Findings from the 2012 National Survey of Cohousing Residents

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Research sponsors:

cohousing.org
MidAtlanticCohousing.org
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Presenters and Topics

Diane Margolis: Background and Introduction to Survey; Demographic Comparisons

Angela Sanguinetti: Transformational Cohousing Practices; Comparing Residents of Retrofit and Traditional Cohousing

Heidi Berggren: Cohousing and Political Involvement

Charles MacLane: Exploring the Data: Themes and Issues

Betsy Morris: Travel Behavior in Cohousing
Background and Introduction
Diane R. Margolis

In 2010, Coho/US Board of Directors planned a three-phase research project to serve its existing constituency, assist those wishing to form communities, and promote the value of cohousing.

Phases 1 and 2 focused on community-level data related to economic, social, and environmental sustainability. See: Report on Survey of Cohousing Communities 2011 by Diane Margolis and David Entin.
Phase III was a national survey of cohousing residents aimed at comparing cohousing residents and households to the general US population and answering other important questions based on researchers’ interests.

Products:


The Sample

- We compiled a **comprehensive database** of cohousing communities, including **unit addresses** and names, based on the FIC directory, personal communications with cohousing professionals, assessors lists, and 411.com
- We excluded senior cohousing and developer-driven cohousing
- We drew a **simple random sample of 1000 households** from the list of almost 2000 unit addresses from 121 communities and recruited one adult member of each household
- We recruited **all persons in retrofit cohousing** to adequately represent what we hypothesized to be a unique subset of communities in terms of many of the demographic and psychosocial variables of interest
- Recruitment involved **both email and USPS mail**, each with a follow-up reminder
- Response rate was about 43%, yielding **528 respondents from 116 cohousing communities in 23 states**
- We estimate that our sample included about **10% of the population** living in each traditional (new build and reuse developments) and retrofit cohousing
The Survey

• Questions were drawn from major national surveys such as the American Communities Survey, the American National Election Survey, and the World Values Survey
• Other items included valid, reliable psychological scales with relevant comparative data available
• Additional items focused on issues particular to cohousing and evaluations of the cohousing experience (e.g., participation in cohousing practices and satisfaction with life in cohousing)
• A copy of the questionnaire with frequencies is available on our website
Demographics: Comparison of Cohousing Survey Data and National Norms

Diane R. Margolis
Cohousers are older, mostly because there are very few twenty-somethings. More cohousers are over forty.
A lower ratio of cohousers are either living alone or in households with children, but the difference is very small (refer to scale on y-axis).
In cohousing there are fewer younger than senior males living alone than in the general population and many more females, especially senior females, living alone in cohousing compared to the general US population.
# Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>PERCENT US (Census)</th>
<th>PERCENT COHouser</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LESS THAN $20,000</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-$34,999</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000- 49,999</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-$99,999</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000-$149,999</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000-$249,999</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$250,000 or more</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cohousers are heavily middle class with much fewer residents with incomes under $35,000 and somewhat fewer with incomes over $250,000 compared to general population in US.
A greater proportion of cohousers own their homes with many fewer renters. Cohousers are residentially more stable than national averages.
Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Disability Status

There tend to be more white persons, more women, and fewer Hispanic or disabled persons living in cohousing.
## Religious Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELIGION</th>
<th>US -- PEW</th>
<th>COHOUSERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHRISTIAN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>evangelical -- 25.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mainline  -- 14.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other -- 9.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quaker</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-U</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox Christianity</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NON-CHRISTIAN FAITHS</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEWISH</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSLIM</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUDDHIST</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Age Spirituality</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goddess Worship</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAFFILIATED (none and nothing in)</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATHIEST</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGNOSTIC</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

➢ 38% of cohousers are Atheist or Agnostic as opposed to 7.1% in the general population

➢ 12.6% Unitarian-Universalist, 10.1% Jewish, and 10.6% Buddhist as opposed to 0.3%, 1.9%, and 0.7% respectively in the general US population
Probably the greatest difference between cohousers and the rest of the US population is in education. Over 60% of cohousers hold a graduate or professional degree and hardly any have less than a Bachelors degree.
### Connection to Nature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Connection to Nature Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activists</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University students</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoo patrons</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf course</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children 10-12 years old</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohousers</td>
<td>4.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cohousers reported greater connection to nature than a variety of other samples according to the same measure. The Connection to Nature scale and comparison data were provided by P. Wesley Schultz.*
Transformational Practices in Cohousing: Enhancing Residents’ Connection to Nature and Community

Angela Sanguinetti

Objective: Create a typology of cohousing practices and identify those associated with connection to nature and community.

