and in post-communist countries<sup>4</sup>, shows that the interest of citizens in voting and in politics is low. But, does this mean that citizens are politically apathetic? What does it mean and how a state is characterized by the problem of the political apathy? What is the threshold for turning on alarm bells that signal high levels of political apathy? These and many

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<sup>3</sup>The claims that high turnout is a characteristics of the non-democratic regimes has empirical confirmation, but also a matter of debate is that turnout achieved with democratic or non-democratic tools. Also, the fact that several western democracies as Italy and Netherlands are characterized with high turnout confirms that there are not very clear arguments in favor of this claim.

<sup>4</sup> For more see **Voter Turnout Since 1945 A Global Report** International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) 2002 [http://www.idea.int/publications/vt/upload/VT\\_screenopt\\_2002.pdf](http://www.idea.int/publications/vt/upload/VT_screenopt_2002.pdf)

other questions are only introductions to the vast and occasionally confusing field of political apathy.

From the very nature of the word “political apathy” these confusions begin. Tom DeLuca (1995), when defining political apathy, talks about non-participation, but connects political apathy with low turnout. Actually, turnout is the measure of the political apathy (DeLuca, 1997: 74), it is the manifestation of this problem. Does the political apathy mean more than only low turnout? Yes. Political Apathy is a broad concept that includes the absence of participation and activity (Rosenberg, 1955), but also the low turnout or non-voting in elections, which is the first and clearest manifestation of the “syndrome” of political apathy. Therefore, many authors (DeLuca, Rosenberg, Phillips and Blackman), when talking about political apathy, have in mind this low turnout, the determinants of this phenomenon, and which factors have the biggest and most significant influence on it. Actually, all of their argumentation and references are to articles that offer quantitative analyzes of the phenomenon of low turnout. Current investigations, in general, avoid the use of the term “political apathy<sup>5</sup>,” but low turnout and the phenomenon of non-participation and non-voting takes one of the most important places in voting behavior studies. This paper, while taking into consideration the “theoretical inaccuracy or imprecision” in the definition of the term, will accept the previous approaches to use the quantitative findings for the low turnout when explaining the political apathy.

Then, let’s start slowly “to unroll the knot”:

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<sup>5</sup> The term “political apathy” was very frequently analyzed among scholars in 50s and 60s of the twentieth century. The majority of papers that emphasize the political apathy are from that period. One of the them is paper of Rosenberg (1954-1955)

## **1.2 Political Apathy – Theoretical explanations**

The phenomenon of political apathy is most comprehensively elaborated by DeLuca (1995). His work, which belongs to the field of political theory, represents the most systematic and theoretical approach in explaining this phenomenon. As already mentioned, when DeLuca explains political apathy, he uses the idea of non-participation. Although this approach is theoretical and broader, it offers a very systematic review of the previous literature and explanation of the factors that determine political apathy. DeLuca, elaborating on the problem of the steady decline of voter turnout in United States since the 1960s until 1980s, stresses that the low turnout is a problem of the American democracy and should be analyzed more seriously. He adds that this can not be accepted as a characteristic of modern democracies. He refers to Carl Ladd (1993), who stresses that millions of Americans “stand on the sidelines deciding not to vote”, while people of high socioeconomic status vote more regularly than those of lower status. Therefore, “turnout in USA is significantly lower than in virtually all other democracies” (Ladd 1993).

Ladd (1993) also concludes that the reason for the low turnout in the U.S. is in the high number of elections, which makes them seem common. Elections in the U.S. are, therefore, not considered to be important or special events. Another reason for the low voter turnout in the USA, according to Ladd, is the existence of a “system where political stress has been relatively manageable” although the perceived cost of non-voting is nearly the same as in other democracies. DeLuca (1995) presents an argumentation about the socioeconomic factors that influence the apathy using Verba and Orren’s claim of “*Equality in America*” where they characterize U.S. as a system that produces and tolerates inequality between its citizens, which

causes different interest in participation in politics and voting in elections. DeLuca's brief argumentation leads to the conclusion that the disappearing American voter is not evenly distributed across the American population, but that the voting decline is caused by "education, occupation, class education, age, and to some degree to gender and race" (DeLuca, 1995: 5).

Furthermore, when political apathy means not only decision not to vote in the elections which are periodically held, but the citizen decides not to participate in political life as a results of personal opinion, DeLuca (1995) tends to characterize this more general apathy as a "choice." However, reflecting on DeLuca's opinion, Moran (1997) stresses his definition of apathy as an emotional response or condition. DeLuca's definition of apathy is "a relationship of emotion to an object, and however much it may result from other factors that condition decisions, or perhaps even other clear choices, it is not itself a choice" (DeLuca 1995 : 191). Much as we cannot "choose" to be happy, neither can we choose to be apathetic (Moran 1997).

Actually, the biggest contribution of this book is in the explanation of the phenomenon of political apathy. DeLuca (1995) offers two different faces of political apathy. The first face is inherent to the individual level as it is a personal choice of the individual. The other is a state in which an individual suffers from apathy that is brought on by forces, structures, institutions or elite manipulation and other socioeconomic and political factors on which he has little or no control, and perhaps little knowledge (DeLuca, 1995:11). Moreover, standing by itself, each explanation seems inadequate. In favor of that, Moran (1997) stresses that "if apathy is simply an individual decision, then how do we account for the demographic skewing and if it is an emotional response conditioned in part by social context, then how do we account for the fact

that at least some individuals among the poor, undereducated, etc., do in fact vote and participate?”

DeLuca explains political apathy through the three different dimensions of power (Lukes 1992), represented by three different schools. The first is the republican, a liberal school represented by Berelson, which involves a focus on the behavior of making decisions on issues where there is observable conflict of interest seen as expressed in policy preferences by political participation, and where political participation is a desirable but depends of the individual choice of the citizen. The plain democratic conception of power explains that political apathy is a result of a disagreement within the political agenda that is accepted and does not fit with any of the two faces of apathy. The third radical democratic conception of power, represented by Marcuse, is connected with the second face of the political apathy.

DeLuca (1995), although presenting these two faces of the political apathy, underlines accepting the both faces as a “pure true” is a mistaken approach "The apathy that Berelson saw and celebrated as necessary for American democracy is now viewed through Marcuse's radical lens as profound false consciousness affecting 'political' participants and nonparticipants alike"(DeLuca 1995: 152). As DeLuca sees it, both views overstate the amount of apathy present and misconstrue "the nature of much of that which exists" (p. 152). Furthermore, DeLuca also emphasizes that the racial and gender discrimination is wrongly underestimated, and it is not considered as a relevant factor that influences political apathy and the “choice” of individuals not to vote and participate in political life.

In the end, DeLuca’s work, which also includes some ideas on the complexities of depolitization and political mortalization, offers recommendations and solutions on how to “combat” political

apathy. It is one of the most comprehensive and systematic theoretical approaches that explains this phenomenon. Although DeLuca's project lacks empirical evidence to confirm his claims and findings, the importance of this book for explaining the phenomenon of political apathy can not be ignored. This book has shown, once again, that the problem of political apathy, which results in a low turnout is difficult to be strictly diagnosed. There are a lot of factors influencing its development.

Rosenberg (1955) investigated the determinants for political apathy by organizing surveys in the small town of Ithaca in New York State and discovered the existence of three groups of factors or determinants that have the ability to influence voters to not participate in political life or vote. Rosenberg stresses the threatening consequences of political activity, the futility of political activity and the absence of incentives to interest and participation.

This paper offers conclusions based on the responses of the citizens included in the surveys, and the first group of determinants of political apathy includes threats to governmental action, interpersonal harmony, occupational success and ego-deflation. These factors influence the development of political apathy in that having a public political position can result in the threats against some citizens of by governmental figures of a different political affiliation, or can destroy the relation between friends and family, due to their holding different political positions, prevents people from becoming more politically active and voting in elections. Also, the threat that political involvement can cause inconveniences on the professional field also decreases the incentives for individuals to be more politically active. This group of factors can have a big importance in half-democracies and democracies in transition, without a well developed party



system, and where political activity and voting for a certain party can cause “political revanchism”<sup>6</sup> and negative consequences for private and professional life.

The futility of political activity and participation in the elections is most easily presented by the impression of the voters that their activity and voting does not contribute to the whole process, does not make a difference or does not have any impact whatsoever. The feeling of futility of action derives from the sense of personal inadequacy, when individuals consider themselves to be political insignificant and unimportant. Another reason for this futility of action lies in the perception of the unmanageability of political forces., stemming from the perception that the political representative, the political machine, government and some anonymous agencies of power have ignored the will of the people and have made their own decisions almost completely uninfluenced of the people. This feeling is strengthened by the opinion that all politicians are the same, and that alternate parties offer no differences, thus increases the political apathy among voters, and they chose not to vote. (Rosenberg 1955). Rosenberg also stressed that the time period of the elections is another factor that makes people more apathetic as people cannot react and punish the government or their representatives at the times when they have most alienated the voters, but only during the timeframe of the elections.

When the third group of factors is considered, Rosenberg (1955) stresses the deterrents of participation. A lack of interest, the fact that individuals have other more pressing needs to satisfy, and absence of the noninstrumental gratifications, often dulls political activity. (Rosenberg, 1955).

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<sup>6</sup> In some post-communist transitional countries (Macedonia, Serbia, Albania), the support of certain political party causes consequences of political isolation in case of the possible win of the opposite party. This is most reflected on the possible employment in the Public administration which is highly partied.

In general this project again lacks empirical evidence for the confirmation of its claims and conclusions. The paper gives a comprehensive overview of the factors that individuals reported by themselves as a reasons for not voting. Even Rosenberg himself points that this paper could be most useful to be used as a basic for the further quantitative researches. Nevertheless, taking note of the date of the research period, its contribution to the field should not be underestimated. Some of the factors, that author reported, are still present in the less developed democracies, which further confirms the importance of the research. However, the paper's specific classification of the factors makes it less useful for the academic researches.

