Cohousing as Civic Society: Cohousing Involvement and Political Participation in the United States*

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Objective. The civic-society literature argues that members of voluntary civic associations engage in community building and other activities that hone political skills and cultivate a sense of efficacy, which can lead to higher levels of participation in politics. This study situates cohousing in the civic-society literature and asks whether cohousing as a form of civic association encourages participation in electoral politics. *Methods.* Data from the U.S. National Cohousing Survey, Phase III were used in bivariate correlation, Jonckheere-Terpstra, and chi-square procedures to test the hypothesis that cohousing involvement facilitates political participation. *Results.* There were ordered increases in levels of the dependent variable, *political activities index*, for increasing levels of cohousing-involvement variables. Chi-square tests were significant for relationships between cohousing-involvement variables and three dummy variables comprised of the activities included in *political activities index—writing to Congress increased (since moving to cohousing)*, *campaign contributions increased*, and *campaigning door-to-door increased*. *Conclusions.* The chi-square results bolstered the evidence, on an aggregate level, in support of the hypothesis. Cohousing holds out promise as a means of revitalizing democratic citizenship.

Cohousing developments and neighborhoods share the following characteristics: community-friendly planning and design, varying degrees of shared ownership, joint responsibility for expenses and work related to the cohousing development, a certain number of regular shared meals, reciprocal provision of help among residents, a high level of sociability, multigenerational memberships, and self-governance (Bygott, 2006; Cohousing Association of the United States; Fenster, 1999; Forrest and Rich, 2005; Garciano, 2011; Jarvis, 2015, 2011; Kahn, 2010; Martin and Yeugn, 2006; McCamant and Durrett, 1994; Mulder, Costanza, and Erickson, 2006; Poley and Stephenson, 2007; Ruiu, 2014; Saegert and Benítez, 2005; Salhus, 2006; Sargisson, 2012; Tummers, 2015; Vestbro and Horelli, 2012; Williams, 2005a, 2005b). Most cohousing developments use consensus or other highly democratic forms of collective decision making to debate and settle community issues (Cohousing Association of the United States; Garciano, 2011; Poley and Stephenson, 2007; Ruiu, 2014; Sargisson, 2012). These features suggest that cohousing constitutes a form of civic association worthy of examination for possible positive spillover effects on political participation. Does the exercise of quasi-political skills and the cultivation of civic-mindedness within cohousing communities across the United States carry over to the realm of electoral politics? After reviewing the civic-society framework and how it can elucidate the civic and political advantages of cohousing, this question will be addressed using data from the National Cohousing Survey, Phase III.

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Civic Society and Cohousing

According to the civic-society literature, involvement in nonpolitical associations and organizations constitutes training for participation in democratic politics (Almond and Verba, 1963; Ayala, 2000; Bachrach, 1967; Barber, 1984; Blumberg, 1968; Dahl, 1970, 1985; Mason, 1982; Pateman, 1970; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nannetti, 1993; Putnam, 1995a, 1995b; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). Carole Pateman stated the ideal as such:

> The existence of representative institutions at the national level is not sufficient for democracy; for maximum participation by all the people of that level, socialization, or "social training", for democracy must take place in other spheres in order that the necessary individual attitudes and psychological qualities can be developed. This development takes place through the process of participation itself. The major function of participation in the theory of democracy is therefore an educative one, educative in the very widest sense, including both the psychological aspect and the gaining of practice in democratic skills and procedures. (1970:42)

Empirical examinations of this general theory have indeed found that involvement in nonpolitical, civic organizations has positive spill-over effects on citizens' participation in politics and on their feelings of political efficacy and competence. These effects occur through education or on-the-job training and experience in the types of organizational and persuasive activities that one puts to use in politics, and through the confidence and sense of competence that comes with this experience (Almond and Verba, 1963; Ayala, 2000; Baumgartner and Walker, 1988; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nannetti, 1993; Putnam, 1995a, 1995b; Stolle and Rochon, 1996; Strate et al., 1989; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). Examples of such activities include giving a speech or presentation in connection to the group, attending meetings, and participating in more informal community-building activities such as bowling as a part of a league (Putnam, 1995a), among others.

