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A COUNTER-HEGEMONIC DISCOURSE OF ECONOMIC DIFFERENCE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF TIMEBANKING IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

Timebanking provides an empirical entry point into a better understanding of the discursive strategies used to legitimize alternative currencies. Theoretically this study uses a post-Marxist perspective, particularly the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Methodologically it uses the mixed methodology of a corpus linguistics approach to critical discourse analysis to examine the websites of 334 timebanks in the United States. Findings include identifying how ideas of strengthening community and social bonds are used by timebanks to construct discursive antagonisms to capitalism. Contributions of this study include extending Laclau and Mouffe's work on radical political participation to J.K. Gibson-Graham's conceptualization of economic difference. This study also demonstrates how a corpus linguistics approach to critical discourse analysis allows for deeper understanding of counter-hegemonic discursive strategies used by alternative economic exchanges. Suggestions for future research are provided.

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INTRODUCTION

Community currencies, which allow community members to exchange goods and services without using conventional money, is one of numerous types of economic exchanges that provide an alternative to free market capitalist exchanges. Perhaps the most widespread type of community currency is timebanking, which allows community members to earn credit for providing services. Members then use this credit to purchase services from other participants.

Timebanking originated in the United States in the mid 1980's by Dr. Edgar S. Cahn, a law professor. Today, Timebanks USA (http://timebanks.org), the primary umbrella organization for timebanking started by Dr. Cahn, currently has nearly 350 active timebanks listed in its United States registry. Interestingly, while timebanking has now been active for over twenty years, the body of research on timebanking has only recently begun to grow. Theoretically, most timebanking research draws upon Robert Putnam's notions of social capital, in which social capital is understood to be rooted in social networks and norms of reciprocity. For example, Seyfang (2002; 2003; 2004) finds that timebanking is effective at building social capital, strengthening a community's social bonds, and including those who are socially excluded. Findings from a social network analysis by Collom (2008) include identifying that timebanking is important in integrating the elderly into communities and strengthening the social capital of the elderly. Molnar (2011) conducts a case study analysis of the only timebank in Sweden in an effort to better understand the challenges and the achievements of that timebank in creating social capital.

Methodologically, most of the timebanking research to date is qualitative and descriptive, using case studies to better understand the benefits and challenges of timebanking. For example, research by Ozanne (2010) focuses upon the obstacles and benefits experienced by members of a timebank in a relatively affluent community in New Zealand. Relatedly, Gregory (2009) examines the structural and organizational issues of a timebank in the United Kingdom. Hayashi (2012) conducts a case study of a timebank in Japan to understand its origins, impacts, and ongoing challenges.

While most of the timebanking research to date consists of qualitative case studies, there are a few quantitative studies. Collom (2012) presents several indicators from timebank databases that he argues are useful for researchers in conducting quantitative studies that cut across multiple timebanks. Collom (2007) also has analyzed survey data from 505 timebank members. Findings include identifying member demographics (mostly white, highly educated females), and identifying motivations for participating (which include values-based reasons as well as needs-based reasons). Collom (2008) has also used social network analysis to examine, in an exploratory fashion, how participation in a local timebank impacts elderly participants.

Other research focuses more upon the policy implications of timebanking. Van Kuik (2009) reviews the literature to argue that timebanks appear to be the most effective type of community currency to address the anti-poverty policies of a Dutch municipality. Naughton-Doe (2011) examines how a timebank is being used to provide social housing in the United Kingdom. Gill Seyfang, who has published several studies on timebanking in the United Kingdom, has several articles that include recommendations for practitioners and policymakers interested in implementing timebanking (2002; 2003; 2004).

Taken in sum, this growing body of research on timebanking provides researchers with a better understanding as to the benefits of timebanking in creating social capital, the challenges in participating in timebanking, and how to more effectively establish a timebank in order to better address certain societal needs. What remains empirically under-examined and under-theorized is how timebanking discursively positions itself as a sustainable economic activity. In turn, insights into these counter-hegemonic strategies deepen our knowledge as to how other alternative economic practices can be more effectively advanced.

Examining timebanking from a discursive approach provides unique insights because it assumes that the hegemony of capitalism is rooted in discourse rather than structure (Gibson-Graham [1996] 2006a). From this perspective, timebanking is understood as a counter-hegemonic activity that, through discourse, is seeking to subvert or provide an alternative to capitalist economic activities. Conceptualizing capitalist hegemony in this manner allows it to be understood as having no essential or coherent identity. Rather, hegemony is conceived of as a social articulation in which capitalism and its alternatives are mutually constituted and in which capitalism is always being challenged by alternative economic discourses. As Gibson-Graham ([1996] 2006a) argue, understanding capitalist hegemony as a dominant discourse rather than as a structure makes visible diverse capitalist and noncapitalist activities that are otherwise marginalized and obscured.