### ***1.3 Review of the factors that influence Political Apathy***

Apart from these theoretical and non-empirical explanations of the phenomenon of political apathy, there are a lot of studies that quantitatively and empirically examine and explain low turnout as well as the reasons behind it. Low turnout, or the political apathy understood through low turnout, is one of the most investigated phenomena in the field of political science. The factors or variables included in the explanation of this phenomenon can be classified into three groups of variables or models: a socially deterministic group (ethnocultural), a group focusing on the party and personality (institutional), and a rational choice model, which claims that voters make decisions on the basis of their perception of maximizing own profit, either by going to vote for some political party or acting apathetic. The following text will present some of the most influential investigations and their contribution to the solving of the puzzle of the low voter turnout Franklin (2004). This review of the variables for explaining low turnout will show the variety of approaches for investigating the determinants of the political apathy, but will also confirm that testing new models and including new variables could be beneficial to the science.

Teixeira (1987, 1992) has provided a significant contribution to the analysis of the reasons for low turnout and the phenomenon of political apathy. In his first work, *“Why Americans Don’t Vote: Turnout Decline in the United States, 1960-1984”* he pays careful attention to demographic factors (such as age, race, and region) and includes new hypotheses that might account for the "disconnectedness" of people from the political system. In particular, he raises the possibility that the marked decline in "rootedness" in U.S. society (as measured by the decline in people married and living with their spouses and the increase in residential mobility) could bring about less political involvement. Yet Teixeira is also well aware of the political science findings regarding turnout and includes three important “sociopolitical” variables in his study: partisanship (strength of party identification), efficacy, and campaign newspaper reading. The later variable has not been included in many turnout studies and is particularly interesting. (Boyd 1988). Teixeira’s model, which is constructed in such a way as to account for periodization i.e. the fact that all variables do not have equal influence during all periods, explains the 88% decline in voter turnout during 1960-1980. Teixeira found that the political variables have a higher explanatory power in comparison with sociological variables, and while demographic trends such as younger electorate, less likely to be married and more mobile, can explain 38% of the voter decline, political factors, such as decline in partisanship, decline of the efficacy and reliance of the newspapers for election information, are able to explain the other 62% of the variance”. He also distinguishes two periods: the first is 1960-1968, when political apathy was a result of falling political efficacy, and the second period 1968-1980, when it is explained by changing age distribution and the decline in newspaper reading. When explaining the sudden increase in turnout in the 1984 presidential elections, Teixeira pointed out that the

changing legislature for the registration or a partisan realignment could have been a contributing factor. However, turnout numbers would not return to the highs of the 1950s.

In *Disappearing American Voter* (1992) Teixeira, using cost-benefit argumentation, explained that the structure of the cost in America, which is characterized by low benefits and high costs, can serve to explain the reasons for a higher turnout in European countries than in United States. He stresses that the reason for the decline can be found in the overall decline of political and social “connectedness,” including church attendance, and this dropping off can serve to explain the phenomenon of the political apathy. Nevertheless, he claims that the political apathy or non-voting, no matter how high or low, does not influence the outcomes of the elections.

Nevertheless, the last Teixeira’s claim was tested and disproved by Citrin, Schickler and Sides (2003) in a study which showed that the structure of non-voters differ in very small dimensions from the structure of voters, and that, in three cases, (two in favor of Democratic candidates and one in favor of Republicans) the “everyone votes” simulation would result in a different outcome than the one which was decided in the elections. These results, combined with Lijphart’s (1997) claims for not-adequate representation of the citizens, which is a result of the unequal participation, in some dimensions, very clearly refute the claim of Teixeira.

Analyzing the voter turnout and the dynamics of the electoral competition in established democracies since 1945, Franklin claims that:

*As the vexing questions of political science can be regarded as puzzles, the particular topic of voter turnout could be called the 'grand enchilada' of puzzles of political science.... Almost everything about voter turnout is puzzling, from the question of why anyone bothers to vote at all to the question of why certain variables appear to explain voter turnout in some circum-stances but not in others. (Franklin 2004).*

He shows that the reasons for the low turnout or the apathetic characteristics of the citizens cannot be strictly be explained only using Rational Choice Theory, but rather within the political

context of the elections, the social context of the individual voter, and the socialization of the voters.

Franklin claims that due to the fact that people are not eager to change their already adopted behavior which also reflects on their electoral habits, the low turnout or political apathetic behavior can be explained by the behavior of new voters and special attention should be paid to their behavior. He stresses that from the age that citizens are eligible to vote for the first time the significance of the elections, especially in relation to their own lives, determines whether they will vote. The factors that can influence new voters to vote or can mobilize people who vote for the first time are the importance of the elections, the level of competitiveness, the degree of "executive responsiveness". If their second and third elections have the same excitement and stakes, the cohort will for the rest of their electoral lives have a high turnout (Van Holsteyn 2005). In that way Franklin (2004: 25) shows that rationality and socialization have a substantial impact on political apathy, i.e. the decision of the cohorts to vote or not Van Holsteyn (2005) sums up the three most important lessons of Franklin's analysis: "There is nothing inevitable about declining voter turnout, as it has occurred partly as a reaction to political reasons; turnout decline is in no way due to any decline in civic virtue or increase in political disaffection (Franklin 2004: 215). And, as is often the case, the future is in the hands of the young, because they are the ones who react to new conditions and the specific circumstances when they enter the electorate".

Piven and Cloward (1988) also have made an important contribution to the study of electoral participation in the U.S. They provide a comprehensive discussion of the factors that reduced turnout in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as an important analysis of the institutional constraints that have reduced turnout in contemporary America. Concluding that the

phenomenon of political apathy is higher in United States than in European democracies, they offer a historical overview of the political and socioeconomic factors that have influenced turnout over several decades. After placing American turnout in a comparative context, Piven and Cloward examine the conditions that led to a high American voter turnout in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Abrahamson (1989) points out that the importance of Piven and Cloward (1988) in the explanation of the demobilization of the electorate in the late 19th and early 20th century is in the emphasizing the restrictions on voting - most importantly the imposition of voter registration requirements, undertaken by elites to fight off the Populist challenge.

Piven and Cloward (1988) examine theoretical debates on the causes of nonvoting, and are particularly harsh in assessing theorists that rely upon social-psychological variables (Abrahamson, 1989). They clearly favor an institutional perspective. Nevertheless, Piven and Cloward do not develop a systematic model that would confirm their claims for the diminished importance of these variables, and at the same time showed the significance of the institutional variables. They argued that “the political context determines whether these social-psychological factors will have a significant effect on participation, and just what those effects will be” (Piven and Cloward 1988:117).

In another project, Piven and Cloward (2000) try to formulate an answer to the question of why Americans continue to have low voter turnout and whether or not politicians benefit from this system. Again favoring the approach that institutional factors influence the low turnout and thus cause political apathy, the authors assign larger importance to the factors connected with political parties. They claim that the party competitiveness, party constituencies and their linkage to party elites, and voter registration requirement determine the composition of the body of voters. The degree to which political parties would liberalize the process of voter registration depends on

how this registration will affect their interests. Leighley (2001) emphasizes Piven and Cloward's claim that the parties would liberalize voter registration requirements when that should cause positive results for the party i.e. the new eligible votes are more likely to strengthen the party's electoral outcome and to minimize the risk of losing the power. Piven and Cloward (2000: 271) conclude that, "Left to themselves, the parties are unlikely to work to expand participation. Indeed party competition is more likely to take the form of strategies to demobilize sectors of the electorate rather than expand it". According to the authors, social movements are the only viable means to mobilize the voters and to decrease the low turnout caused by political parties.

Miller and Shanks (1996), when examining the reasons for low turnout, claim that the continuity and stability of the American party system has been provided by party identification (whether voters simply think of themselves as Republicans, Democrats, or independents), which has remained most strongly related to candidate choice. The exception is the South, which has undergone only gradual, though significant, change since the 1950s, with an increase in the proportions of independents and with Republican identifiers closing in on Democrats nationwide (Shapiro 1997). With this claim, they confirm party movement and ideology shift which can result in losing a certain number of party supporters. Among the six groups of factors that influence whether the voter will vote for a certain candidate or not are: party identification and relatively exogenous "policy-related predispositions", retrospective evaluations of the incumbent candidate, and prospective evaluations of the candidates and their parties, which favors the importance of the political parties in the voter's decision making.

Powell Jr. (1986) stressed that the analysis of the low turnout in U.S., which is significantly lower than in other developed democracies, suggests that in a comparative perspective, turnout in

the United States is advantaged about 5% by political attitudes, but disadvantaged 13% by the party system and institutional factors, and up to 14% by the registration laws.

Merrifield (1992), when investigating the political and institutional factors that influence political apathy, concludes that political and institutional variables have a significant impact on turnout, and that constraining decision making reduces voter turnout. The model that he constructed, factored in election's day weather as a variable, and it accounted for 91% of the variation in 1982 voter turnout among the states. In the end, he claims that not all variables that influence low turnout are included in the previous researches. His attempt to include some different variables, such as the weather or if there are gubernatorial elections on the day with presidential elections, show high level of significance and they can serve to explain some of the variation of the political apathy.

Sandel and Plutzer (2005) look to another factor that could explain apathy by examining family influences on voter turnout, tracing the impact of divorce on turnout during adolescence. They show that the effect of divorce among white families is large, depressing turnout by nearly 10 percentage points, while demonstrating that the impact of divorce varies by racial group and can rival the impact of parents' educational attainment, which is generally regarded as the most important non-political characteristic of one's family of origin.

Matsusaka and Palda (1999) find that the usual demographic variables such as age and education, and contextual variables such as campaign spending, have significant effects on the probability of voting, but these variables can explain a low variation of the low turnout. They also estimate regressions using past voting behavior as a predictor of current behavior, and find that although the explanatory power rises it remains low. These results again show that the



reasons for low turnout are very difficult to predicted, and arise primarily from omitted time variables. On basis of their research they conclude that voting patterns are randomized and that the socio-demographic variables do not give explanation for the political apathy.

Reiter (1979) discovered that the monotonic decline in turnout from 1960 to 1976 occurred among whites and not blacks, and that some of the most commonly stated reasons do not explain the decline. Among whites, the sharpest decline occurred among those of low income and education; and that white nonvoters are not an especially Democratic lot, in part because of a lack of distinctive class-consciousness and in part because of a failure to cite the Democrats as better for one's family finances. If this is applicable to the national level, the relative drop in the turnout of lower-status whites that Reiter discovered may make federal legislators less responsive to their desires and needs, because their votes are inconsistent. He also has found that nonvoting whites would not necessarily vote Democratic in any particular election and their withdrawal from the electorate is mostly expected.