The literature above highlights a variety of civic arenas where such learning occurs, including the workplace, fraternal organizations, church-related groups, parent-teacher associations, sports or hobby organizations, and other kinds of groups. Cohousing communities differ from these kinds of settings and organizations in important ways. However, as detailed in the following section, cohousing in practice shares many important features with what we would commonly recognize as civic settings and organizations. Cohousing furthermore involves voluntary, conscious, and active efforts to create community. Ayala found that members of voluntary organizations, as opposed to those belonging to more obligatory work-related organizations, experienced significantly stronger political participation effects (2000:109). Poley and Stephenson's study (2007) found strong aggregate associations between involvement in cohousing and a wide variety of social-capital factors. Berggren found a relationship between cohousing involvement and participation in electoral politics among members of cohousing communities in the state of Massachusetts (2013). The current study asks if this relationship occurs nationally and utilizes a larger number of measures of both concepts than were used in the state-level study to address the question.

Cohousing in the United States

According to the latest count from the Cohousing Association of the United States directory ⟨www.cohousing.org/directory⟩, there are 160 "established" communities, 21 emergent communities that own a site, and 97 "forming" communities in 37 states across

the United States.[1] Cohousing in the United States traces its roots to the cohousing movement of the 1960s and 1970s in Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, which sought to undo the isolation of city life and create a more communal way of life (Cohousing Association of the United States; McCamant and Durrett, 1994; Ruiu, 2014; Sargisson, 2012). Contemporary cohousing does not entail abolition of private property. A condominium-type legal arrangement is typical, with residents sharing ownership of the site but owning and occupying separate homes (Sargisson, 2012:39). What stands out is the voluntary commitment among members to tip the balance more heavily in favor of community, while still maintaining privacy. This focus on community highlights cohousing as a phenomenon entailing physical settings, social processes, interactions, relationships, and organizations that in turn can facilitate skills and habits of mind conducive to political participation.

Physical Design

Cohousing residents help to design, plan, and operate their own neighborhoods (McCamant and Durrett, 1994). Certain physical design features, according to self-descriptions posted on individual community websites and on the Cohousing Association of the United States' website, are linked to community-building aims (Sargisson, 2012). First, homes are grouped around and overlook common spaces, with cars restricted to areas around the edges of the community. This provides everyone with access to open spaces, opportunities to socialize, and safety, with neighbors engaging in "casual surveillance" of the area (Ruiu, 2014:325; Williams 2005a, 2005b). Homes in cohousing complexes are smaller than those in other kinds of housing developments due to the higher proportions of common spaces and facilities (Garciano, 2011; Ruiu, 2014; Sargisson, 2012). Residents may then spend more of their time interacting with people outside of their private households.

A key feature of the cohousing built environment is the "common house," which includes a shared kitchen and dining area, laundry, and playroom. In addition, there may be a workshop, library, exercise room, and guest rooms ⟨http://www.cohousing.org/what_is_cohousing⟩. Examples of common areas include gardens, pools, and other outdoor recreation areas (Garciano, 2011; Sargisson, 2012). The goal of the common house is to facilitate interaction among community members (Jarvis, 2011, 2015; Sargisson, 2012:40–41). Common-house activities should then serve to draw residents into exchanges and relationships with people outside of their own households.

Social Design

Weekly shared meals prepared by residents are a key part of cohousing life (Forrest and Rich, 2005; Kahn, 2010; Martin and Yeugn, 2006; Mulder, Costanza, and Erickson 2006; Salhus, 2006; Sargisson, 2012). Sargisson found that the vast majority of communities included shared meals as a defining feature in self-descriptions at community websites (2012:40). Common meals provide opportunities to build informal ties with, and to develop trust of, others, which are important elements in civic engagement. The expectation that members perform unpaid labor to help the community is prevalent (Bygott, 2006; Cohousing Association of the United States; Fenster, 1999; Garciano, 2011; Kahn, 2010; McCamant and Durrett, 1994; Poley and Stephenson, 2007; Ruiu, 2014; Saegert and

[1]Tally taken on January 23, 2016.

Benítez, 2005; Sargisson, 2012). Common projects may then develop organizational and communication skills that are relevant to political participation.

Regular membership meetings and the use of consensus or a similar process to discuss, debate, and decide on community concerns are additional components of cohousing social design (Cohousing Association of the United States; Garciano, 2011; Poley and Stephenson, 2007; Ruiu, 2014; Sargisson, 2012). Sargisson found that 94 percent of the communities in her sample cited community meetings as important and nearly all preferred consensus decision making (2012:42). Meetings and the use of consensus entail processes and skills that embody the civic-engagement ideal. Communicating, persuading, collaborating, presenting, compromising, and organizing are highly relevant to political participation. Use of these skills should build confidence in the ability to make a difference, which may carry over into the political arena as a sense of political efficacy.

