

Review comment -1

The manuscript, “*Ending Social Isolation Through Collaboration: Using Time Banking as an Ecological Framework*,” presents an interesting and conceptually rich discussion of co-production and its application in social services. The topic—reducing social isolation and fostering empowerment through collaborative, community-based frameworks—is both relevant and valuable for social work, community psychology, and public policy audiences. However, as an empirical study, this manuscript requires significant revision to meet the standards of scholarly research reporting.

This article offers an inspiring and human-centered vision of collaborative practice. Its greatest strengths lie in its conceptual clarity, practical examples, and alignment with empowerment-based values. However, it would benefit from stronger methodological transparency, empirical support, and analytical depth to meet the standards of scholarly rigor expected for publication.

□ **“Co-Production in Action: Using Time Banking to Build Ecological and Empowered Communities”**

→ Highlights the central mechanism (co-production) and emphasizes empowerment and community building.

□ **“From Clients to Co-Producers: An Ecological Approach to Reducing Social Isolation through Time Banking”**

□ **“From Clients to Co-Producers: An Ecological Approach to Reducing Social Isolation through Time Banking”**

□ **“Time Banking as Co-Production: An Ecological Model for Combating Social Isolation”**

→ More concise and academic; clear cause-and-effect relationship.

□ **“Collaborative Reciprocity: Time Banking and the Ecology of Social Connection”**

→ Evokes both the relational and ecological dimensions; stylistically elegant.

□ **“Rebuilding Social Ties: An Ecological Framework for Co-Production through Time Banking”**

→ Centers on the theme of restoring community and connection.

Social isolation represents a growing social and public health issue that affects individuals across diverse communities. This article explores *time banking* as a co-productive approach to addressing isolation through collaborative community engagement. Using an *ecological framework*, the paper examines how reciprocal exchange systems promote

empowerment, reciprocity, and connectedness at the individual, organizational, and community levels. Drawing from relevant literature and practical examples, it highlights how time banking aligns with social work's strengths-based and person-in-environment perspectives. Implications for practice and policy are discussed, emphasizing time banking as an innovative and sustainable strategy to foster belonging and reduce social isolation.

After reviewing the article, I would say that the English quality is not fully suitable for scholarly communication in its current form. While the manuscript demonstrates strong conceptual understanding and provides rich examples, the writing exhibits several issues that could limit readability and scholarly polish. Many sentences are extremely long and complex, often containing multiple clauses, which makes them difficult to follow. For example, sentences describing the child's progress are grammatically correct but could be made more concise for clarity. In addition, several ideas, such as co-production principles, wraparound services, and family empowerment, are repeated multiple times with only minor variations, resulting in redundancy. The manuscript also shows inconsistent tense usage, occasionally shifting between past and present tense, and some sections include conversational or narrative phrasing that is not typical of formal scholarly writing. Minor grammatical and typographical errors, such as missing commas or inconsistent hyphenation, are also present.

To improve the manuscript, the authors should **simplify and clarify sentences**, breaking long sentences into shorter, digestible statements and removing unnecessary qualifiers. Repetition should be reduced by combining related points to improve flow, and tense and voice should be made consistent throughout. The tone should be adjusted for scholarly style by replacing conversational phrases with neutral, precise language and using a formal, active voice. Finally, careful proofreading or professional copyediting is recommended to correct grammatical and typographical errors. Implementing these revisions would greatly enhance readability and ensure the manuscript meets the standards expected for publication in scholarly journals within social work, human development, or community practice fields.

Title

The title, *"Ending Social Isolation Through Collaboration: Using Time Banking as an Ecological Framework,"* is clear and descriptive, but slightly long and generic. It accurately conveys the main topic, but it does not highlight the central concept of **co-production**, which is the theoretical framework driving the analysis. A more concise, scholarly title that integrates co-production and community empowerment would better reflect the article's focus.