Published in: Journal of Environmental Psychology.
Behavior ➔ Connection ➔ Transformation

“Through the adoption of practices at [EVI] that make explicit the connectedness of the individual to the social and ecological worlds both self and environment are being mutually and reciprocally transformed. The development of a new form of social and ecological relations takes place through the everyday lived experience of residents.”

—Kirby (2003)
Connection to Community

“The conditions that lead to empathic concern also lead to a greater sense of self-other overlap, raising the possibility that helping under these conditions is not selfless but is also directed toward the self.”

(Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997)

Connection to others (i.e., self-other overlap) increases empathy and willingness to help.

Connection to Nature

“People need to feel they are part of the broader natural world if they are to effectively address environmental issues. ... and view their welfare as related to the welfare of the natural world.”

~Aldo Leopold (1949)

Connection to nature predicts ecological behavior and subjective well-being (Mayer & Frantz, 2004).
Behavior ➔ Connection ➔ Transformation

“Through the adoption of practices at [EVI] that make explicit the connectedness of the individual to the social and ecological worlds both self and environment are being mutually and reciprocally transformed. The development of a new form of social and ecological relations takes place through the everyday lived experience of residents.”

—Kirby, 2003
Factors Influencing Social Interaction in Cohousing

Doesn’t tell us explicitly about behavior... What do cohousers DO?

Figure 8. The interaction between design, personal and social factors in a cohousing community and its impact on social interaction.
Factors Influencing Pro-environmental Behavior in Cohousing

Empowerment model of influences upon environmental praxis within the context of community.

Source: Meltzer (2005)
Research Goals

Systematic study of behavior in cohousing, including a typology of practices and identification of practices related to connectedness
Methodology

National Survey of Cohousers \((N = 559)\)
- Connection to nature and community
- Participation in cohousing practices
- Length of residence in cohousing
## Connection to Community

### Phase 3 Survey

30. Please indicate the picture that best describes your relationship with your cohousing community. How interconnected are you with your cohousing community? (*S* = Self, *C* = Your Cohousing Community)

- [ ] a
- [ ] b
- [ ] c
- [ ] d
- [ ] e
- [ ] f

### 31. Please think about your cohousing community when rating the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Mildly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Mildly agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The physical appearance of my community fits well who I am as an individual.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I live in my community, but feel like my roots are elsewhere.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My community is home to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel safe here.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a strong community spirit here.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When talking to others about my community I feel proud.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am attached to my community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be sorry to move, even if the people I appreciate in my community moved with me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Connection to Nature

Phase 3 Survey

22. Please indicate the picture that best describes your relationship with the natural environment. How interconnected are you with nature? ('Self' = you; 'Nature' = the environment)

- a.  
- b.  
- c.  
- d.  
- e.  
- f.  
- g.  

23. Please rate each of these statements in terms of the way you generally feel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Mildly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Mildly agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I often feel a sense of oneness with the natural world around me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think of the natural world as a community to which I belong.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recognize and appreciate the intelligence of other living organisms.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often feel disconnected from nature.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My personal welfare is independent of the welfare of the natural world.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participation in Cohousing Activities

QUESTION:
Please describe your participation in the following activities at your cohousing community.

RESPONSE OPTIONS:
- Never
- Less than once/month
- About once/month
- About once/week
- More than once/week
Typology of Cohousing Practices

- Cohousing Core
- Sharing
- Support
- Fellowship
- Culture
- Stewardship—Built Environment
- Stewardship—Natural Environment
Cohousing Core

Practices present in virtually all cohousing communities:

- Common meals
- Meetings: whole community and smaller management teams
- Work days
Common Meals
Community Meetings
Community Work Days
Sharing and Support

Practices involving reallocation of resources, reciprocal (SHARING) or with distinct giver/receiver (SUPPORT):

SHARING
- Materials exchange, gifting, or sharing (e.g., tools, vehicles)
- Exchange or donation of services (e.g., computer support, car repair)
- Skill sharing or training among neighbors
- Babysitting, childcare exchange or cooperative
- Carpooling

SUPPORT
- Care and support of elderly neighbors
- Care and support of sick or injured neighbors
- Support of new parents
- Voluntary financial aid or assistance between neighbors
Materials exchange, gifting, or sharing
Skill sharing or training
Babysitting, childcare exchange or cooperative
Care and support of elderly neighbors
Fellowship and Culture