Residents pool and share the resources, skills, and time necessary to carrying out daily responsibilities and tasks (Garciano, 2011; Jarvis, 2011, 2015; Ruiu, 2014; Sargisson, 2012; Williams, 2005a, 2005b). Carpooling, tool sharing, child-care cooperatives, community clothes closets, libraries, and gardens are typical. Such arrangements may hone organizational and collaboration skills and cultivate a sense of efficacy. Finally, informal social gatherings, parties, and holiday celebrations help to build community.

The intent to build communities with diverse memberships, while only partly realized, is an important aspect of social design. According to Sargisson, cohousing communities value diversity, seeking a mixture of household types and members of varying ages, races, and ethnicities (2012:42, 48). Diversity exists in terms of age, religion, and household type, but most communities are overwhelmingly white and are skewed upward socioeconomically. This bias is due mainly to the fact that cohousing can be quite expensive (Garciano, 2011). There is a movement advocating for cohousing as an affordable housing alternative, which should improve accessibility. Notable examples of successful cohousing developments targeting lower-income buyers and renters include Berkeley Cohousing and Petaluma Avenue Homes in California.[2] Yet it is clear that, presently, cohousing and its associated benefits are unevenly distributed throughout society (Garciano, 2011).

In accordance with the civic-society literature, I hypothesize that the exercise of quasi-political skills and the cultivation of civic-mindedness among those who live in cohousing communities facilitate participation in electoral politics.

Data and Analysis

Data came from the cross-sectional National Cohousing Survey, Phase III,[3] conducted in the spring of 2012. The data set is based on a simple random sample of 1,000 unit

[2]Berkeley Cohousing, Cohousing Directory, The Cohousing Association of the United States ⟨http://www.cohousing.org/Berkeley%20Cohousing⟩, accessed on February 16, 2015.

[3]The lead researcher was Angela Sanguinetti, M.S., Ph.D., Department of Planning, Policy, and Design. Members of the research network associated with the Cohousing Association of the United States assisted in the recruitment procedures, survey construction, and data analysis. These individuals include Richart Keller, AICP, Professional Community and Environmental Planner; Diane Margolis, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Emeritus, University of Connecticut; Elizabeth Markle, Ph.D., Northeastern University; Charles MacLane, Ph.D., Personnel Research Scientist; (Heidi M. Berggren, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Political Science and Co–Chair of Women's and Gender Studies, University of Massachusetts–Dartmouth;); and Betsy Morris, Ph.D., Community Development Consultant and Cohousing Coach. Survey questions were based on items from major national surveys, such as the American Communities Survey, the American National Election Survey series, and the World Values Survey. Additional survey items were aimed at collecting information specifically relevant to cohousing residents. Questions were varied, covering demographics, civic and political engagement, commuting and travel behavior, quality of life, values and beliefs, connection to community, social support, health, and more.

TABLE 1

Variables

	N	Min.	Max.
Political activities index[a]	481	0.00	3.00
Attendance at meetings[b]	475	0.00	3.00
Attendance at mgmt. team meetings	464	0.00	3.00
Participation in skills sharing/training	447	0.00	3.00
Participation in services exchange	452	0.00	3.00
Participation in materials exchange	449	0.00	3.00
Attendance at meals	473	0.00	3.00
Attendance at parties/holiday celebrations[c]	454	0.00	2.00
Attendance at movie/game nights, talent shows	458	0.00	2.00
Writing to Congress increased	484	0.00	1.00
Campaign contributions increased	485	0.00	1.00
Campaigning door-to-door increased	484	0.00	1.00

[a]This variable is an additive scale computed from the following three dummy variables: "Have you ever written to members of Congress/made a financial contribution to a campaign/campaigned door-to-door?" The variable was coded: 0=none of these types of activities; 1=one type of activity; 2=two types of activities; 3=three types of activities.

[b]This and the subsequent five variables listed in the table are based on the survey item: "Please describe your participation in the following activities at your cohousing community" (attendance at meetings; attendance at mgmt. team meetings; participation in skills sharing/training, services exchange, materials exchange, attendance at meals). Coding was as follows: 0=never; 1=less than once per month; 2=about once per month or more frequently; and 3=about once per week or more frequently.

[c]This variable and the next one are based on the survey item: "Please describe your participation in the following activities at your cohousing community" (attendance at parties/holiday celebrations; attendance at movie/game nights, talent shows). Coding was as follows: 0=never; 1=less than once per month; 2=about once per month or more frequently. These variables include fewer values because parties and movie nights can be expected to occur more infrequently and irregularly than meetings, meals, and the other types of activities indicated.

addresses in nonretrofit cohousing communities and an oversampling of 300 addresses in retrofit cohousing.[4] Sources for this information included the Cohousing Association of the United States and county government offices. The survey was online, with 559 adults (18 years +) initiating and 472 completing the entire form. Since households were recruited, more than one adult per household could participate. The final data set includes 528 respondents distributed among 116 cohousing communities in 23 states. The distribution of respondents among states is shown in the Appendix in Table A1. The Appendix also includes demographics tables (Tables A2–A8).