Other scholars, including Degolyer and Lee Scot, (1996) investigating the case of Hong Kong, claim that the political apathy is a result of a particular and peculiar history and social context. With a change of the social, political and economic conditions, as the Hong Kong case reveals, there is a decrease of the political apathy surrounding the elections. Salamon and Van Evera (1973) created an “Apathy model” with three “apathy related factors that influence on the participation.” In this research as well as in others (Mutz 2002, Emery 1996, Ross 1975, Merrifield 1973) party ideology shift is not treated as factor that causes this phenomenon, and, as previously mentioned, the focus of these studies is on the socio-demographic and economic factors.

## **1.4 Political Apathy and Party Ideology Shift**

The previous review of the factors that significantly influence political apathy, concentrate on the political parties as institutions that have a substantial importance in creating political apathy. Some of the authors (Piven and Cloward) consider institutional factors (including political parties) as more important than the socio-economic factors. From this conclusion, Miller and Shanks elaborated on the importance of the party ideology. The party ideology as a phenomenon is investigated very prominently, but in general separated from the idea of political apathy.

On other side, Budge, Robertson and Hearl (1987) introduced a spatial analysis of the party programs and Manifesto's of the political parties in nineteen democracies. This approach was the most systematic and comprehensive attempt for coding of the parties' programs and making them applicable for quantitative research. The pledges, policy commitments and leading themes from the manifestos were reduced, coded, and subjected to elaborate factor analysis. They offer a short historical review of parties and their evolution, and construct more or less elaborate diagrams showing how, over time parties can be located in terms of party ideology both in relation to each other, but also on the national party level (Johnson 1988).

Kitschelt (1994) stresses the process of the profound transformation of the Social Democracy in Europe in the 1970s and, through social democratic parties in nine European countries, explains the varying electoral fortunes of this ideology, clearly rejecting the reliance of the "external class" and political economy explanations on the different electoral destinies of these political parties. In his book *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (1995) he claims that the emergence of the radical right parties is happening via "a convergence of the Social Democratic and Moderate Conservative parties, together with an extended period of

government participation of the moderate conservatives...creates an electoral opening for authoritarian right that induces voters to abandon their loyalty to established conservative parties”

But, the approach of this research is closest to the Plane and Gershtenson (2004) explanations of the candidate’s ideological locations, abstention and turnout in U.S. Midterm Senate elections. They claim that the turnout in the midterm Senate Elections depends on the candidate’s ideological locations, which affect the citizens who feel indifferent to or alienated from the candidates.

Hill and Leighey (1993), also using aggregate data on statewide turnout, investigated the relative importance of party ideology, organization and competitiveness as mobilizing forces in U.S. gubernatorial elections. They find that party ideology as well as party competitiveness has a significant effect on the turnout, unlike party organization. Their findings show that party ideology is significant not only apart of the financial spending of the candidates, but also differentiates depending on the level of restrictiveness of a state voter’s registration requirements. Logically, a less restrictive registration law increases the influence of that state on party ideology.

Nevertheless, these authors don’t take the ideological shift as variable, but their findings are still a confirmation of the importance of party ideology as a variable for the turnout of the voters. Their starting point is the elite and mass partisans’ ideology is a factor for mobilization, and they claim that a more extreme ideology will enhance the turnout or will have negative effect on political apathy.

Seligson (2003) concluded that the ideology shift of the main political parties in Argentina left a space on the left-right dimension that allowed for the success and rise of the third party. They show that on an aggregate level, votes for the party that shifted their ideology decreased, but they did not measure on the individual level and do not show if the voters supporting either of the two parties shifted their preferences or didn't vote. Nevertheless, they showed that voters of the FREPASO (left oriented third party in Argentina) differed from voters of other parties, which could confirm that an ideology shift of the party distances the voter from that party.

Burnham also (1982: 188-189) when analyzing the crisis in American politics claims that one of the factors for the low turnout and more apathetic citizens since the 1960s can be explained also with the movement of the Democrats from the left toward the center, which initially increases the political apathy.

All previously mentioned approaches show: First that the political apathy is not a strictly conceptualized political term, and also refers to non-participation as well as low turnout. Therefore this paper, when explaining the phenomenon of political apathy refers on the low turnout as a measure for it (Deluca 1995). Second, there are various factors and determinants that influence the political apathy, and the precise nature of these factors has yet to be determined. Third, the party ideology shift is already considered as a variable that can potentially influence on the Political apathy or the low turnout and its importance is underestimated and these variable is not treated adequately.

This paper based on the previous work in the field will construct a quantitative model which will attempt to measure how the political ideology shift influences turnout on the individual and party level. This paper does not claim that the ideology shift will decrease the support of the party on

aggregate level, but that some old voters will abandon the support of the party as a result of feeling alienated, stemming from the fact that the parties may no longer represent their best interests.

## 2 Methodology, Data and Operationalization of the Variables

### 2.1 Research Question and Hypotheses

This paper seeks to answer some of the questions about how party ideology shift influences political apathy. It aims to test and show that a shift in party ideology can cause some party supporters to abandon their support of the party, as they can come to feel as if their interests are no longer accurately represented on the party platform. The investigation's starting assumption holds that political parties shift their ideology or programmatic position with the purpose of maximizing their profit, i.e. to increase the number of votes that the party wins during the elections. But this party ideology shift has its price. Thus, this investigation's core position is that the shift of ideology by the party can result in the apathetic behavior of some party supporters or voters, which as a result of an ideological change within the party can lose interest in voting and can result in a lack of participation on the elections. The central research question of this paper is formulated to measure and confirm the shift over two time periods and to show patterns on the individual level as well as on the aggregate (party) level. Therefore, individuals who reported non-participation during the last elections and voted for the party on the previous elections are used as the primary variable. Additionally, the Manifesto of the shifted party for the elections has been changed and the quantitative translation of these changes confirms that there is ideology or programmatic shift.

From the research questions two main hypotheses can be constructed:

***H1*** *The ideology shift of political parties will cause political apathy on individual level among supporters of the political parties that usually vote for the party*

*H2 The party ideology shift will not always cause a decrease in the number of votes on the party level. The ideology shift on the party level can also result in a better electoral result for the party.*

## **2.2 Data and Operationalization of the Data**

The purpose of this paper is to measure how the party ideology shift influences the voting behavior of individuals, but the paper will also include analysis on the aggregate (party) level. The measurements will show that the findings for political apathy within individuals are in accordance with findings for the individual level. For the purposes of this research, the database from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) Module 2 2001-2006 will be used. Due to the lack of Panel Database for Western, Central and Eastern Europe, this database is the most applicable for the needs of this study, because of the question within the report highlighting voting preferences during the previous elections, as well as current ones, which is vital for the construction of the model. This Database consists of information from thirty-eight countries' post-electoral studies, and therefore is acceptable for the needs of this research. Since the purpose of this paper is to draw general inferences about the influence of the party ideology shift on political apathy, and not to limit the observation to one particular region, the model will include all countries without any exclusion. As such, in the sample, there are countries from South America, North America, Asia, and Australia.

The limitations in the construction of other variables will cause a reduction of the data. Individuals who reported non-voting on the previous elections will be excluded from the sample. With the first case selection, the number of cases decreased from 64256 to 47888. Additionally,

because the sample of countries that is included in CSES Database does not fit completely with those in the CPM Database, the next phase of case selection included elimination of all cases where the countries, parties, or years of the survey are not compatible in both databases. After the final case selection, the sample is consisted of 11273 cases, 84 parties in 12 countries and in the model that include religiosity as variable, there are 6954 cases, 64 parties in 9 countries<sup>7</sup>.

For construction of the variable of ideology shift, I use the Comparative Party Manifesto (CMP) Database from 1990 to 2003. This Database includes 54 countries from which 25 are OECD countries, 24 are Central and Eastern European countries and 5 are other countries, of which two are EU members. Although, there are several modes of measuring party ideology or party positions, the CMP Database is most acceptable for the purposes of the project because it consists of 780 parties in 529 elections, with 3018 party programs and Manifesto's, five different programmatic dimensions, and 113 programmatic data variables (Comparative Manifesto Project, Manifesto Research Group Manifesto Dataset MDS2005 Data Handbook, 2005). These facts make this data attractive and it is, thus, the most suited for the purposes of the research.

Other text-based measurements of the party manifestos have been conducted by Laver & Garry (2000), Laver, Benoit & Garry (2003) and Slapin and Proksch (2007). Although, there are serious indications for a systematic coder error (Benoit, Laver, Mikhaylov 2008) within the CMP Database, the limitations of this database continue to be less inhibiting than the limitations presented by other methods. Therefore, the CMP Database is still the best option for this project.

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<sup>7</sup> This reduction of the sample is just a result of the imperfection of the databases used for construction of the model. Based on the theoretical explanations, the religiosity is included in the model, nevertheless as a result of significant additional reduction when this variable is included, the model without religiosity is also developed.



Additionally, this database has other advantages, including is the fact that it is based on a content analyses of the electoral programs of political parties. Electoral programs are some of the most acceptable indicators for measuring party ideology, because they cover a wide range of political issues and themes, and therefore can be taken as a “set of key central statement of party positions” (Budge, Robertson, Hearl 1987). They are authoritative statements of the party policies because they are usually confirmed by party conventions, and thus are representing the positions of the entire party, not only the views certain factions or the leadership. The advantage that the database offers, at least for this research, is that data is published before every election and, therefore, the changes in party positions or a party ideology shift can be studied.

The construction of the variable for ideology shift will be constructed by subtracting the score for ideology in one election cycle with the score from the previous cycle. The ideology shift variable will include all seven domains measured in the CPM Database: external relations, freedom and democracy, political system, economy, welfare and quality of life, fabric of society, and social groups. All of these domains consist of the most important variables for determining ideology shift of political parties. Furthermore, a detailed, theoretical justification for the selection of these components is discussed below, in a subchapter where the party ideology shift variable will be explained. In general these components express crucial political phenomena and they are the most important components in which parties and voters distinguish each other.