With these aims I assert that post-Marxism provides a useful theoretical perspective in locating timebanking within the broader framework of economic alternatives to capitalism, and also understanding the discursive strategies involved in these counter-hegemonic efforts.

A DISCOURSE OF ECONOMIC DIFFERENCE

Within the various alternative economic movements there are numerous mid-level theoretical frameworks, ranging from participatory economics (e.g. Albert and Hahnel 1991; 1999; Albert 2004) to the social economy and the solidarity economy (e.g. Allard et al. 2008; Lewis and Swinney 2008). While these are useful, I assert that for the purposes of this study, the work of J.K. Gibson-Graham (two feminist authors writing under a single pen-name) on what they refer to as "diverse economies" provides the most useful theoretical insights concerning relations between capitalist activities and its diverse alternatives.

In brief, Gibson-Graham ([1996] 2006a; 2006b) deconstruct the hegemony of capitalism in an effort to open a discursive space for economic activities that are otherwise obscured. They argue creating a discourse of economic difference is necessary in order to dislodge the hegemonic status of capitalism from its naturalized position as the only "normal" form of work, exchange, and business organization. In constructing this counter-hegemonic discourse that makes a space for other economic forms, Gibson-Graham ([1996] 2006a) propose a language of the "diverse economy." They argue this discourse of "economic difference" allows for thinking about the economy differently and in a manner that includes all economic practices which are otherwise excluded or marginalized by capitalist hegemony.

Gibson-Graham (2006b) argue that counter-hegemonic economic relations occur through practical efforts of three interconnected dynamics: a politics of language, a politics of the subject, and a politics of collective action. These interconnected dynamics lead to a "community economy" rooted in a locale in which economic diversity can thrive. They state that their conceptualization of a community economy contrasts with the mainstream economy and "economic development"; they argue these conceptualizations are dominated by the assumption that a capitalist economy is the only true, viable economic form.

Gibson-Graham's conceptualization of a diverse economy presents a provocative way of understanding sustainable economic development for communities. In applying their theoretical framework to their participatory action research activities, Gibson-Graham utilize qualitative methods to better understand notions of subjectivity in relation to capitalism and creating a diverse community economy ([1996]2006a; 2006b; see also Cameron and Gibson 2005). Gibson-Graham (2006b) note their empirical work approaches economic development as arising from "ethical debates and decisions" rather than working out structural imperatives (p. 167). They state that additional questions remain unanswered. These include identifying structures and dynamics that are necessary to sustain their conceptualization of a community economy.

To date, little if any research has drawn upon Gibson-Graham's insights to understand how a counter-hegemonic discourse is constructed at a more structural level. The purpose of this study is to extend Gibson-Graham's insights beyond a focus on economic subjectivity by exploring more structural mechanisms that communities are using to legitimize their alternative economic activities as being viable and legitimate.

For further theoretical and methodological insights into the structural counter-hegemonic processes that underpin the discourses of alternative currencies such as timebanking, the post-Marxist political theory of Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) and more recently, Laclau ([1996] 2007) is useful.

Laclau and Mouffe: Capitalist Hegemony and Discursive Chains of Equivalence.

While Laclau and Mouffe focus upon the issues of political hegemony and radical democratic politics, I argue their theoretical framework can be extended to economic issues. This provides insights into the discursive strategies necessary to more fully realizing – and borrowing from Gibson and Graham's work – a diverse economy. More specifically, and for the purposes of this study, I argue that Laclau and Mouffe's conceptualizations of chains of equivalences and differences are useful in understanding how alternative forms of economic exchanges, such as timebanking, discursively construct themselves in relation to the hegemony of free market capitalism.

Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) conceive of the social as a discursive space with political struggles occurring in this space. In order to examine the processes by which a hegemonic relation becomes possible they reformulate Gramsci's notion of hegemony by drawing upon the poststructuralism of Derrida, Lacan, Foucault and others.

Central to Laclau and Mouffe's argument is the notion of antagonism, with antagonism defined not as an objective relation, but rather as relations "which reveal the limits of all objectivity" ([1985] 2001: xiv). Laclau and Mouffe assert that the specific universality inherent to hegemony consists in a dialectic relationship; they conceive of this relationship as a logic of difference and a logic of equivalence. In brief, the logic of equivalence is understood as the simplification of political space while the logic of difference increases the complexity of this space.

For example, Laclau and Mouffe argue that neoliberalism seeks to redefine notions such as "equality," "liberty" and "democracy" through equivalences which justify and legitimate inequality and which simplify political space. The "right to difference" by political subjects is defined by neoliberalism as "difference = inequality = liberty" ([1985] 2001:174).