Variables used in the analyses are displayed in Table 1.

The dependent variable, *political activities index* mirrors American National Election Studies items measuring standard forms of electoral participation beyond voting, including writing to members of Congress, making financial contributions to a campaign, and campaigning door-to-door.

There are two types of cohousing-involvement independent variables. First, *attendance at meetings, attendance at management team meetings, participation in skills sharing/training, participation in services exchange,* and *participation in materials exchange* access formalized kinds of cohousing involvement that should prepare residents for participation in politics.

[4]"Non-retrofit" refers to new-build cohousing developments and to sites with large buildings converted into cohousing communities of apartment-like units. "Retrofit" refers to blocks or neighborhoods that largely keep sites and dwellings intact while neighbors work together to create and live in a cohousing arrangement. See Sanguinetti (2015).

TABLE 2

Correlations

		Partic. in skills sharing/training	Partic. in materials exchange	Partic. in services exchange	Atten. at parties/holiday celeb.	Atten. at movie/game nights	Atten. at meetings	Atten. at meals	Atten. at mgmt. team meetings
Political Activities Index	Correlation Coefficient	.119*	.089	.166**	.100*	.211**	.167**	.160**	.146**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.061	.000	.033	.000	.000	.001	.002
	N	441	444	448	450	452	469	467	459
Writing to Congress increased	Correlation Coefficient	.135**	.133**	.101*	.168**	.175**	.117*	.053	.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.005	.032	.000	.000	.011	.255	.066
	N	445	448	451	454	456	473	471	462
Campaign contributions increased	Correlation Coefficient	.041	-.020	.023	.151**	.157**	.105*	.093*	.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.385	.676	.624	.001	.001	.022	.044	.063
	N	445	448	451	454	456	473	471	462
Campaigning door-to-door increased	Correlation Coefficient	.068	-.021	.029	.062	.197**	.089	.042	.116*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.151	.657	.544	.185	.000	.052	.362	.013
	N	445	448	451	454	456	473	471	462

Spearman's rho, all correlations; **correlation is sig. at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *correlation is sig. at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

At cohousing meetings, members discuss and debate community matters using specified group decision-making procedures. Attendees at smaller "management team meetings" take up issues in more detail. Both types of meetings may involve writing reports, giving speeches, persuading, collaborating, and getting and communicating expert knowledge/advice. Skill sharing and participation in services and materials exchanges hone organizational and collaboration abilities and cultivate a sense of efficacy.

Second, *attendance at meals*, *attendance at parties/holiday celebrations*, and *attendance at movie/game nights, talent shows* relate to informal community building and expressive aspects of life in cohousing. The civic-society literature suggests that such events and activities help to create social capital, which is conducive to political involvement.

The dummy variables *writing to Congress increased*, *campaign contributions increased*, and *campaigning door-to-door increased* comprise respondents' self-reports on whether or not these activities—which are included in *political activities index*—have increased since moving to cohousing. To the extent that these variables are found to relate to the cohousing-involvement variables, such relationships would corroborate the proposed primary relationship between the cohousing-involvement variables and *political activities index*.

Bivariate correlations provide a baseline. Table 2 presents statistically significant cohousing independent variable-*political activities index* pairings highlighted in yellow and the significant cohousing independent variable-change dummy variable pairings highlighted in blue. Statistically significant bivariate correlations will be the focus of further analyses, with all others excluded from this point forward. *Participation in materials exchange-writing to Congress increased* will be removed as well, since the primary relationship—*participation in materials exchange-political activities index*—is not statistically significant.

Political activities index and the cohousing-involvement variables are ordinal. The rank-based, nonparametric Jonckheere-Terpstra test for ordered alternatives is used to test the

FIGURE 1

Jonckheere-Terpstra Test for Ordered Alternatives of *Attendance at Meetings*
($T_{JT} = 33{,}554.000$, $z = 3.614$, $p < 0.001$, $N = 469$)