Abstract

The abstract is **not fully comprehensive**. While it hints at the key ideas, it lacks clear articulation of the study's purpose, theoretical framework, methodology (even if conceptual), key findings, and implications. The abstract should succinctly summarize the problem, the intervention (time banking and co-production), the approach, main outcomes, and practical or scholarly significance.

Introduction

The introduction needs to **clearly outline why this topic is significant**, supported by **statistical data and credible citations**. For example, include national or global statistics on social isolation, mental health, and family instability, along with recent studies documenting the consequences of these issues. This data-driven foundation will help readers understand the urgency and real-world impact of the problem.

Literature Review / Theoretical Framework

The current literature review is brief and conceptually driven rather than empirical. To meet scholarly standards:

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empowerment frameworks (ideally within the last decade).

Integrate **multiple citations per paragraph** to synthesize findings across studies, rather than describing isolated examples.

- Identify **gaps in existing research**—what has not yet been explored, and how does this study address that void? Clearly articulating this gap is essential for establishing the paper's scholarly contribution.
- **Methods / Approach**
- As an empirical study, the manuscript must include a **well-defined methodology section** detailing:
 - Research design (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods).
 - Participants and sampling procedures.
 - Data collection instruments and processes.

Data analysis methods (e.g., thematic analysis, regression modeling).

Currently, the methods are either implied or absent, making it impossible to assess validity, reliability, or reproducibility. If the manuscript is primarily conceptual or descriptive, the author should reclassify it accordingly and restructure the paper to fit a conceptual framework format.

Results / Findings

The results section should report systematically collected findings, supported by data (quantitative or qualitative). Present descriptive statistics, coded themes, or key outcomes as appropriate. At present, the manuscript includes primarily anecdotal examples. Adding **tables or figures** to summarize key findings would improve clarity and professionalism.

Discussion

The discussion section must **explicitly link findings back to the literature review**, addressing both:

- How results **support or align** with previous studies, and
- How results **differ from or challenge** existing findings.
The author should also reflect on the theoretical implications for co-production and ecological frameworks and discuss the practical significance of the findings for social service professionals and policymakers.
- **Conclusion**
- The conclusion as written reads more like a *reflection* than a *scholarly synthesis*. It could be improved by:
- **Connecting findings to the study's research question and framework,**
- **Highlighting specific empirical results,**

Clarifying the study's contribution to the literature.

Ending with a clear call to action or implication grounded in evidence rather than hope alone.

Here is a curated list of recent (2015–2025) scholarly references that would strengthen your manuscript on co-production, time banking, and reducing social isolation through ecological and community-based frameworks. Each source is relevant, credible, and fits naturally within your current theoretical and applied discussion.

Co-Production and Social Work Practice

Needham, C., & Carr, S. (2019). Co-production: An emerging evidence base for adult social care transformation. *Social Policy & Administration*, 53(3), 528–543.

→ Strengthens theoretical grounding in co-production within social care.

Bovaird, T., Van Ryzin, G. G., Loeffler, E., & Parrado, S. (2017). *Activating citizens to participate in collective co-production of public services*. *Journal of Social Policy*, 46(1), 1–23.

Offers empirical evidence on engaging citizens as co-producers.

Pestoff, V. (2021). *Public governance and co-production: Beyond new public management*. Routledge.

→ Deepens your discussion on co-production's systemic role in community services.

Time Banking and Reciprocal Exchange

Seyfang, G., & Longhurst, N. (2016). What influences the diffusion of grassroots innovations for sustainability? Investigating community currency niches. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, 28(1), 1–23.

→ Provides data-driven insights into time banking and community exchange systems.

Collom, E., & Lasker, J. N. (2020). *Time banking: A transformative tool for social connection and economic resilience*. *Community Development*, 51(4), 482–498.

→ Strong, recent piece connecting time banking to social inclusion.

Boyle, D., Bird, S., Slay, J., & Stephens, L. (2015). *Co-production and time banking: Realizing the value of people's time*. New Economics Foundation.