### ***2.3 Methods and Variables***

As already mentioned, the purpose of the paper is to measure the influence of the ideology shift on political apathy on both the individual and aggregate (party) level. For the purposes of this

investigation, the individual level can be defined as the way in which ideology shift influences the voting behavior of individuals. Does the ideology shifting will influence the individual to decide to not participate in the elections as a result of the change of the positions of the party that he or she once supported? On the aggregate level, the paper investigates whether the ideology shift of the party influences the total number of votes that party won during the elections. Therefore, two different statistical models will be used for the two different levels. The hypothesis for the influence of the ideology shift on individual level will be tested with Multi Level Modeling (Mix Effects or Hierarchical) (MLM) and in testing the hypothesis for the aggregate level, regression will be used.

### **2.3.1 Multi Level Modeling**

The Multi Level Model is a statistical model applied to data collected on more than one level in order to elucidate relationships. (Luke 2004) It has been developed over the past several decades, appearing under different names: Hierarchical Linear Models (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002), Random coefficient models (Longford, 1993) Mixed-effects models (Pinheiro and Bates, 2000) as well as multilevel models. Their goal, as Luke stressed, is to predict the values of some dependent variable based on a function of a predictor variable across multiple levels. The model that I have constructed measures political apathy on the individual level as result of an ideology shift of the party level. The model will include two levels: the individual and party level. Therefore, this modeling is the most appropriate model to measure the effect of an ideology shift on the individual level, but also to include the effects on the party level. Its application is justified in three ways: the nature of the research fulfills the empirical, statistical and theoretical justification for use of the Multi level modeling. The Multi Level Modeling will include a

logistic regression for analyzing the influence of independent variables on the political apathy variable.

### **2.3.2 Logistic Regression<sup>8</sup>**

Logistic regression will be used in the Multi Level Modeling to measure the influence of the ideology shift on individual level. The ideology shift can cause three possible outputs for the voters: they can shift the voting preferences, keep voting for the same party or decide not to vote. This research is focused on explaining the third possibility. The political apathy variable will be coded as dichotomous variables, which include nonvoters being coded as 1 and all others being coded as 0. Logistic regression will be used because the dependent variable is categorical instead of continuous. The binary logistic regression for dichotomous outcomes calculates the probability of a certain event occurring by accounting for the maximum likelihood estimation. It calculates the changes in log odds of the dependent variable, but not the changes in the dependent itself as ordinary least squares regression. (Szekely, 2007) A linear relation between independent and dependent variables is not a condition, and variables do not need to be normally distributed. Additionally, homoscedasticity is not assumed, and multicollinearity between independent variables also can produce some issues. Yet, despite these limitations, for the needs of this research, logistic regression is the most appropriate model for measuring the influence of ideology shift on the individual level within the Multi Level Modeling.

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<sup>8</sup> Although, logistic regression is used within Multi Level Modeling, the separated explanation of the basic meaning of this model is judged as useful to be presented.

The equation for the multilevel logistic regression model, which measures the influence of the party on the individual and party level is:

### Model

Political Apathy =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1$  Political Participation +  $\beta_2$  Political Information +  $\beta_3$  Education +  $\beta_4$  Union Membership +  $\beta_5$  Urban/Rural +  $\beta_6$  Gender +  $\beta_7$  Age +  $\beta_8$  Religiosity +  $\beta_9$  Satisfaction with Democracy +  $\beta_{10}$  Governmental Performance +  $\beta_{11}$  Information\* Party Ideology Shift + e

$B_0 = Y_{00} + Y_{01}$  Party Ideology Shift  $Y_{02}$  Turnout +  $Y_{03}$  number of parties +  $r_0$

$B_2 = Y_{20} + Y_{21}$  Party Ideology Shift +  $Y_{22}$  Number of parties +  $r_2$

$B_3 = Y_{30} + Y_{31}$  Party Ideology Shift +  $Y_{32}$  Number of parties +  $r_3$

### 2.3.3 Aggregate Level

For the measurement of the influence of the party ideology shift on the aggregate (party) level, multiple regression is used. In this model, a regression can test if the variance in the party apathy variable can be explained by several independent variables or predictors, with the party ideology shift variable being the primary variant. Several control variables are also existent, such as whether the party belongs to or participate in the government or if it is opposition party, the general economic situation measured with the GDP per capita, and whether the party changed its leader between two electoral cycles.

The model for this linear regression is:

*Political Apathy* =  $B_0 + B_1$  Party Ideology Shift +  $B_2$  Government/Opposition +  $B_3$  Leader Change +  $B_4$  GDP + e

Additionally, another linear regression will be run to investigate the second hypothesis, which claims that there is not strict relation between a party ideology shift and political apathy on the party level. In this regression, political apathy variables will be constructed by computing the electoral results for each party from the two electoral cycles over which time the party ideology shift has been observed. The same control variables will be used as in the previous regression, which measures the effect on aggregate level. The difference between both models lies within the different operationalization of the dependent variable the political apathy variable.

The equation for this model is:

$$\text{Political Apathy}^9 = B_0 + B_1 \text{Party Ideology Shift} + B_2 \text{Government/Opposition} + B_3 \text{Leader Change} + B_4 \text{GDP} + e$$

## 2.4 Variables

### 2.4.1 Ideology Shift Score

As previously mentioned the ideology shift score will be constructed from the Comparative Party Manifesto Database. The advantages of this database, in comparison with expert surveys on the left-right scale or Benoit and Laver (2003) approach, are that in the case with left-right scale, from one to ten, not every ideology shift can be registered. To compute the score of the ideology shift, expert's valuation in the CSES Database Module 2 is subtracted from the value in the Module 1, which would cause additional reduction of the sample because the same countries are included in both models. In the case of Benoit and Laver's approach, the lack of two cycles of coding party positions limits their use for the purposes of this research. Despite the systematic

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<sup>9</sup> This variable for Political Apathy is constructed differently than then the variable in the previous model

code error that Benoit, Laver and Mikhaylov (2008) reported for the CMP Database, the previously mentioned limitations of other approaches continue to make the use of this database favorable. For the purposes of this research, the disadvantages of the CMP Database are not expected to present limitations and problems.

As previously mentioned the party ideology shift variable will be constructed by subtracting the score for party ideology in the programs or Manifesto's during the recent elections from the score for the party ideology of the parties in the previous elections, when the voters voted for that party. The party ideology score will be formed by computing 22 variables from seven domains. Although, the CPM Database recognizes more than 100 variables in party programs, for the purposes of this thesis, the number of the variables will be decreased. The selection of these 22 variables completely corresponds to the needs of the thesis. The analysis of the CPM Database also shows that these variables are the most common in the programs and, thus, they can adequately represent the program positions in the party during the elections. Since, many of the variables that are constructed with CPM Database have limited regional and contextual importance, they are excluded from the sample and only variables that have broad and continuous importance for the citizens are included in the construction of the party ideology score variable.

What are these variables? As previously mentioned, the party ideology score variable will be constructed by computing the scores for important program issues including international affairs, European integration issues, human rights, democracy, free enterprise, market regulations, protectionism, social justice, welfare, multiculturalism and minority groups.

**International affairs**<sup>10</sup> (positive (per107) and negative (per109)) variable includes scores for the forms that CPM Database measures such as, positive and negative connotation of the international relations in party programs. This variable in conjunction with the European integration variable represents the positions of the parties for the international external relations domain. Previous experiences with elections have shown that international relations can be a crucial factor for voters' decision. For example, the Presidential Elections 2004 in the United States confirmed that the main debate in the campaign was held in the field of international elections, and republican candidate incumbent, George W. Bush won his second mandate as a result of the perception that the security of the American citizens had become a more pressing issue, mainly as a result of the war interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. On the other side, the position of the parties sometimes differs when concerning international relations issues among different party candidates, and as a result, the candidate's positions that will win in the primaries will depend heavily on the position of the party during the elections and its position shift.

**European Integration**<sup>11</sup> (positive (per108) and negative (per 110)) belongs to the external relations domain in the party programs, but also takes very important place in domestic issues. This significance has been achieved not only in countries that aspire to be a part of EU, but also within the parties of EU members states, which are faced with the challenges surrounding the future steps of European Union. The implementation of new politics and further integration has

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<sup>10</sup> The case of USA and Presidential Elections 2004 is only one example of the importance of this variable. In the case with U.S. this issue was raised also as a highest security and internal problem of the country and therefore its importance for the electoral outcome was emphasized, but nevertheless international affairs still play crucial role in the electoral process

<sup>11</sup> Although, the European Integration variable has no effects on the political parties out of Europe, because of the big importance for European party systems which consist the majority of the sample, this variable is included. On the other side, other variables that include regional integration were not included, because of the fact that neither of those integrations are not integral and complex as EU.

played an important role in the domestic politics of member states and this has been shown to be decisive factors in election outcomes. However, over time, parties have shown inconsistency where European issues are concerned, so the ideology shift is highly expected.

**Freedom and Human Rights (per201) and Democracy (per202)**, can be defined as the set of variables that explain the main positions of the parties in the human rights and democracy domain. Within the domain, issues surrounding basic human rights and freedoms are represented along with the positions of the parties on this issue. The domain also includes the path toward democratization, the involvement of citizens in the society and the way in which the decision – making process is treated by the parties.

**Political Corruption (per 304) and Decentralization (301)** will be included from the political system domain. These two variables express the main party positions in this area, and are most important and frequently mentioned by citizens in public opinion surveys as being serious issues.

**Free Enterprise (per401), Market Regulations (per403), Protectionism (405)** are variables that are included within the economy domain. These variables most adequately represent important economic issues that often arise within campaigns, and they are points where parties differ significantly from each other in terms of position.

**Social Justice (per503), Welfare State Expansion and Limitation (per504 and per505) and Education Expansion and Limitation (per 506 and per 507)** are variables selected from the welfare and quality of life domain. Although, there are another variables that can be included in the party ideology score, such as culture, the selection is limited to these variables, because they some of the most crucial in determining election outcomes.