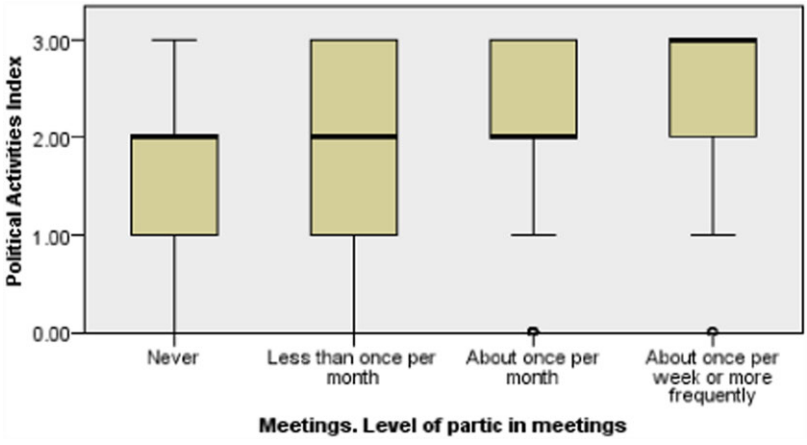
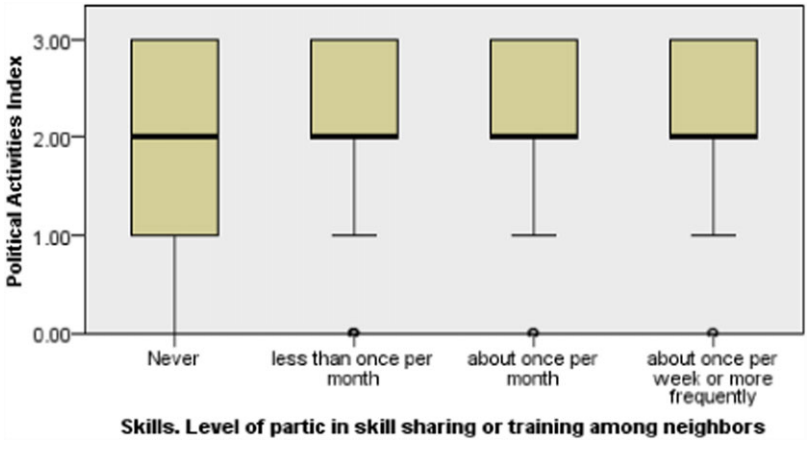


FIGURE 2

Jonckheere-Terpstra Test for Ordered Alternatives of *Participation in Skills Sharing/Training*
($T_{JT} = 35{,}603.000$, $z = 2.482$, $p < 0.05$, $N = 441$)



directional hypothesis[5] that *political activities index* medians do not decrease for any increase in level of each of the cohousing-involvement independent variables, and furthermore that *political activities index* medians increase for one or more increasse in level of the cohousing-involvement variables.

Figures 1–5[6] based on post hoc Jonckheere-Terpstra test results, display both the median *political activities index* score (the thick lines) for each increasing level of the

[5]The test is for an ordered difference in medians where the direction of this order is stated (Lunneborg, 2014).

[6]The chart titles use the full names of the independent cohousing-involvement variable names as listed in Table 1. These variables appear as the X-axis titles under somewhat different names since they were generated by the statistical package in the course of analysis.

FIGURE 3

Jonckheere-Terpstra Test for Ordered Alternatives of *Participation in Services Exchange* ($T_{JT} = 40{,}262.500$, $z = 3.517$, $p < 0.001$, $N = 448$)

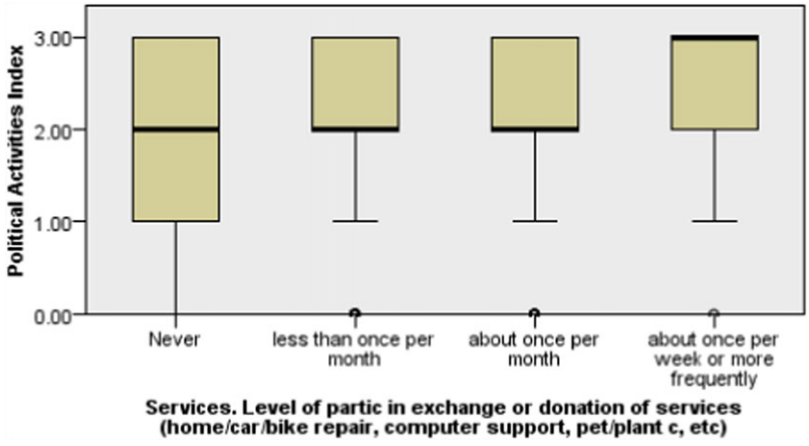
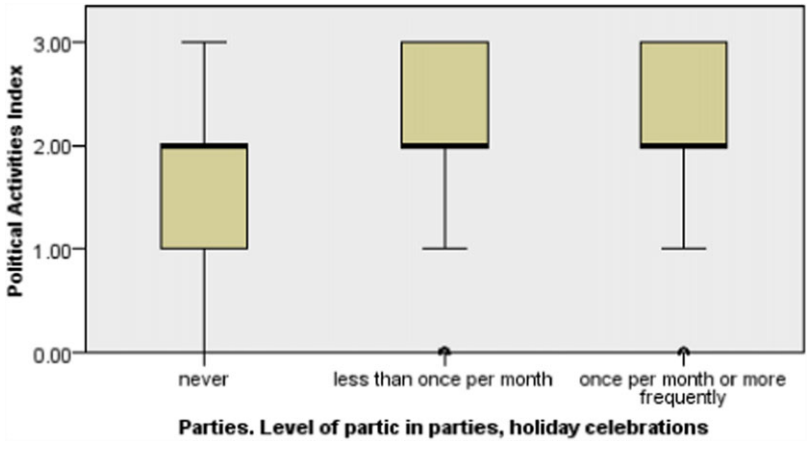