They state that antagonisms are expressions of resistance to inequalities and as such emerge from subject positions. Antagonisms effectively challenge the simplified, universalized discursive space created by a hegemonic relation by making this space more complex. The more unstable and inequitable the social relations, the more antagonisms will develop and proliferate, increasing the difficulty in establishing a unified chain of equivalence necessary for hegemony.

I assert Laclau and Mouffe's conceptualization of hegemonic relations provides a useful way to theorize about the discursive strategies underpinning the counter-hegemonic strategies of an alternative economic relation such as timebanking. Applying these theoretical insights to this study, I seek to identify how timebanking is discursively constructing an antagonistic relation to free market capitalism. In turn, this is creating a discursive space that can be filled by timebanking and, by extension, potentially

other alternative economic relations. To understand how timebanking is discursively constructing an antagonistic relation to capitalism, two research questions guide this study. First, what are the main topics associated with timebanking? Second, what strategies (predication, nomination, and argumentation) are used to discursively construct timebanking? These research questions draw upon the work of Reisigl and Wodak (2009) on critical discourse analysis, discussed in detail below.

METHOD

I use a mixed methodology comprised of corpus linguistics and a discourse-historical approach to critical discourse analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) refers to a diverse school of thought rooted in the Critical Theory work of the Frankfurt School. While the various strands of CDA employ diverse methodological approaches to discourse analysis, they all share a common theoretical interest in demystifying ideologies and power and emphasizing empancipation (Chouliaraki and Fairclough1999; Wodak and Meyer 2009). The discourse-historical approach to CDA is one of several approaches within the CDA paradigm and over the last few years arguments have been made for bringing corpus linguistics into the CDA tent (Baker and McEnery 2005; Baker et al. 2008; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008; Mautner 2009; Wodak and Meyer 2009). In this study I build upon these recent efforts which originate in linguistic studies. I assert this mixed methodological approach allows for a deeper, more complex analysis as to how discourse is used to challenge the hegemony of capitalism.

CDA has traditionally relied primarily upon qualitatively analyzing small sets of data. In contrast, corpus linguistics is a quantitative approach that is used to analyze large sets of data. Baker et al (2008) advance a mixed methodological approach that uses both corpus linguistics and the discourse-historical approach (DHA) to CDA (see also Mautner 2009; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008). This allows a large volume of data to be analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively and also provides a greater degree of researcher objectivity in the analysis (Mautner 2009; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008; see also Baker 2006).

While corpus linguistics techniques allow for the quantitative examination of discourse, DHA is used in this study for qualitative analysis. A primary aim of DHA, which is rooted in critical theory, is to demystify the hegemony of specific discourses by analyzing the ideologies that establish and perpetuate dominance, and also those discourses that fight this dominance (Reisigl and Wodak 2009). DHA is a qualitative methodology that provides an inter-disciplinary, problem-oriented approach (Reisigl and Wodak 2009). Central to DHA is the principle of triangulation, in which a whole range of empirical observations, theories, methods, and background are taken into account, with the specific choices depending upon the specific problem (Reisigl and Wodak 2009).

In discussing DHA, Reisigl and Wodak (2009) state that three components constitute a DHA analysis. First, the specific contents or topics of a specific discourse must identified. Discursive strategies are then investigated (including predication, nomination, and argumentation strategies), and lastly specific linguistic meanings and words are examined.

Data and Sample

This study examines the discourse of timebanks as presented on their websites. Preliminary searches indicated that the topic of timebanking is scarce in news sites and other public media. Further, focusing on how U.S. timebanks discursively present themselves "officially" per their websites is particularly useful in understanding the counter-hegemonic discourses timebanks are employing in presenting themselves in what is arguably a society that epitomizes capitalist hegemony – the United States.

The list of timebanks was created using the list on Timebanks USA (http://timebanks.org) the primary organizational umbrella for timebanking in the United States. It is also useful to note that Timebanks USA was founded by Dr. Edgar S. Cahn, the originator of timebanking (Cahn 1992). According to the website, Timebanks USA was created in 1995, with its central office located in Washington D.C. The mission statement of Timebanks USA, a nonprofit organization, is to "nurture and expand" the timebanking movement. Services provided by the Timebanks USA website include providing information about timebanking, providing resources for timebanks including software and networking opportunities, and a membership directory which is publicly available so that interested individuals can contact / join a timebank in or near their community. This membership roster is what was used to identify timebanks throughout the U.S. Each of the timebanks on this roster have an informational page, and many have their own websites to which they direct the readers. All 334 active timebanks listed on this directory were included in this study. Active membership of each timebank, as per the Timebanks USA website, ranged from 1 to 670 members. All websites were accessed between Feb.1, 2013 to Feb.13, 2013.