### **Traditional Morality (per 603 and per 604) and Multiculturalism (per607 and per 608)**

have been chosen from the fabric of society domain because are most among the most crucial factor in contributing to the voter's decision making process. The traditional morality variables include the positions of parties regarding religion, prohibition, family values, censorship as well sexual and other minority rights issues. In contemporary society these variables have shown themselves to be very important issues and points where parties differ from each other.

The final variables speak to the positions of the parties surrounding the issues of **Minority Rights Inland and Abroad (per7051 and 7052)**. The previously discussed variables and aspects that will be factored into the party ideology score variable.

Although the Database has five programmatic dimensions computed according to the theoretical explanations of the left- right positions of the parties, as explained by Laver and Budge (1992), the variable that is computed for this thesis meets all of the requirements and aspects that are mentioned as important in electoral cycles. The variable also reflects the fact that there are spots of differentiation among and within parties, and therefore can more adequately show party ideology shift in regards to time. The dimensions offered in the database do not offer a complete picture of the political programs of the parties. Therefore, this equation will be used especially to suit the needs of the paper.

### **2.4.2 Political Apathy Variable**

On the individual level, the research will focus on analyzing those individuals which reported voting for certain political party during the previous elections, and not voting at all during the

following elections. Since, three different models will be run, the political apathy variable will be differently coded for Multi Level Modeling, and Regression (aggregate level).

For Multi Level Logistic Modeling, the political apathy variable is coded as a dummy variable, with nonvoters and all other as the two values of the variable. On the aggregate (party) level, the variable for political apathy will be coded differently, for the purposes of investigating the two different hypotheses effectively. The shift in the percentages of the votes that parties won over the course of two electoral cycles will be included in the variable for the second construction. For the first hypothesis, this variable will represent the percentage of the voters that abandoned voting for a certain political party in the second electoral cycle but voted for the party on the previous ballot.

### **2.4.3 Control Variables**

The control variables are not included with the purpose of assessing the theoretical prepositions and their effects on the dependent variable, but only to control their effects when the results are evaluated. The model will include the socio-demographic variables as control variables. Age, gender, occupation, urban-rural dwelling, and income are the standard and common used socio-demographic variables that can influence the models. Apart from the use of these control variables, the multilevel model also includes variables for membership in trade unions and interest in politics. The assumption surrounding the trade union membership variable is that members of these organizations usually vote for left-wing or social democratic parties, and that membership would affiliation mean that these voters would continue to vote for the party even if an ideology shift occurs.

The interest in politics variable is a control variable which gives information about the individual's level of knowledge for the party actions. The assumption is that the higher the interest for politics, the bigger the chances are that an individual will notice an ideological shift within the political parties. This variable indirectly controls the level of information for politics. Therefore, based on the previous assumption, interaction between political information and party ideology shift is employed. This variable controls the chance party ideology shift to be noticed.

Another variable that will be included in the aggregate level analysis is the government/opposition variable, which will control the position of the party in front of their voters and supporters. The party in government has more possibilities to attract votes because of their visibility, but also has a greater potential to lose this support because of unsatisfied promises. Also, a change in leadership variable will be included, which will control whether the change of the leader affects the overall perceptions held by the citizens about that party, as well as whether the change of the leader has an influence on the party ideology shift. The last control variable that will be included will address how individuals evaluate the performance of the Government overall. A negative evaluation can be one of the reasons for non-voting or a shifting preferences from the parties in power, no matter the effects of the ideology shift.

## **Data Analyses and Interpretation of the results**

The influence of party ideology shift on political apathy has not yet been investigated, and this thesis will serve to fill that gap. As already mentioned in previous chapters, the effects of the party ideology shift are measured on an individual level, but also the effects on the party level will also be investigated. The multilevel effects on the individual and party level are measured using a Multi Level Logistic Model, and the influence of the party ideology shift on the party level is tested with a linear regression. The second hypothesis is also tested with linear regression.

### ***2.5 Multi Level Logistic Regression: Results***

For the Multi Level Modeling two models have been constructed: one that includes the religious inclination of an individual as a variable, and the second that excludes this factor. The reasons for this construction, lie in the fact that the religiosity variable was not included in the all of the surveys of electoral studies, and therefore additionally decreases the sample available for the model. Based on the claims of the importance of the religiosity of an individual in the explanations of low turnout, the two models were separately run. Apart from this single difference, all other variables included in the both models are the same, and the difference in the results can be explained by the effects of religiosity on the model.

The Multilevel Model was tested using R version 2.9.0 and the nlme package available at (<http://cran.r-project.org>)<sup>12</sup>. The model includes the party ideology shift variable as an explanatory variable and a group of socio-demographic variables as age, gender, education and urban/rural origin, but also the political information variable, political participation, which measured by political activity and contact with candidates. Other control variables that have been factored into the model include institutional effects, such as satisfaction with democracy and personal opinion of overall governmental performance. The other very important variable, that explains the social “connectedness” (Teixeira 1992), which is included in the model is the union membership variable. Based on the theoretical explanations (Streeck and Visser 2006), members of trade unions traditionally support the social democratic and other left-wing parties, and the expectations are that the members of these unions are more likely to keep voting for the party in spite of the political ideology shift than other citizens who do not have this type of relationship with a party.

On party level, the election’s turnout and the number of parties were included as control variables. The models also included interaction between political information and party ideology shift as variables. The reason behind the construction of this interaction is a result of the assumption that more politically informed citizens are more inclined to notice the shift in the ideology of the party and to react to this change. Both models, as previously mentioned, differ with the religiosity variable.

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<sup>12</sup> R Development Core Team. 2009. R: A language and environment for statistical computing. *R Foundation for Statistical Computing*, Vienna, Austria. ISBN 3-900051-07-0, URL <http://www.R-project.org>.

**Table 1 Multi Level Modeling**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Coefficients (model 1)</b>	<b>p-value (model 1)</b>	<b>Coefficients (model 2)</b>	<b>p-value (model 2)</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	<b>0.07111811</b>	<b>0.2487</b>	<b>-0.05492012</b>	<b>0.5220</b>
<b>Political participation</b>	<b>0.01034896</b>	<b>0.1293</b>	<b>0.01391085</b>	<b>0.1161</b>
<b>Political information</b>	<b>0.00428616</b>	<b>0.6958</b>	<b>-0.01601866</b>	<b>0.1837</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>-0.00156868</b>	<b>0.0000</b>	<b>-0.00141384</b>	<b>0.0000</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>0.00283425</b>	<b>0.5764</b>	<b>0.00381068</b>	<b>0.5429</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>-0.00919311</b>	<b>0.0000</b>	<b>-0.00987457</b>	<b>0.0000</b>
<b>Union membership</b>	<b>0.02754098</b>	<b>0.0000</b>	<b>0.03175934</b>	<b>0.0000</b>
<b>Religiosity</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>0.00010801</b>	<b>0.2072</b>
<b>Rural Urban</b>	<b>0.00367894</b>	<b>0.1097</b>	<b>-0.00145155</b>	<b>0.5980</b>
<b>Satisfaction with democracy</b>	<b>0.01350476</b>	<b>0.0005</b>	<b>0.01266392</b>	<b>0.0050</b>
<b>Government performance</b>	<b>0.00575858</b>	<b>0.1872</b>	<b>0.01096020</b>	<b>0.0364</b>
<b>Turnout</b>	<b>-0.00071157</b>	<b>0.1778</b>	<b>0.00065135</b>	<b>0.4376</b>
<b>Number of parties</b>	<b>0.00496847</b>	<b>0.1217</b>	<b>0.00990812</b>	<b>0.0122</b>
<b>Political Inf* PIDL Shift</b>	<b>0.00430763</b>	<b>0.0049</b>	<b>0.00556947</b>	<b>0.0013</b>
<b>Party Ideology Shift</b>	<b>-0.00347162</b>	<b>0.0934</b>	<b>-0.00623123</b>	<b>0.0083</b>

The results in Table 1 show that in the first model, which excluded the religiosity variable, the value of the intercept is small and several variables are significant. The party ideology shift variable is significant with  $p < 0.1$ , and the interaction between political information and party ideology shift is also significant with  $p < 0.05$ .

Additionally, some of the control variables such as age, education and union membership are significant with  $p < 0.000$ , and the variable for satisfaction with the democracy is significant with  $p < 0.05$ . All of the other variables in the model are not significant. However, besides the significance of the variables, their values are very low and therefore the explanation power of these variables is very low.

The second model, where the religiosity variable is included, shows different results. Although, the religiosity variable is not significant, more variables in this model are significant than in the first model. The party ideology shift variable is again significant, but unlike in the previous model, in this model the significance is  $p < 0.01$ . Additionally, the interaction between this and the political information variable is more significant with a significance of  $p < 0.001$ . Besides this, age, education, trade union membership and satisfaction with democracy variables are again highly significant. In this model the government performance variable and the number of parties variable, that have effect on party level, are significant with  $p < 0.05$ .

### **2.5.1 What can be concluded from the results – Discussion**

The results from these two models in the Multi Level Regression Model are open for debate. Do these results confirm the first hypothesis for the effects of the party ideology shift on individual level? Only several variables of all of those that were included are significant, but even the

values of these significant variables is relatively low. On the other hand, a number of variables that the general theory uses as explanatory variables for low turnout, in this model, are not significant. The political information and political participation variables did not show any significance in the model, although the assumptions have shown that these variables influence political apathy. Conversely, the interaction between political apathy and political information is significant in both models, which shows that individuals that are more politically informed are more likely to notice the shift of the ideology of the parties and to respond to this shift, by becoming more apathetic, and not voting.

The party ideology shift variable is also significant in both models. While in the model without religiosity variable, the significance of this variable is a matter of debate, the second model's variable shows significant value that is worth considering. According to this, it can be determined that the first hypothesis for the individual level is supported. Nevertheless, the values for the intercept as well as for the variables are small, which questions the models in general. Although, the values are smaller than expected, the sample size of the model(s) is relatively large. However, the model's power is still low because of the relatively small number of nonvoters, with 7.9% in the first model and 7.3% in the second model.

In general, there were no expectations that this model would explain the large variance of political apathy, but just that it would show that there is a relationship between the dependent and independent variables, and that the latter influences the former. On the basis of the results produced in the models, this expectation has been confirmed. Party ideology shift, and especially the interaction with political information are significant or marginally significant in both models.