FIGURE 4

Jonckheere-Terpstra Test for Ordered Alternatives of *Attendance at Parties/Holiday Celebrations* ($T_{JT} = 28{,}118.500$, $z = 2.114$, $p < 0.05$, $N = 450$)

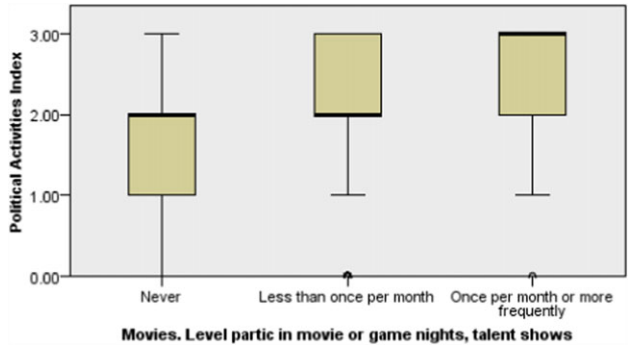


cohousing-involvement variables and the range of scores above and/or below the medians. Summary statistics are included at the bottom of each figure.[7] The summary statistics for *political activities index-attendance at management team meetings* (TJT = 41,538.000, $z = 3.105$, $p < 0.005$, $N = 459$) and *political activities index-attendance at meals* (TJT = 36,444.000, $z = 3.470$, $p < 0.005$, $N = 467$) were significant, but these relationships are

[7] T_{JT} is the Jonckheere-Terpstra test statistic, "z" represents the standardized form of this statistic, and "p" values indicate level of significance. On the basis of the significant summary statistics listed with each figure, we can reject the null hypothesis of no increase in *political activity index* median for increases in each of the cohousing-involvement variables. However, these statistics by themselves do not demonstrate whether *political activities index* median was higher for groups at a higher level of involvement or for groups at a lower level of involvement. Post hoc Jonckheere-Terpstra test results are used to make this determination.

FIGURE 5

Jonckheere-Terpstra Test for Ordered Alternatives of *Attendance at Movie/Game Nights, Talent Shows* ($T_{JT} = 32{,}822.000$, $z = 4.479$, $p < 0.001$, $N = 4$)



not included among the figures. *Political activities index* median score decreased when moving from a lower to a higher level of cohousing involvement in each case, which indicates failure of the Jonckheere-Terpstra test.

The figures indicate, to varying degrees, success in meeting requirements of the test. Figures 1–3 center on variables representing formalized types of cohousing involvement. Figure 1 shows both that *political activities index* median does not decrease for any increase in cohousing-meeting participation level and that there is an increase in *political activities index* median from the second-highest level of cohousing-meeting participation to the highest level. While the median *political activities index* score of 2 stays constant from the first to the third level of meeting participation, the range of scores at increasing levels includes a larger proportion of scores of 2 and 3. According to Figure 2, median *political activities index* is the same across all four levels of *participation in skills sharing/training*. *Political activities index* scores range between 1 and 3 at the first level of *participation in skills sharing/training* and between 2 and 3 for the three higher levels. The pattern shown in Figure 3 for *participation in services exchange* is the same as that in Figure 2, with the difference that median *political activities index* is higher for the highest level of *participation in services exchange*.

Figures 4 and 5 feature the variables accessing informal, community-building kinds of cohousing involvement. Figure 4 shows the same median *political activities index* score of 2 across all three levels of *attendance at parties/holiday celebrations*. The range of *political activities index* scores at the lowest level does not include 3 whereas at the highest levels it does include 3. Figure 5 presents the same pattern as Figure 4, except that median *political activities index* is higher for the highest level of *attendance at movie/game nights, talent shows*.