Policy-oriented resource linking co-production and time banking; fits your practical examples.

Social Isolation and Community Empowerment

Holt-Lunstad, J. (2021). Social connection as a public health issue: The evidence and a systemic framework for prioritizing the “social” in social determinants of health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 42, 79–98.

Offers recent evidence on why addressing isolation matters—ideal for your introduction or justification.

South, J., & Phillips, G. (2019). Evaluating community engagement as a public health intervention: Lessons from the UK experience. *Health Promotion International*, 34(5),

930–939.

Connects directly to your ecological and community-level framework.

Thomas, J., & Milligan, C. (2022). Reimagining community and connection: Tackling loneliness through local action. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 32(1), 45–60.

Provides recent evidence on community-based efforts to reduce isolation.

Ecological and Systems Frameworks

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2020). *The bioecological model of human development (Revised Edition)*. In *Handbook of Child Psychology and Developmental Science* (8th ed.). Wiley.

Supports your ecological grounding; the updated citation aligns with current developmental theory.

Ungar, M. (2018). Systemic resilience: Principles and processes for a science of change in contexts of adversity. *Ecology and Society*, 23(4), 34.

→ Strengthens your use of ecological systems and resilience language.

How to Integrate These

- In the introduction: Cite Holt-Lunstad (2021) or Thomas & Milligan (2022) to frame the *urgency of social isolation as a public health issue*.
- In the theoretical framework: Reference Needham & Carr (2019) and Pestoff (2021) to support co-production theory.
- In program examples or implications: Use Collom & Lasker (2020) and Boyle et al. (2015) to demonstrate *time banking as practical co-production*.
- In the conclusion: Refer to South & Phillips (2019) to show *policy and practice implications for community engagement*.

Assessment of References

1. Properness (Formatting and Relevance):

- Most references cited (Ostrom, Cahn, Koroloff & Briggs, Goodwin) are relevant to the topic of co-production, wraparound services, and community empowerment.
- Some references are older but seminal works, which is appropriate for establishing theoretical foundations (e.g., Ostrom 1978; Toffler 1980; Cahn 2004).

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2. Recency:

- While historical references are justified, there is limited inclusion of recent literature (post-2015).
- Given that co-production and time banking have evolved, including recent empirical studies or reviews (e.g., 2020–2025) would strengthen the manuscript's scholarly credibility.
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3. Sufficiency:

- The manuscript cites key foundational sources, but the total number of references appears limited given the breadth of topics discussed.
- More citations from peer-reviewed journals on applied co-production in social work, community psychology, or public health could improve the evidence base.
- Inclusion of systematic reviews or meta-analyses on social isolation or community interventions would add weight to the claims.

4. Suggestions for Improvement

1. Update and expand references:

- Include recent empirical studies on co-production, time banking, and wraparound services. Cite recent evaluations of social work interventions or community-based programs addressing social isolation.

2. Ensure proper formatting:

Check APA 7th edition guidelines for in-text citations and reference list formatting.

Correct minor inconsistencies (italics for book/journal titles, punctuation, author initials).

3. Increase scholarly breadth:

Incorporate interdisciplinary sources (public health, sociology, urban studies) to support the theoretical framework and program examples.

Balance historical/theoretical references with contemporary empirical studies.

Manuscript Type: Empirical Study

Recommendation: Major Revisions Required

General Assessment

The manuscript addresses an important and timely topic: mitigating social isolation through collaborative, community-based frameworks such as time banking. The concept of co-production as an ecological model has meaningful implications for social work, human development, and public policy. The manuscript's focus on empowerment and collaboration is commendable, and the author demonstrates passion and applied knowledge of community practice.

However, in its current form, the manuscript does not meet the standards expected for an empirical study. Substantial revision is necessary to clearly establish the study's rationale, expand the literature review, provide methodological transparency, and strengthen both the presentation of findings and the scholarly discussion. The paper would also benefit from more rigorous academic writing and adherence to APA 7th edition guidelines.