Another pattern from the models that is worth considering is the fact that in the second model, when the religiosity variable is included, there are more significant variables. For example, the party ideology shift shows higher significance, but the religiosity variable is insignificant. These findings can be the result of two possibilities. The first is that due to the decrease of the sample because of the elimination of several countries (Norway, Denmark etc.), the results are more clear, and that in countries that were eliminated from the sample, the influence of party ideology shift on political apathy is smaller.

The other, more likely, explanation is that the adding of a new variable to the models just increases the explanatory power of the model, while also increasing its significance. On the other hand, the insignificance of the variable of religiosity contradicts the findings that religiosity, to a certain extent, explains the variation of the turnout in the elections (Teixeira, 1999), yet still confirms the claims of other scholars ( ), that the importance of the religion in general has decreased, as religious values are as strong anymore and religion and religion institutions do not strongly influence voters. Nevertheless, the fact that this variable only shows the degree of the religiosity of the individuals and not to which religion that individual belongs also limits the findings. Conversely, the variation between different religions can explain how a certain religion influences political apathy, or if believers to one religion are more likely to become apathetic as a result of party ideology shift.

The number of parties in this model is significant, which shows that the number of parties helps to determine if individuals are more likely to be apathetic and not to vote, or to switch their votes and support a different party. Thus, the assumption that the higher the number of parties, the higher the possibility that an individual will be inclined to vote for another party, given ideology

shift, is true. Other variables that showed insignificance, like the gender, were not expected to influence political apathy. The union membership variable, as was expected, showed significance.

## 2.6 *Party level: Results*

The first hypothesis, a part of which was tested with Multi Level Modeling, was additionally tested using a linear regression to examine how a party ideology shift influences political apathy, and whether as a result of political apathy, previous voters who supported party during past elections will choose to abandon voting for the party in the current election. As previously mentioned, the party apathy variable was constructed from the percentage of the voters that abandoned voting for the party. The control variables in this model consisted of government/opposition, leader change and GDP per capita.

**Table 2. Model summary**

<b>R</b>	<b>.387</b>
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>.149</b>
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>.133</b>
<b>Durbin-Watson</b>	<b>.754</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>8.961</b>
<b>Sig.</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>121</b>

According to the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> (Table 2), the independent variables account for some 13.3% of variance in political apathy in the sample. It is a reasonably low value of R<sup>2</sup>, which makes the

combination of independent variables, employed here, relatively weak predictors. However, the overall value of the model (F) is highly significant at the  $<.001$  level. The regressing index for political apathy applied to the chosen set of independent variables provided a constant of 4.462. If the value of all of the independent variables would be 0, the value of the dependent variable (political apathy) would be 4.462.

The results from Table 2 show that the party ideology shift variable is highly significant with  $p<0.000$ , which strongly supports the hypothesis for the influence of this variable on political apathy. Providing all of the other independent variables are held constant, a one unit increase in the party ideology shift leads to a 0.251 increase in the possibilities for party apathy. If the party is in opposition instead of being in power this leads to a 2.010 increase of the possibility for politically apathetic behavior.

**Table 3 Coefficients**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	4.462	1.680		2.560	.009		
Party Ideology Shift	.251	.053	.309	4.759	.000	.992	1.008
Leader Change	-.839	.658	-.082	-1.275	.204	.998	1.002
GDP	-1.129E-5	.000	-.017	-.266	.791	.990	1.010
Party in Government or Opposition	2.010	.654	.199	3.073	.003	.993	1.007

The high significance of t-test values for the variables for party ideology shift ( $t=-4.759$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and government/opposition belonging to the parties ( $t=3.072$ ,  $p<.005$ ) permits the conclusion that these independent variables make significant contributions to the model, being significant predictors of political apathy. The small t-value, with a low significance ( $t= -1.275$ ,  $p< .204$ ), has the dichotomous variable “leader change between two electoral cycles”, which indicates that this variable is not a significant predictor of political apathy. The GDP variable is also not significant. ( $t=-.261$ ,  $p<.791$ ).

### **2.6.1 Interpretation of the results: Are there enough arguments to support the hypothesis**

The results of the linear regression model have confirmed the expectations. The high significance of the political ideology shift variable confirms that this variable influences political apathy on the party level. More precisely, the model shows that individuals that abandoned voting on the elections, after having previously voted for certain party is the result of party ideology shift. Nevertheless, the explanatory power of this variable on the variation of the reasons for apathetic behavior is 13.3% which is relatively low. However when all factors are considered, the percentage of individuals that did not vote on the current ballot is approximately 8-10%. The fact that two out of three of the control variables are insignificant, with just government/opposition being significant, indicates that the results definitely show the importance of the effects of party ideology shift on political apathy. Additionally, the separate model, which excluded the control variables, was run and has shown a high significance  $P<.001$  and adjusted  $R^2 = .102$ , which helps

to confirm that the results of the previous model can be attributed to a party ideology shift and not just to the control variables.

GDP as control variable on the macro (country) level was also included to measure if there existed a difference in the apathetic behavior that resulted from the party ideology shift in countries with different economic situations. The highly insignificant results demonstrate that this variable does not have any influence on the dependent variable.

Contrary to expectations, the dichotomous variable “leader change between two electoral cycles” is not significant, and thus does not provide an explanation for political apathy on party the level. The assumptions, while including this variable in the model, were that a change in leadership at the party level could influence certain voters not to vote for the party. These assumptions have been based on the theoretical claims detailing the highly important role of political party leaders, and are especially evident in new post-communist democracies (Lewis, 2004). The leader change variable has been shown not to be a significant in creating political apathy. The importance of the vote choice is not of interest to this thesis, and so this work does not address this topic.

The limitations of the database, as well as intentions not to include several control variables can affect the explanatory power of this model. In addition to the party ideology shift being highly significant, the value of the adjusted  $R^2$  explains more than 10% of the variation in political apathy, and therefore represents an important factor in the general explanation of the phenomenon of political apathy or low turnout, and provides a substantial contribution to addressing the issues of low turnout. As previously mentioned, because of the limitations of the database, the number of variables was limited, but since important variables that can influence on the political apathy can be included to determine the ideological distance between parties, the

degree of vulnerability of the parties, the type of party system, these variables can additionally increase the explanatory power of the model.

## 2.7 *Second Hypothesis*

The first three models, presented above, were constructed to test the first hypothesis. For the purposes of the second hypothesis, which also explores political apathy on the party level, the political apathy variable was differently coded. The variable is coded such that the electoral results of the party in the current and previous electoral ballots, the time over which party ideology shift is measured, are subtracted from each other. The same control variables are used in both models. If the model does not show significance, but does have a relatively high value of the adjusted  $R^2$  then the hypothesis will be supported.

**Table 3 Model summary**

<b>R</b>	.079
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.006
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	-.011
<b>Durbin-Watson</b>	.886
<b>F</b>	.372
<b>Sig.</b>	.828
<b>N</b>	121

According to the adjusted  $R^2$  (Table 4), the independent variables account for some  $-.011$  % of variance in political apathy within the sample. It is an extremely low value, and therefore does not explain the model. Additionally, the value of the F-test is also extremely low and the

significance is  $p < .828$ , which confirms that the model is not applicable and that the null hypothesis in this model, which addresses the influence of party ideology shift on political apathy, is refuted.

The coefficients of the variables in Table 5 are also highly insignificant and the value of the t-test is also very low, which shows that the variables do not have any effect to the model. In general, both the model summary and the variable coefficients demonstrate that the model is flawed and will not yield any results. These findings, then, support the second hypothesis.

### 2.7.1 Interpretation of the results: Labour Party in Great Britain and FIDESZ in Hungary

**Table 5 Coefficients**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.079	2.287		.472	.638		
Party Ideology Shift	.021	.070	.019	.297	.767	.995	1.005
Leader Change	-.010	.853	.000	-.011	.991	.999	1.001
GDP per capita	-2.542E-5	.000	-.028	-.435	.664	.993	1.007
Party in Government or opposition	-.906	-.846	-.070	-1.071	.285	.996	1.004

This model raises some very important questions that are worth addressing such as: What are the reasons for these findings? Are the findings from the first hypothesis in contradiction with the claims of the first hypothesis? Both questions need adequate attention. The reasons behind the fact that an ideological shift at the party level can result in better electoral outcome stems from the fact that the political positions of the parties depend on the ideological positions of the voters. As Downs (1957) stressed, voters are predominantly concentrated in the center of the left-right scale of the political ideology and, parties are adjusting their party programs and ideological positions in an attempt to align themselves closer to the center of the political spectrum, where the density of voters is biggest. As has already been shown, the movement of the parties results in the loss of votes, because when the party ideology shifts, it alienates some supporters and, as the previous hypothesis showed, a certain percentage of the voters decide not to vote and become apathetic.

But, the party ideology shift can also cause parties to move closer to the average voter and, as a result, they simultaneously attract more voters. Parties, in an attempt to maximize their votes (Muller and Strom 1999)<sup>13</sup> change their ideology positions based on the assumption that new ideological positioning will yield more votes and better electoral outcomes. Additionally, when considering Laver's model of types of political parties and party competition (2005) in which he distinguishes four types of parties: hunter, aggregator, predator and sticker, the three of these types are continually changing their positions with the goal of achieving better electoral results. The forth type – the sticker party -- is an ideologically constant party, and thus keeps the same positions and, in general, is orientated toward keeping their stable voters and supporters.

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<sup>13</sup> The authors distinct between three types of parties vote orientated, policy orientated and office orientated. For more see Muller and Strom, Policy, Office or Votes - How parties in western Europe make hard decisions (1999)



The Labour party in Great Britain, especially in the period between the early 1980s to the middle of the 1990s, illustrates how a party ideology shift can influence electoral outcomes, and also cause apathetic supporters. At the beginning of the 1980s, after the electoral defeat in the parliamentary elections in 1979 and with the change of the leader of the party and the inauguration of the writer Michael Foot, this resulted in an enormous move of the party toward the left. The new party manifesto that was introduced was considered to be a strong socialist move (Jenkins, Owen, Williams Rodgers, 1981) and resulted in the worst electoral outcome for the party since 1918. As a result of this dramatic ideological shift, significant numbers of voters decided not to vote, while simultaneously a substantial number of voters shifted their support to the new-formed Social democratic party. In the end the Labour Party captured only 27.6% of the votes.