Activities based on common interests (FELLOWSHIP), tradition or entertainment (CULTURE):

FELLOWSHIP
- Physical, spiritual, or mental wellness groups
- Movie or game nights, talent shows
- Literature, arts, or crafts clubs
- Small dinner groups
- Other special interest groups

CULTURE
- Live music, other art shows/performances
- Parties, holiday celebrations
- Other community traditions
- Events that benefit the larger community (e.g., educational, political)
Movie Nights
Game Nights
Talent Shows
Small Dinner Groups
Parties and Holiday Celebrations
Parties and Holiday Celebrations
Live music, other art shows/performances
Other Community Traditions
Stewardship—Built Environment

Activities involving care of the built aspects of a community:

- Routine building maintenance
- Construction projects
Construction Projects
Routine Building Maintenance
Stewardship—Natural Environment

Activities involving care of the natural world:

- Gardening, farming, animal husbandry
- Routine grounds maintenance
- Landscaping projects
Gardening, Farming, Animal Husbandry
Gardening, Farming, Animal Husbandry
Gardening, Farming, Animal Husbandry
Gardening, Farming, Animal Husbandry
Routine Grounds Maintenance
Landscaping Projects
Transformational Cohousing Practices

Predictors of connection to community
- Cohousing Core
- Sharing and Support
- Fellowship and Community
- Stewardship—Built Environment (-)
- Length of residence

Predictors of connection to nature
- Fellowship and Culture
- Stewardship—Natural Environment
- Being older, female, and less educated
Discussion Points

Length of residence predicts connection to community and participation in practices does not fully mediate this relationship.

More to it...

Length of residence

?  

Participation in practices

Connection to community
spaces, and features that enhance connection to community and nature…

*How to measure?*
Pattern Language (Alexander)

“(Connection to the wild land) is made explicit by the compactness of the village, with an unbroken line from the tree-clad horizon to the residents’ back doors.”

Kirby, 2003, p. 331
Informal Activities

• Spontaneous, informal social interactions on walkways and porches
• Spontaneous, informal enjoyment of natural areas and animals in the community
Objective: Compare residents of retrofit cohousing to residents of new build and reuse cohousing developments.

Published in *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*
Multilevel Methodology

Geospatial analyses of areas encompassing co-housing communities

Cohousing community survey (Phase 1/2)

Cohousing resident survey (Phase 3)
Political Affiliation by Cohousing Type

- **Retrofit**
- **Traditional**

Percent per Cohousing Type

- **Political Affiliation**
  - Republican
  - Democrat
  - Independent
  - Other

- 80.0%
- 60.0%
- 40.0%
- 20.0%
- 0.0%
Discussion/Future Research

So, is retrofit cohousing truly more diverse than traditional cohousing...

...inclusive of different cultural backgrounds and ideologies...

or just more financially accessible to folks at earlier life stages with values and backgrounds similar to traditional cohousers?

...young, single, renters, limited assets, students...
Exploring the Data: Themes and Issues

Charles MacLane
1. COHOUSING LIFE SATISFACTION QUESTION RESPONSES

In general, how has living in cohousing affected your satisfaction with life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>FREQ</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly negatively</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally negatively</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat more negatively than positively.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat more positively than negatively.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally Positively</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly positively</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(For background information about this slide, see the Table 1 note in the Appendix—slide 84)*
2. LIFE SATISFACTION: RELATIONS WITH SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Social Provisions Scale (perceived social support--L. Markle)</td>
<td>0.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Connection With the Natural World (Graphic Item--A. Sanguinetti)</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Connection With the Natural World (5 Items--A. Sanguinetti)</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Connection With Cohousing Community (Graphic Item--A. Sanguinetti)</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Connection With Cohousing Community (8 Items--A. Sanguinetti)</td>
<td>0.73**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Political Activism Change Score (4 items--H. Berggren)</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(For background information about this slide, see the Table 2 note in the Appendix—slide 84)
3. ASPECTS OF COHOUSING: RATING SCALES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monetary cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-generationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement of dwellings and common spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The help residents give each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The work residents do for the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for social relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to live a sustainable life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (urban/suburban/rural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of goods and services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(For background information about this slide, see the Table 3 note in the Appendix—slide 84)
4. LIFE SATISFACTION: RELATIONS WITH NINE ASPECTS OF COHOUSING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>RS</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The help residents give each other</td>
<td>0.456</td>
<td>0.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Opportunities for social relationships</td>
<td>0.514</td>
<td>0.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Placement of dwellings and common spaces</td>
<td>0.546</td>
<td>0.299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sharing of goods and services</td>
<td>0.554</td>
<td>0.307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Monetary cost</td>
<td>0.562</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(For background information about this slide, see the Table 4 note in the Appendix—slide 84)
5. FACTORS THAT AFFECT FEELINGS ABOUT COHOUSING