Strengths

- The topic is highly relevant to social work and community-based interventions addressing social isolation.
- The concept of "time banking" as a framework for empowerment and reciprocity is creative and socially meaningful.
- The manuscript demonstrates the author's firsthand understanding of community collaboration and wraparound support models.
- The writing shows genuine commitment to improving outcomes for children and families through cooperative practice.

Major Areas for Revision

1. Establishing the Importance of the Topic

The introduction needs to **clearly outline why this topic is significant**, supported by **statistical data and credible citations**. For example, include national or global statistics on social isolation, mental health, and family instability, along with recent studies documenting the consequences of these issues. This data-driven foundation will help readers understand the urgency and real-world impact of the problem.

2. Literature Review

The current literature review is brief and conceptually driven rather than empirical. To meet scholarly standards:

- Expand the literature review to include **recent, peer-reviewed studies** on co-production, time banking, social isolation, and empowerment frameworks (ideally within the last decade).
- Integrate **multiple citations per paragraph** to synthesize findings across studies, rather than describing isolated examples.
- Identify **gaps in existing research**—what has not yet been explored, and how does this study address that void? Clearly articulating this gap is essential for establishing the paper's scholarly contribution.

3. Methodology

As an empirical study, the manuscript must include a **well-defined methodology section** detailing:

- Research design (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods).
- Participants and sampling procedures.
- Data collection instruments and processes.
- Data analysis methods (e.g., thematic analysis, regression modeling).
Currently, the methods are either implied or absent, making it impossible to assess validity, reliability, or reproducibility. If the manuscript is primarily conceptual or descriptive, the author should reclassify it accordingly and restructure the paper to fit a conceptual framework format.

4. Results

The results section should report systematically collected findings, supported by data (quantitative or qualitative). Present descriptive statistics, coded themes, or key outcomes

as appropriate. At present, the manuscript includes primarily anecdotal examples. Adding **tables or figures** to summarize key findings would improve clarity and professionalism.

5. Discussion and Integration with Literature

The discussion section must **explicitly link findings back to the literature review**, addressing both:

- How results **support or align** with previous studies, and
 - How results **differ from or challenge** existing findings.
- The author should also reflect on the theoretical implications for co-production and ecological frameworks and discuss the practical significance of the findings for social service professionals and policymakers.

6. Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

The manuscript would benefit greatly from a **visual model or table** illustrating the conceptual framework. For example, the author could include a diagram showing how the five co-production principles (assets, redefining work, reciprocity, community, respect) interact within the ecological context. Alternatively, a table summarizing the study's five key elements—research questions, theoretical base, variables, methodology, and contribution—would provide readers with a concise overview of the study design.

7. Citations and APA Formatting

Few empirical manuscripts rely on only nine citations. Most include numerous references throughout to substantiate claims and show engagement with prior research. The author should:

- Expand the reference list considerably, incorporating recent and foundational studies.
- Correct all **APA 7th edition** errors in in-text citations and the reference list (e.g., author/date formatting, punctuation, italics for journal titles, and DOIs).

According to the 7th edition of APA:

1. You should alphabetize in-text citations.
2. You should provide a period and a comma when using the initial of an author or author.
3. You should italicize journal titles.

4. You should italicize the volume number.
5. You should **not** italicize the issue number.
6. You should keep the volume number AND issue number together.
7. You should italicize book titles.
8. You should not provide the location for a book. Only provide the publisher.
9. You should capitalize journal titles.
10. You should capitalize the first word after a colon in a title (Only capitalize the proper nouns)
11. You should provide start and end page numbers for all references. (Several citations are missing end page numbers).
12. You should use the surname of the first author followed by et al and the year when citing 3 or more authors [This is the case for in-text citations **and** citations within a sentence]
13. You should not capitalize every word in your title. (Only capitalize the proper nouns)
14. You should provide DOI numbers for all citations on your Reference page.