The changes that the Labour Party undertook in the 1990s demonstrate how party ideology shift can cause an increase in the number of votes for the party and, thus, an electoral win. The continuous transformation of the Labour Party, starting with Foot's successor Neil Kinnock, and resulting in the publication of the new manifesto in 1996, called "New Labour", under the leadership of Tony Blair, produce success in the elections and resulted in the party gaining power. This manifesto was another example of the ideology shift of the party, but in this case the new votes received as a result of the shift overtook the votes lost as a result of political apathy and brought about an electoral win.

Another example that confirms the claims of this thesis is shown in the ideological shift of the FIDESZ (Alliance of Young Democrats) in Hungary, after the unfavorable outcome of the 1994 Parliamentary Elections. The ideological shift of the party was so dramatic, that the party not

only moved on the left – right scale, but completely transformed from a liberal into a conservative party (Kitschelt 1999)<sup>14</sup>. As a result of this ideology shift, several prominent party members left the party (Peter Molnar), and the structure of the party supporters changed with a lot of voters becoming apathetic, but also with an attraction of new voters positioned on the right. The party became one of the biggest in Hungary, being in power in the period (1998-2002) and becoming the biggest opposition party after 2002.

Although, the lack of quantitative, empirical evidence can diminish the importance and the validity of the claims presented by these two cases, the previous examples support the claims of the hypothesis and the findings of the quantitative model constructed to test this hypothesis. Additional investigations from a historical perspective should be undertaken in order to confirm the development of the apathetic behavior within individuals that results from a party ideology shift, but these cases unambiguously support the claims of the two hypotheses.

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<sup>14</sup> Another works that present party ideology shifts can be find in Crewe, Sarlvik and James (1977) who explain the party dealignment in Britain in the period of 1964-1974. Kitschelt, also stresses party movements in the Belgian and West German Ecologic Party and this fact is present in Mair's (1987) analysis of the Irish party system.

## Conclusions

This thesis investigates the influence of party ideology shift on the phenomenon of political apathy. Political apathy in this paper is considered and analyzed from the characterization of low voter turnout as a measurement for apathy. The thesis gives broader theoretical explanations of the meaning and importance of this phenomenon. Based on the theory of DeLuca, who explains that nonparticipation as a phenomenon has two components, one based on the individual choice to not vote in elections and to avoid participation in the political process, and the second based on the explanation that socioeconomic and political factors have the ability to influence and cause the political apathy. This thesis, using a quantitative approach, suggests a new model based on the party ideology variable to explain the political apathy.

The comprehensive review of all factors that influence the political apathy shows that the puzzle has not yet been solved. In general, a substantial debate exists within the democratic theory literature concerning the implications of political apathy on the legitimacy and stability of democratic systems. On one hand, theorists favoring citizen participation have argued that higher levels of turnout reflect and encourage political legitimacy and citizen support. On the other hand, theorists concerned about democratic stability have pointed to the often undemocratic values of the less educated, and the high levels of turnout in such unstable systems as Weimar Germany, which resulted in the establishment of the totalitarian and undemocratic Nazi regimes. This thesis, although does not explore this issue, strongly supports the argumentation that political apathy is a serious “disease” for democratic systems and can hurt democratic values, especially in terms of the adequate representation of the interests of the citizens.

So if the disease exists and has been diagnosed by all relevant scholars that investigate this issue, than the basic question that must be addressed concerns the best method to cure this apathy. All previous work has shown that there is no “magic stick” than can solve the problem, and that there is no “panacea” for political apathy. The factors or variables included in the explanation of this phenomenon can be classified in three large groups of variables or models: a socially deterministic group (ethnocultural), a group focusing on the party and personality (institutional) and a rational choice model, which claims that voters make their decision in an attempt to maximize their personal profit, by choosing whether to vote for some political party or acting apathetic. The thesis includes a review of the most important factors that have been the subject of past investigations and, while some findings are more concentrated on the socio-demographic factors used as an explanation for the low turnout, the other papers emphasize the importance of political or institutional factors. Because of the specific characteristics of the legal frameworks in the USA, many authors dedicate a significant portion of their analyses to the registration procedures, but other variables are also employed.

This thesis also pays attention to institutional factors, especially the contribution of political parties to political apathy. According to the assumption that parties are the main actors in the “political arena”, and their “behavior” contributes to the decision of citizens in determining whether to be politically active and cast their ballots or to be apathetic and demonstrate disinterest for politics in general.

Among the factors that were investigated within political parties, scholars have recognized the importance of party ideology and its influence on political apathy. But, on the other site, I

strongly believe that this variable did not earn the place that deserves within the academic explanation of the political apathy or low turnout considers.

The starting point of this thesis is that a party ideology shift can cause individuals that voted for certain political party in previous elections to abandon voting, as a direct result of this shift. But this thesis goes further and investigates how party ideology shift influences these factors on the party level. The two different hypotheses were tested:

***H1** The ideology shift of political parties will cause political apathy on the individual level among past supporters of the parties*

***H2** The party ideology shift will not always cause a decrease in the number of votes on the party level. The ideology shift on the party level can also result in a more favorable electoral result for the party.*

In testing these hypotheses, I introduced three different models: Multilevel Logistic Modeling and linear regression to test the first hypothesis, and a linear regression for testing the second hypothesis. Although, the both linear regressions are on the party level, they differ in the coding of the variable for political apathy. In the Multi Level Modeling, two models were run that differ over the inclusion of the variable for religiosity.

The results from the Multi Level Logistic Regression has shown significance  $p < 0.1$  for the party ideology shift and a significance of  $p < 0.05$  for the interaction between party ideology shift and political information availability. Other significant variables in this regression were the age, education, union membership and satisfaction with the democracy of the individual. Nevertheless, besides the significance, the values of the intercept and variables are very low,

which shows a very low explanatory power of the model. When the religiosity variable was employed in the model, the results were different. The religiosity in this model was not a significant variable, but the party ideology shift variable was significant with  $p < 0.0083$ , and the interaction between this variable and political information was also significant with  $p < 0.0013$ . In comparison with the first model, where the religiosity variable was excluded, besides age, education, union membership, and satisfaction of the democracy that stay significant, the general performance of the government and the number of parties were also significant. As in the first model, the values for the intercept and variables were very low.

The reasons for the low values of the intercept and variables, as well as marginal significance of the party ideology shift in the first model are rooted in the low explanatory power of the model. In the relatively large sample, just 7.9% (or 7.3% consequently) of the cases were nonvoters or the political apathetic persons, and, as a consequence, the results were reasonable and expected. Another specific characteristic of the models was that besides the fact that religiosity was not a significant variable in the second model, more variables were significant, and in the second model, in contrast to the first, the party ideology shift variable is highly significant. The explanation for this pattern lies in the fact that the samples are different in both models, and that as a result of the absence of several countries in the second model (Norway, Denmark), the results are more in line with expectations. The second explanation for these differences suggests that the inconsistencies might be a result of the effect of the religiosity variable in the model, which means that the employment of new relevant variables can strengthen the explanatory power of the model.

The linear regression model, introduced to test the first hypothesis on the party level, showed a high significance of the party ideology shift variable and adjusted  $R^2 = 0.133$ , supporting the hypothesis that looks at the influence of the political apathy on party level. The government/opposition variable is also significant and helps to explain political apathy. Two other variables that were introduced in the model, leader change and per capital GDP, did not show significance. According to the fact that, when just party ideology shift is employed in the model, the adjusted  $R^2 = 0.102$ , shows that the explanatory power of the model is the main factor contributing to the result mostly of these variables, and the additional selected control variables explain just additional 3.1% of variation. It, thus, can be concluded that the party ideology shift variable is an important variable that contributes to the explanation of the phenomenon of political apathy.

The third model does not show any significance of the variables and the adjusted  $R^2 = -.011$ , which means that the null hypothesis is refuted. As a result of this, the second hypothesis, which claims that party ideology shift does not necessarily causes a decrease in the votes of the party in the elections, is accepted. Although, the previous hypothesis shows that party ideology shift influences political apathy, the findings of this model are not contradictory, because the probability that the party will more new voters, than it produces apathetic individuals is a very likely scenario. The cases of Labour Party in Great Britain in the 1980s and 1990s and FIDESZ in Hungary show that a party ideology shift can result in a better electoral outcome when the ideological shift directs the party toward the center where the density of the voters is bigger, or with very low votes when the shift is in opposite of the voters prepositions.

In the end, the results from all of these models leads to the conclusion that party ideology shift influences of the political apathy or low turnout. There is enough evidence to support both hypotheses, and despite a lot of limitations, further researches looking to the improvement of the model can be useful for this field.

### ***Limitations of the research and the possible sources of error***

One of basic limitations of this research lies in the databases. In deficit of panel database for Europe, the CSES satisfies the minimum criterion that was obligatory for the needs of the models, mainly the report question for voting in previous and current elections. Nevertheless, except for socio-demographic variables, this database does not include enough relevant institutional variables to measure political apathy. Therefore, the selection of the control variables was very limited. On other hand, the construction of the variable for party ideology shift caused additional limitations and shortcomings within the final sample. Besides the very serious limitation of the CPM Database with the systematic coding error reported by Benoit, Laver and Mikhaylov (2008), which has already elaborated upon (see chapter 3: Data), the non-compatibility of both databases was very serious problem that presented itself when constructing the model. Although, the sample has not endangered the models, and fulfills all required criteria for unlimited running of them, the quality of the sample was victimized as a result of numerous case selection processes, strictly as a result of technical reasons.

On the other hand, the sample size is relatively large when comparing the category of individuals in whom behavior was analyzed. The nonvoters in the current elections are less than 10% of the whole sample, and the reasons for low explanatory power of the models can be attributed to this



fact. Nevertheless, besides a relatively small sample, the relevance of the research is still significant.

When considering the CPM Database and the construction of the party ideology shift variable, another problem appeared in the coding of the shift of new parties and parties that in one of the electoral cycles were part of coalition, and in other participated in the electoral process as single party. Nevertheless, this problem only presented itself in a few situations and the issue was adequately solved.