These results support the hypothesis that there are bivariate relationships between the cohousing-involvement independent variables and *political activities index*. The next step was to provide additional aggregated evidence via respondents' self-reports about whether or not participation in the activities comprising *political activities index*[8] increased since moving to cohousing. Chi-square tests were performed on pairings between each of the cohousing-involvement variables included in the Jonckheere-Terpstra tests above (Figures 1–5) and the dummy variables with which these cohousing variables are

[8] *Political activities index* was constructed from the following dummy variables: "Have you ever written to members of Congress/made a financial contribution to a campaign/campaigned door-to-door?"

TABLE 3

Chi-Square Test Results

	Meetings[a]	Skills	Services	Parties	Movies
Writing to Congress increased					
Pearson chi-square	12.248[b]	10.201	4.872	13.654[c]	13.978
N	473	445	451	454	456
df	3	3	3	2	2
Sig.	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.05$	$p = 0.181$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$
Campaign contributions increased					
Pearson chi-square	8.259[d]			10.341	12.303
N	473			454	456
df	3			2	2
Sig.	$p < 0.05$			$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$
Campaigning door-to-door increased					
Pearson chi-square					17.943
N					456
df					2
Sig.					$p < 0.001$

[a]Independent variable names were shortened to save space. These shortened names refer to: *attendance at meetings*, *participation in skills sharing/training*, *participation in services exchange*, *attendance at parties/holiday celebrations*, and *attendance at movie/game nights, talent shows*.

[b]One cell (12.5 percent) had expected count of less than 5.

[c]One cell (16.7 percent) had expected count of less than 5.

[d]One cell (12.5 percent) had expected count of less than 5.

significantly correlated (see Table 2). The dummy variables are *writing to Congress increased* (since moving to cohousing), *campaign contributions increased*, and *campaigning door-to-door increased*. Results are shown in Table 3.

In the case of *writing to Congress increased* and *campaign contributions increased*, there were significant results across all cohousing-involvement variables included in the chi-square analysis, except for *participation in services exchange-writing to Congress increased*. *Participation in services exchange*, while found to be related to *political activities index* (Figure 3 above), did not turn up significant results in this case. C*ampaigning door-to-door increased* was significant for *attendance at movie/game nights, talent show*, which was the only cohousing-involvement variable paired with this particular dummy variable. The results indicate statistically significant relationships in the case of all of the tests run with one exception. As such, the results buttress the findings above for *political activities index* and the cohousing-involvement variables (Figures 1–5).

Conclusion and Discussion

Analysis began with a set of significant bivariate correlations between cohousing-involvement variables and *political activities index*, the variable used here to capture standard forms of electoral participation as regularly measured by ANES. The cohousing-involvement variables accessed formalized kinds of involvement and informal, community-building activities. The next step was to test the hypothesis that the direction of the relationship went from cohousing involvement to political participation, as measured by *political activities index*. Jonckheere-Terpstra tests were significant for *attendance at meetings*, *participation in skills sharing/training*, *participation in services exchange*, *attendance*

at parties/holiday celebrations, and *attendance at movie/game nights, talent shows*. Chi-square tests were then conducted on relationships between three dummy variables accessing the activities in *political activities index—writing to Congress increased since moving to cohousing*, *campaign contributions increased*, *and campaigning door-to-door increased*—and the cohousing variables from the Jonckheere-Terpstra tests that were initially found to be significantly correlated with the dummy variables (see Table 2). The chi-square results were significant in all cases except for *participation in services exchange-writing to Congress increased*. These results constitute additional evidence, on an aggregate level, supporting the hypothesis that cohousing involvement facilitates political participation.

The findings suggest that members of cohousing communities who are involved in their communities develop capacities, confidence, and a sense of efficacy, and hone skills that facilitate participation in electoral politics. This research therefore builds on similar state-level research on cohousing and political involvement (Berggren, 2013) and on Poley and Stephenson's findings (2007) as to the social capital building capacities of cohousing, and supports the understanding of cohousing as a form of civic association that fits into the civic-society literature. According to this view, involvement in nonpolitical associations and organizations is a crucial training ground for political participation (Almond and Verba, 1963; Ayala, 2000; Bachrach, 1967; Barber, 1984; Blumberg, 1968; Dahl, 1970, 1985; Mason, 1982; Pateman, 1970; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nannetti, 1993; Putnam, 1995a, 1995b; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). The research here furthermore is consistent with Ayala's finding that members of voluntary organizations, as compared to more obligatory work-related organizations, experience stronger political participation effects (2000:109). Cohousing involves voluntary, conscious, and active efforts to create community, which might be expected to be particularly conducive to political involvement.