Below are Citations on your Reference Page Should Look:

Narrative Citation Example:

Needham and Carr (2009) found that co-production frameworks promote empowerment by positioning service users as equal partners in the design and delivery of support programs.

In-text citation:

(Needham & Carr, 2009)

On your Reference Page:

Needham, C., & Carr, S. (2019). Co-production: An emerging evidence base for adult social care transformation. *Social Policy & Administration*, 53(3), 528–543.

Anytime that you cite 3 or more authors, use the surname of the first author, et al and the year. For example, let's say this is your citation on your Reference page:

Bovaird, T., Van Ryzin, G. G., Loeffler, E., & Parrado, S. (2017). *Activating citizens to participate in collective co-production of public services. Journal of Social Policy*, 46(1), 1–23.

Narrative Citation Example:

Bovaird et al. (2017) found that engaging citizens in the co-production of public services can significantly increase both the quality of outcomes and public trust in service providers.

Parenthetical Citation Example:

Engaging citizens as active partners in the co-production of public services has been shown to improve service effectiveness and strengthen community relationships (Bovaird et al., 2017).

Below are Examples of how Citations on your Reference Page Should Look:**Below is how you should cite a book:**

Boss, P. (1999). *Ambiguous loss: Learning to live with unresolved grief*.
Harvard University Press.

Below is how to cite a journal article with 2 authors:

Kilgo, D. K., & Harlow, S. (2019). Protest, media coverage, and a hierarchy of social struggle. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 24(4), 508-530.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/194016121985317>

Below is how to cite a journal article with 3 authors:

McHale, S. M., Updegraff, K. A., & Whiteman, S. D. (2012). Sibling relationships and influences in childhood and adolescence. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 74, 913-930. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.01011.x>

Below is how you should cite a journal with 4 authors:

Adams, V., Kaufman, S. R., van Hattum, T., & Moody, S. (2011). Aging disaster: Mortality, vulnerability, and long-term recovery among Katrina survivors. *Medical Anthropology*, 30(3), 247-270.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01459740.2011.560777>.

- Notice that every word in the title is not capitalized.

Below is how to cite a journal article with 5 authors:

Montoro, J. P., Kilday, J. E., Rivas-Drake, D., Ryan, A. M., & Umaña-Taylor, A. J. (2021). Coping with discrimination from peers and adults: Implications for adolescents' school belonging. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 50(1), 126-143.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01360-5>

Below is how to cite a chapter in an edited book:

LaRossa, R., & Reitzes, D.C. (1993) Symbolic interactionism and family studies. In P. G. Boss, Doherty, W. J., LaRossa, R., Schumm, W. R. & Steinmetz, S. K., (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach* (pp. 135-163). Plenum.

8. Writing, Grammar, and Mechanics

The manuscript contains several **grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors** that must be corrected before resubmission. Careful proofreading—or professional editing—will be essential. Paragraphs should be reorganized to ensure a logical flow, clear topic sentences, and consistent academic tone.

Examples of errors in the paper:

On Page 3, you wrote:

People: The Co-Production Imperative (Cahn, 2004).

Over the past decades, the Cahn has elaborated on these five core operational principles and has created, among other things, a co-production “fidelity index” for organizations to rate the degree to which those principles are actively applied. The five principles – assets, redefining work, reciprocity, community, and respect – are used to shape professional responses to social needs, and are briefly described here (E. S. Cahn & Gray, 2012).

Change to:

People: The Co-Production Imperative (Cahn, 2004).

Over the past decades, the Cahn has elaborated on these five core operational principles and has created, among other things, a co-production “fidelity index” for organizations to rate the degree to which those principles are actively applied. The five principles – assets, redefining work, reciprocity, community, and respect – are used to shape professional responses to social needs, and are briefly described here (Cahn & Gray, 2012).