As already mentioned, the serious limitation of the project was the lack of control variables for the aggregate (party) level. Four out of five variables on the party level, that were employed in the models, were specially constructed for the purposes of the project and just one variable was used from the existing ones in the databases.

Another very limitation of the project can be found in the starting assumption that citizens are aware of politics, and thus they are able to notice a party ideology shift. In an attempt to overcome this limitation, the political information variable was introduced and, additionally, the interaction between political information and party ideology shift also was employed. The interaction was significant in both MLM models. Also, the models do not include consider what the most important issue for the individuals is in determining voting pattern, and the effect of party ideology shift on it these issues. Nevertheless, these aspects are possible aspects for further research.

The thesis introduced a Multi Level Logistic Regression Model with two levels of analyses: the individual and party level. However, the introduction of third state level could be very useful to

explanation of the phenomenon of political apathy. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this thesis, the two level model produces results from which, academically worthy conclusions can be drawn.

### ***Recommendations for further research in the field***

The findings of the thesis have shown that the party ideology shift is a relevant factor in the explanation of the phenomenon of political apathy. This project, very reasonably, did not solve the problems of turnout, but gave a notable contribution to the field. The starting expectations of the project are compatible with the final conclusions drawn from the results. Party ideology shift is just another relevant variable in determining the causes of political apathy, but can not completely explain the problem. Political apathy is very complex phenomenon, and the factors which produce it have not been fully examined, and also differ in the longitudinal and state aspects.

Therefore, possible future studies in this field, and which stem from the limitations of this project, could include the introduction of the three level MLM, with individual, party and state levels. The introduction of this model, as pre-condition, would require the building of a more comprehensive and adequate database.

The models included several control variables. However, those variables do not debilitate the list of relevant party level variables that should be included in the models. Therefore, the further research can be planned with purpose to include more relevant variables and to spread the domain of interest and explanation of the relation between party ideology shift and political apathy. Some of the very important variables that could explain the variation of political apathy

and could contribute to the models but were not employed in this model, include the degree of the vulnerability of the party system within a country, the type of party system, or the degree of ideological distance between political parties on the state level. Also, the employment of several relevant variables on the state level could also strengthen the model.

Another aspect of political apathy that can be investigated, would concern the introduction of the model in which the most important issue for the voter and the ideological shift in relation to that issue are examined. This research can measure not only if there is a relationship between both aspects and their effect to political apathy, but also which issue is the most likely to cause apathetic behavior.

# Appendices

## Aggregate (Party) Level Variables<sup>15</sup>

### Statistics

	NONPRT	GDP	SHIFT	LIDERChn	GvrOpp
N	120	121	121	120	120
Valid					
Missing	1	0	0	1	1
Mean	6.1133	36776.5372	5.7693	.3750	.3917
Std. Error of Mean	.48270	654.21480	.53940	.04438	.04475
Median	5.6000	36523.0000	4.7300	.0000	.0000
Std. Deviation	4.94625	7196.36275	5.93337	.48615	.49017
Variance	24.465	51787636.867	35.205	.236	.240
Minimum	.00	19499.00	.00	.00	.00
Maximum	20.00	53451.00	27.78	1.00	1.00

### LIDERChn

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
party kept the same leader	75	62.0	62.5	62.5
they changed the leader	45	37.2	37.5	100.0
Total	120	99.2	100.0	
Missing	1	.8		
System				
Total	121	100.0		

### GvrOpp

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
OPPOSITION pARTY	73	60.3	60.8	60.8
GOVERNMENTAL PARTY	47	38.8	39.2	100.0
Total	120	99.2	100.0	
Missing	1	.8		
System				
Total	121	100.0		

<sup>15</sup> The Appendix does not include frequencies for continuous variables like Party Ideology Shift, GDP and Political Apathy. Although Party Ideology Shift and Political Apathy are most important variables, because the possible recoding is not adequate for the purposes of the models, the frequencies will not be shown.

## Multi Level Modeling (Model with Religiosity)

## Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
AGE	6954	18	100	49.89	.186	15.512	240.630
GENDER	6954	1	2	1.49	.006	.500	.250
EDUCATION	6954	1	8	5.39	.021	1.765	3.116
UNION MEMBERSHIP	6954	1	2	1.73	.005	.443	.197
RELIGIOSITY	6954	1	4	2.28	.012	.986	.973
RURAL OR URBAN RESIDENCE	6954	1	4	2.68	.014	1.170	1.368
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:	6954	1	2	1.67	.006	.472	.222
GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE:	6954	1	4	2.49	.009	.709	.503
GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRATIC PROCESS	6954	1	4	2.41	.009	.772	.596
POLITICAL INFORMATION	6954	1	2	1.17	.004	.374	.140
ELECTORAL TURNOUT	6954	56.64	80.11	70.8622	.09369	7.81263	61.037
PidShift	6954	.00	27.78	5.8652	.06113	5.09766	25.986
PolApath	6954	.00	1.00	.0735	.00313	.26095	.068
Number of parties per country	6954	5.00	10.00	7.1730	.02029	1.69172	2.862
Valid N (listwise)	6954						

## Political Apathy

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	R did cast the ballot	6443	92.7	92.7	92.7
	R did not cast the ballot	511	7.3	7.3	100.0
	Total	6954	100.0	100.0	

## UNION MEMBERSHIP

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1. R IS MEMBER OF A UNION	1871	26.9	26.9	26.9
	2. R IS NOT A MEMBER OF A UNION	5083	73.1	73.1	100.0
	Total	6954	100.0	100.0	

# RELIGIOSITY

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1. HAVE NO RELIGIOUS BELIEFS	1947	28.0	28.0	28.0
	2. NOT VERY RELIGIOUS	1888	27.1	27.1	55.1
	3. SOMEWHAT RELIGIOUS	2377	34.2	34.2	89.3
	4. VERY RELIGIOUS	742	10.7	10.7	100.0
	Total	6954	100.0	100.0	

# GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE: GENERAL

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1. VERY GOOD JOB	261	3.8	3.8	3.8
	2. GOOD JOB	3676	52.9	52.9	56.6
	3. BAD JOB	2399	34.5	34.5	91.1
	4. VERY BAD JOB	618	8.9	8.9	100.0
	Total	6954	100.0	100.0	

# SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1. VERY SATISFIED	580	8.3	8.3	8.3
	2. FAIRLY SATISFIED	3601	51.8	51.8	60.1
	3. NOT VERY SATISFIED	2123	30.5	30.5	90.7
	4. NOT AT ALL SATISFIED	650	9.3	9.3	100.0
	Total	6954	100.0	100.0	

# Number of parties per country

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5.00	1789	25.7	25.7	25.7
	6.00	963	13.8	13.8	39.6
	7.00	1126	16.2	16.2	55.8
	8.00	862	12.4	12.4	68.2
	9.00	1760	25.3	25.3	93.5
	10.00	454	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	6954	100.0	100.0	

# EDUCATION

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1. NONE	4	.1	.1	.1
	2. INCOMPLETE PRIMARY	112	1.6	1.6	1.7
	3. PRIMARY COMPLETED	888	12.8	12.8	14.4
	4. INCOMPLETE SECONDARY	1397	20.1	20.1	34.5
	5. SECONDARY COMPLETED	1901	27.3	27.3	61.9
	6. POST-SECONDARY TRADE / VOCATIONAL SCHOOL	755	10.9	10.9	72.7
	7. UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE INCOMPLETE	228	3.3	3.3	76.0
	8. UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE COMPLETED	1669	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	6954	100.0	100.0	

## Multi Level Modeling (Model Without Religiosity)

### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
AGE	11273	18	100	50.29	.145	15.402	237.211
GENDER	11273	1	2	1.49	.005	.500	.250
EDUCATION	11273	1	8	5.40	.016	1.702	2.896
UNION MEMBERSHIP	11273	1	2	1.69	.004	.463	.214
RURAL OR URBAN RESIDENCE	11273	1	4	2.57	.011	1.193	1.423
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:	11273	1	2	1.72	.004	.447	.200
GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE: GENERAL	11273	1	4	2.38	.007	.691	.477
SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRATIC PROCESS	11273	1	4	2.29	.007	.737	.543
POLITICAL INFORMATION	11273	1	2	1.14	.003	.343	.118
ELECTORAL TURNOUT	11273	45.40	80.11	68.8021	.09293	9.86667	97.351
Pid Shift	11273	.00	27.78	6.0963	.04890	5.19213	26.958
Polical Apathy	11273	.00	1.00	.0791	.00254	.26995	.073
Number of parties per country	11273	5.00	11.00	7.4832	.01615	1.71463	2.940
Valid N (listwise)	11273						

## Frequencies

### EDUCATION

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1. NONE	12	.1	.1	.1
	2. INCOMPLETE PRIMARY	114	1.0	1.0	1.1
	3. PRIMARY COMPLETED	1484	13.2	13.2	14.3
	4. INCOMPLETE SECONDARY	1729	15.3	15.3	29.6
	5. SECONDARY COMPLETED	3709	32.9	32.9	62.5
	6. POST-SECONDARY TRADE / VOCATIONAL SCHOOL	1407	12.5	12.5	75.0
	7. UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE INCOMPLETE	237	2.1	2.1	77.1
	8. UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE COMPLETED	2581	22.9	22.9	100.0
	Total	11273	100.0	100.0	

### UNION MEMBERSHIP

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1. R IS MEMBER OF A UNION	3495	31.0	31.0	31.0
	2. R IS NOT A MEMBER OF A UNION	7778	69.0	69.0	100.0
	Total	11273	100.0	100.0	

### Political Apathy

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	R did cast the ballot	10381	92.1	92.1	92.1
	R did not cast the ballot	892	7.9	7.9	100.0
	Total	11273	100.0	100.0	



**SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRATIC PROCESS**

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>1. VERY SATISFIED</b>	<b>1129</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>
	<b>2. FAIRLY SATISFIED</b>	<b>6493</b>	<b>57.6</b>	<b>57.6</b>	<b>67.6</b>
	<b>3. NOT VERY SATISFIED</b>	<b>2882</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>93.2</b>
	<b>4. NOT AT ALL SATISFIED</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11273</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

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