The findings of this study also focus attention on the types of civic involvement and activity that are important for political engagement. Formalized kinds of activities, such as participating in meetings, emerged as important. Similarly, participation in skill-sharing arrangements and services exchanges likely provided opportunities to hone formalized skills and to build confidence and a sense of efficacy. Social activities and events also have a place in the literature as drivers of community building and civic engagement, and as precursors to political involvement. The results here indicate that socializing, fun activities, and community celebrations are important for political engagement. Data limitations in this study, which should be addressed in future research, did not allow for systematic assessment of the relative role of this type of involvement and more formalized activities in facilitating political participation. Further understanding of this distinction is important in light of evidence linking weakened social ties as such, captured by the phrase "bowling alone," to detachment from civic life (Putnam, 1995a).

In order to more definitively assess the relationship between cohousing involvement and political engagement, it is necessary to collect data allowing for systematic comparisons between members of cohousing communities and nonmembers. One promising project is to conduct surveys including both members of cohousing communities and residents of condominiums in the same geographical areas. Cohousing and condominium developments both arguably involve an emphasis on community relative to privacy and present a challenge to the suburban low-density, single-family home development template. Given the heavier emphasis on community entailed by cohousing (Ruiu, 2014), such a study design should make it possible to determine whether cohousing, in and of itself, has the positive effect on civic engagement and political participation that has been argued here.

Finally, another avenue for research is to examine how communal housing arrangements related to cohousing effect political engagement. Housing cooperatives and intentional

communities, like cohousing, involve varying degrees of shared ownership and spaces, require some community-related work, and commonly use small-group democratic procedures to make decisions affecting the community. However, unlike cohousing, housing cooperatives and intentional communities do not typically involve unit ownership, so are therefore more widely accessible. It is ultimately important to study these phenomena so that we may understand the political participation effects of the full array of intensive forms of community living as these occur throughout the country. Together, they represent potential sources of revitalization of democratic citizenship.

Appendix

TABLE A1

Distribution of Survey Participants Among States

	N	Valid Percent
	3	0.6
Alaska	4	0.8
Arizona	20	3.8
California	102	19.3
Colorado	66	12.5
D.C.	9	1.7
Georgia	9	1.7
Kansas	2	0.4
Maine	1	0.2
Maryland	14	2.7
Massachusetts	59	11.2
Michigan	41	7.8
Minnesota	2	0.4
New Hampshire	8	1.5
New Mexico	2	0.4
New York	11	2.1
North Carolina	36	6.8
Oregon	42	8.0
Pennsylvania	1	0.2
Utah	4	0.8
Vermont	20	3.8
Virginia	7	1.3
Washington	47	8.9
Wisconsin	18	3.4
Total	528	100.0

TABLE A2

Gender

	N	Valid Percent
Female	337	63.8
Male	130	24.6
Not that simple	1	0.2
Missing	60	11.4
Total	528	

TABLE A3

Age

	N	Valid Percent
21–29	7	1.3
30–39	56	10.6
40–49	100	18.9
50–59	114	21.6
60 or older	193	36.6
Missing	58	11.0
Total	528	

TABLE A4

Education

	N	Valid Percent
Some college but no degree	20	3.8
Associate degree	10	1.9
Bachelor degree	131	24.8
Graduate degree	309	58.5
Missing	10	
Total	528	

TABLE A5

Employment Status

	N	Valid Percent
Not employed due to retirement, homemaking, involuntary unemployment, student status, or disability	204	38.6
Employed part or full time	324	61.4
Total	528	

TABLE A6

Marital Status

	N	Valid Percent
Married	237	44.9
In a long-term committed partnership but not married	46	8.7
Divorced	105	19.9
Widowed	21	4.0
Never married	53	10.0
Separated	4	0.8
Missing	62	11.7
Total	528	

TABLE A7

Number of Children 17 and Younger in Household

	N	Valid Percent
Zero	330	62.5
One	83	15.7
Two	87	16.5
Three	18	3.4
Four	2	0.4
Seven	1	0.2
Ten +	1	0.2
Missing	6	1.1
Total	528	

TABLE A8

Household Income in 2010 (Before Taxes)

	N	Valid Percent
Less than $20,000	21	4.0
$20,000–$34,999	43	8.1
$35,000–$49,999	59	11.2
$50,000–$74,999	119	22.5
$75,000–$99,999	90	17.0
$100,000–$149,999	74	14.0
$150,000–$249,999	32	6.1
$250,000–$349,999	3	0.6
$350,000 or more	3	0.6
Missing	84	15.9
Total	528	

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