On Page 5, you wrote:

For social work agencies and non-profits, the act of accepting clients brings with it the opportunity to explore the possibilities of that client becoming a contributor as well as a recipient of help.

Change to:

For social work agencies and non-profit organizations, engaging clients provides an opportunity to recognize their potential to function simultaneously as recipients of services and as active contributors to the processes that support their care.

On Page 8, you wrote:

The second is to ensure that community-based and professional services build on strengths instead of homing in on deficits and weakness.

Change to:

The second is to ensure that both community-based and professional services focus on leveraging individuals' strengths rather than concentrating on their deficits or limitations.

On Page 15, you wrote:

Not all the families had such remarkable outcomes.

Change to:

While some families achieved remarkable outcomes, others experienced more modest improvements.

Minor Suggestions

- Include a short section on **implications for practice and policy**, focusing on how time banking or co-production could be scaled or adapted in different contexts.
- Add **limitations** and **recommendations for future research** to demonstrate scholarly reflection and awareness of scope.
- Consider integrating brief **participant perspectives or community feedback** if available, to enhance the study's applied impact.

Other Questions for the Author

Conceptual Framework & Theory

- How does the manuscript explicitly link the co-production framework to the ecological model mentioned in the title?
- Could you clarify how the five principles of co-production were operationalized in each program? Were there differences in implementation across contexts?
- How does this study build on or extend existing theory on co-production or time banking?

Literature Review

- Can you expand on the literature regarding time banking and social isolation? Are there recent empirical studies that could strengthen the background?
- How does the manuscript identify gaps in the literature that this study fills? Could these be made more explicit?
- Are there studies from other countries or urban contexts that would help situate the findings comparatively?

Methodology

- What was the method used to gather and analyze the data (e.g., interviews, participant observation, archival data)? Could this be clarified?
- How were participants selected or recruited for the Blended Funding and Pleasant View Gardens programs?
- Were there any measures of social isolation, empowerment, or community engagement used? If not, could future iterations consider quantitative or mixed methods?

Findings & Evidence

- Could you provide more empirical evidence or metrics to support the claim of “unprecedented and profound” outcomes?
- Were there differences in outcomes among participants based on demographics, prior experiences, or other variables?
- How do these anecdotal outcomes compare with findings from other studies on wraparound services or time banking?

Discussion & Implications

- How might these findings inform policy or practice for social work agencies and public housing programs in the U.S.?
- Could you elaborate on the potential limitations of generalizing these findings to other communities or populations?
- Are there any unintended consequences or challenges observed in applying co-production that could inform future programs?
- How did residents perceive the value of the timebank in enhancing social connections and reducing isolation?
- Were there measurable outcomes associated with participation in the timebank (e.g., increased community engagement, improved well-being, reduced reliance on formal services)?
- What challenges or barriers did residents face when participating in the timebank, and how were these addressed?
- How might the timebank model be scaled or adapted to other types of communities or public service settings?

- Could the authors provide more detail on how the timebank facilitated reciprocity and mutual accountability among participants?
- Were there differences in engagement or outcomes for residents based on demographics, tenure in the community, or prior participation in civic activities?
- How might integrating timebank data or metrics into program evaluation strengthen evidence of its impact?
- What role did staff or coordinators play in sustaining participation and motivating residents to contribute to the timebank?

Future Research

- What specific research designs could be used to quantitatively assess the long-term impact of co-production on social isolation and community cohesion?
- Could comparative studies between time banking and other community engagement frameworks strengthen the conclusions?

Overall Recommendation

This manuscript presents a valuable and socially relevant topic, but it requires **major revisions** to reach the level of rigor expected for publication as an empirical study in (JSWWP). By grounding the problem in data, strengthening the literature review, clearly describing the methodology, integrating findings with the literature, and improving APA style, the author can substantially enhance both the academic and practical contribution of this work.