| Monetary cost                                      |
| Multi-generationality                              |
| Placement of dwellings and common spaces           |
| The help residents give each other                 |
| The work residents do for the community            |
| Opportunities for social relationships             |
| Opportunities to live a sustainable life           |
| Location (urban/suburban/rural)                    |
| Sharing of goods and services                      |

*(For background information about this slide, see the Table 5 note in the Appendix—slide 84)*
6. LIFE SATISFACTION: RELATIONS WITH FACTORS THAT AFFECT FEELINGS ABOUT COHOUSING

| 1. The help residents give each other | 0.418 | 0.174 |
| 2. Opportunities for social relationships | 0.47 | 0.217 |
| 3. Sharing of goods and services | 0.482 | 0.227 |

(For background information about this slide, see the Table 6 note in the Appendix—slide 84)
### 7. Relations of Current Life Situations with Social/Environmental Perceptions

| 1. Social Provisions Scale (perceived social support) | 0.162 |
| 2. Connection With the Natural World (Graphic Item) | -0.312** |
| 3. Connection With the Natural World (5 Items) | -0.022 |
| 4. Connection With Cohousing Community (Graphic Item) | 0.118 |
| 5. Connection With Cohousing Community (8 Items) | 0.372** |
| 6. Political Activism Change Score (4 items) | 0.114 |
| 7. In general, how has living in cohousing affected your satisfaction with life? | 0.414** |

*(For background information about this slide, see the Tables 7-9 note in the Appendix—slide 84)*
Our cohousing community is one of the smallest in the country at only 11 units. The small size and enormous income and size spread amongst the units has made it quite difficult to create a common vision.

I was one of the founders and developers of …… and I want out. Cohousing can be an energy suck of the highest order. Hey, principal investigator, interested in a nice three bedroom unit?

external noise caused by the location of my unit adjacent to the central courtyard/play area, and the echo effect caused by the architecture. the result is noise pollution and loss of privacy which contribute to my disillusionment with cohousing.
9. RELATIONS OF CURRENT LIFE SITUATIONS WITH SOCIAL/ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTIONS: EXAMPLES

Being the single mother of a toddler is logistically very difficult in my community due to the layout and the lack of others in my stage of life.

...you might notice I am not a big fan of cohousing at least like this place works I feel it was built too large and the community has never really been together since we moved in...

I am 91 years old and a founder of......I have been hard-of-hearing for about 10 years so people avoid me and I feel I am in coventry. Not ideal.

A handful of my neighbors are fearful and controlling. they target individuals who do not fall within rigid confines and make life difficult for those individuals. they use rumor, innuendo, slander and bullying.

Aging as a minority of the community
Appendix and Annotations to Themes and Issues

Tables

Table 1. This question was one of the primary questions used to measure satisfaction with cohousing life. As the table shows, ninety-five percent of the responses were in one of the top three categories, each positive.

Table 2. This table shows the correlations of six measures inserted in the Phase III survey by three cohousing researchers (names in parentheses) with satisfaction-with-life in cohousing. The table shows strong (measures 1 and 3), very strong (measure 4), and extremely strong (measure 5) correlations with satisfaction-with-life in cohousing for measures of social relationships in the community. It also shows that connections with the natural world (measures 2 and 3) are not on the minds of cohousers when asked about satisfaction with cohousing life.

Table 3. These nine questions asked about the satisfaction that cohousers felt with each of the listed aspects of cohousing.

Table 4. This table indicates the relative importance of the nine aspects listed in Table 3 to satisfaction-with-life in cohousing. The five listed aspects were the only ones that were determined (by the multiple regression statistic) to matter in the cohousers’ judgments. This is a strong result very unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Table 5. This table shows the nine questions that asked directly how much the nine points included in the previous tables affected the feelings of cohousers.

