Editor's Note

We are pleased to present this issue of JEPOP which is a special issue on the topic of turnout, and more specifically on how turnout is influenced by socialization, social networks and mobilization. We are delighted to welcome on board Kasper M. Hansen as guest co-editor for this issue. Kasper is Head of the PhD program at the Department of Political Science, at the University of Copenhagen and President of the Danish Political Science Association. Kasper is not only co-author of two of the articles in this issue but has been instrumental in recruiting the other authors whose work is included. All articles in this issue have been through JEPOP's rigorous reviewing process and we would like to thank our two referees, Dr. David Cutts and Professor Robert Huckfeld (who waive their anonymity).

Ed Fieldhouse, Mark Franklin and Rachel Gibson

Turnout – Socialization and Social Networks

KASPER M. HANSEN
University of Copenhagen, Denmark

In recent years, researchers have revisited the effect of socialization processes and social networks in studies of political behavior – electoral turnout in particular – recognizing that social influence and socialization held a prominent place in the pioneer studies on electoral behavior (Campbell et al., 1960; Lazarsfeld et al., 1948; see Zuckerman (2005) for a historical overview). The renewed attention is fueled both by the ongoing development of the conceptualization as well as empirical findings, due to some extent to improved data sources and statistical resources. Studies have found interpersonal discussions on political participation to have a strong effect (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; Huckfeldt et al., 2005), that voters tend

to conform their political behavior to their social relations (Stoker & Jennings, 2005; Zuckerman et al., 2005), and that elements in the social environment, such as neighborhoods, affect political participation (Kenny, 1992; McClurg, 2004). This has also inspired studies focusing on how the residential concentration of ethnic minorities affects turnout. US studies have found a predominantly negative relationship between the residential concentration of ethnic minorities and the group's turnout (e.g. Cho, 1999, et al., 2006), whereas Fieldhouse and Cutts (2008a, 2008b) found the opposite results in UK religious groups. Nickerson (2008) shows how voting can be contagious among spouses, and Fowler (2005) finds that turnout can spread in social networks in the form of a "turnout cascade," as a single person's decision to turn out affects the decisions of at least four other people as to whether or not to vote (see also Christakis & Fowler, 2009).

In this special issue, we tap into the discussion of socialization and the effect of social networks on turnout in several ways. Yosef Bhatti and Kasper M. Hansen present an impressive data set of more than 145,000 eligible voters between 18 and 21 years of age and show how strong parents influence their children in relation to turnout and how this effect disappears when the young adults leave home and their new household influences the voting decision. The article illustrates how 18-year-olds actually vote more than 21-year-olds when analyzed with a fine-grained dataset; thus supporting the Franklin (2004) argument that 18 as age for enfranchisement is unfortunate because at this age many potential young voters are disrupted in their social ties which otherwise would have helped them become habitual voters early in life (Plutzer, 2002).

By applying a regression discontinuity design with voting-age eligibility as the discontinuity, Elias Dinas finds an increased probability of 25% voting in the coming election if the person turned out in the previous election.

In an article entitled "The Age Gap in Voter Turnout through Time and Space," Kaat Smets shows how the age for important social events (e.g. establishing a family) in the early and middle stages of the political lifecycle contribute to understanding why voting habits are established differently in ten different Western democracies.

Julia Partheymüller and Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck show how non-voting is contagious, particularly when social ties are strong, and how it is reinforced through political discussions with non-voters. This indicates that interpersonal political discussions do not always lead to increased political participation, as is usually considered the norm. These findings correspond to the first article in this volume where parents tend to pass on voting and non-voting habits to their children.

In the fifth article in this special issue, Bhatti and Hansen illustrate how senior citizens stop voting as their primary social network withers away (withdrawing from the labor market and being widowed). The study is also able to explain why male seniors vote more often than female seniors, the reason again relating to the social network; as women tend to marry older men and outlive their spouses, women live alone longer and without their primary social network to encourage them to vote.

In a related article appearing in the next issue of JEPOP (Vol. 23. No.1) Donald P. Green, Peter M. Aronow and Mary C. McGrath present an impressive meta-analysis of the effects of field experiments on turnout. They consistently report that

social pressure and social gratitude treatments tend to be among the treatments providing the largest mobilization effects. Furthermore, these effects seem to spread through social networks (e.g. households).

Taken together with the five articles in this volume this provides strong evidence that turning out at elections is indeed a social act.

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