Table 6. This table shows the relative importance of the nine points listed in Table 3 and Table 5 in the minds of cohousers as determined by their ratings of how much they have been affected by each one. The three shown came out to be the only ones that mattered to them in their judgments of satisfaction-with-life in cohousing.

Tables 7, 8, and 9. One-hundred and eight (108) cohousers gave narrative responses to the question at the top of Table 7. Forty of these were negative and related to cohousing. On the other hand, sixty-eight were negative and not related to cohousing. Examples of these chosen from the forty related to cohousing are shown in Table 8 and 9.

Two researchers independently rated the 108 responses to determine which were related to cohousing and which were not. The forty examples related to cohousing were assigned a value of 1 and the 68 unrelated examples were assigned a value of 2. These numbers were then correlated with the six measures listed Table 7 (also in Table 2) plus the basic satisfaction-with-life in cohousing question. The resulting correlations are listed in Table 7.

The correlations shown in Table 7 are consistent with Tables 2, 4, and 6. Together, they point to the overwhelming importance of social relationships in determining life satisfaction with cohousing. They also indicate that other aspects of cohousing tend not be part of cohousers’ thinking when they are asked retrospectively about their satisfaction with life in cohousing (although (a) placement of housing and common spaces and (b) monetary issues play a meaningful but fairly small part in their judgments.)
Cohousing as Civic Society: Cohousing Involvement and Political Participation in the United States

Heidi M. Berggren

(Based on a paper prepared for the panel “23-15 Relationships and Voter Turnout” at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference, Chicago, Illinois, April 3-6, 2014)

Continuing research from earlier published work
Cohousing

Physical and social design for community

Shared
- Ownership
- Spaces
- Meals
- Responsibility for community work

Consensus/consensus-like decision making

Community events
Civic-society Literature and Cohousing

Spill-over effects of cohousing involvement on political participation
- Political efficacy
- Practice for political participation
Hypothesis

Involvement in cohousing leads to participation in politics.

The survey included items on extent of involvement in cohousing and in politics, as well as self-reports on whether participation in various kinds of political activities have increased since joining cohousing. If there is a correlation between cohousing community activity and participation in politics and if there are correlations between each of these two items and self-reports of change in political participation since joining cohousing, this would suggest a relationship between involvement in cohousing and involvement in politics insofar as members themselves report such a relationship.
Variables

Cohousing involvement
- Attendance at meetings
- Attendance at meals
- Attendance at mgmt. team meetings
- Participation in skills sharing/training
- Participation in services exchange
- Participation in materials exchange
- Attendance at parties/holiday celebrations
- Attendance at movie/game nights, talent shows

Political involvement
- Political activities index
- Talking about politics increased
- Writing to Congress increased
- Campaign contributions increased
- Campaigning door-to-door increased
- Voting increased
Charts from Means Tests

**Figure 1. Political Activities Index Mean and Attten. at Movie/Game Nights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Activities Index Mean</th>
<th>Atten. at Movie/Game Nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Less than once per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Once per month or more freq.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2. Talking About Politics Increased Mean and Attendance at Movie/Game Nights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talking About Politics Increased Mean</th>
<th>Attendance at Movie/Game Nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>Less than once per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Once per month or more frequently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3. Writing to Congress Increased Mean and Attendance at Movie/Game Nights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing to Congress Increased Mean</th>
<th>Attendance at Movie/Game Nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>Less than once per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>Once per month or more frequently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4. Campaigning Door to Door Increased Mean and Atten. at Movie/Game Nights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaigning Door to Door Increased Mean</th>
<th>Attendance at Movie/Game Nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>Less than once per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>Once per month or more frequently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Charts from Means Tests

Figure 5. Writing to Congress Increased Mean and Attendance at Parties/Holiday Celebrations

Figure 7. Political Activities Index Mean and Attendance at Meetings

Figure 6. Talking About Politics Increased Mean and Attendance at Meals

Figure 8. Writing to Congress Increased Mean and Attendance at Meetings
Charts from Means Tests

**Figure 9. Campaign Contributions Increased Mean and Attendance at Meetings**

**Figure 10. Political activities index mean and Atten. at Mgmt. Team Meetings**

**Figure 11. Writing to Congress Increased Mean and Participation in Materials Exchange**

**Figure 12. Writing to Congress Increased Mean and Political Activities Index**
Charts from Means Tests

Figure 13. Campaign Contributions Increased Mean and Political Activities Index

Figure 14. Campaigning Door to Door Increased Mean and Political Activities Index