Analysis

The sample resulted in a corpus of 334 sites with a total of 70,591 words. I first converted each web page in the sample to plain text files (.txt) and then uploaded these files into WordSmith Tools version 6 for analysis. This software program is widely used for corpus linguistics analysis (e.g. Baker and McEnery 2005; Baker 2006; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008; Baker et al. 2008).

I began the analysis by examining the quantitative characteristics of the data. I examined frequencies and dispersions, as well as statistically significant lexical patterns. I also statistically calculated collocates of the word "timebanks." Collocation refers to the co-occurrence of two words typically within five words on either side of the word being examined (Gabrielatos and Baker 2008; see

also Baker 2006; McEnery et al. 2006). Collocates of a word provide insights into the word's meaning, for the assumption is that meanings do not reside in words themselves but rather how words relate to other words (Fairclough 2003; Krippendorff 2004). For example, both neoliberal and anti-globalization discourses use the word "globalization" although this word is often used very differently (Fairclough 2003).

The quantitative analysis of collocations informed the qualitative analysis. For each statistically significant word I examined the predication, nomination, and argumentation strategies associated with the use of that word. This required examining how every single statistically significant word was used within the larger context of its immediate co-text within the concordance.

FINDINGS

High Frequency Words

As is standard in corpus linguistics analysis, all function words – such as the, and, a, an, and so forth – were omitted in the analysis. Lemmas were also combined (for example, you, your, and yours are combined). Table 1 displays the top ten most frequently occurring words.

Table 1: Top Ten Frequency Words*

	Word	Frequency
1	You / your / yours	1996
2	We / our / ours	1496
3	Time	1043
4	Community	1005
5	Timebank	744
6	Members	685
7	Exchange	654
8	Help	552
9	Other	523
10	Member	399

*Function words omitted and lemmas combined

Table 1 indicates that the pronoun "you" and its lemmas was the most frequently occurring word, occurring 1,996 times. The second most occurring word is "time" with the third most frequently occurring word being "community."

While word frequencies must be treated with caution, they are useful in providing insights into the types of words that dominate the data (Baker 2006; McEnery et al. 2006). The words displayed in table 1 are interesting in that they stress notions of collectivity and community (words such as "we / our / ours," "community," "members," "help" and "exchange"). The high frequency of the word "you / your / yours" underscores and personalizes the notion of ownership and belonging to the collectivity.

Table 2: Word List Word Cluster (Three Words) Of "Community"

	Phrase	Frequency
1	Respect Every Human	8
2	Respect Underlies Freedom	7
3	Respect Where People	7
4	Respect is Denied	6
5	Respect Supplies The	6

For further insights into how these words are used I computed a word cluster for the word "community," the third highest frequency word. I was unable to compute word clusters for the top two frequency words due to a lack of associated word clusters. The word cluster (consisting of three words) for "community" is displayed in table 2.

Similar to table 1, table 2 should be examined cautiously. What is of interest here is the dominance of the word "respect" and the suggestion that community is a place associated with respect (due to this being a word cluster of the term "community"). This implies respect and community are often denied in capitalist exchanges.

Table 3: Concordance Word Cluster (Five Words) Of "Community"

	Phrase	Frequency
1	Are built which strengthen our	108
2	Built which strengthen our community	108
3	Strengthen our community please respond	107
4	Community please respond	107
5	Please respond in a timely	107
6	Our community please respond in	107
7	Which strengthen our community please	107
8	Overall community is strengthened when	105
9	Our community is alive and flourishing	105
10	The overall community is strengthened	105

Table 4: Top Ten Collocates* By Mutual Information Score For The Word Community

Total Left (-5/-1)	Total Right (+1/+5)	Total (-5/+5)
We (519) [23.80 / 4062.6]	Flourishing (108) [19.65 / 930.62]	We (519) [24.05 / 4416.00]
Strengthen (331) [21.65 / 1839.04]	Alive (108) [19.65 / 930.62]	Strengthen (331) [22.88 / 2939.77]
Built (177) [20.67 / 1334.83]	Overall (106) [19.57 / 893.29]	Built (177) [21.07 / 1538.81]
Flourishing (108) [19.65 / 930.62]	Fabric (99) [19.30 / 800.72]	Help (230) [20.57 / 1271.11]
Alive (108) [19.65 / 930.62]	Strengthen (331) [18.51 / 606.05]	Alive (108) [19.65 / 930.62]
Overall (106) [19.57 / 893.29]	Neighbors (105) [18.20 / 546.86]	Flourishing (108) [19.65 / 930.62]
Fabric (99) [19.30 / 800.72]	Help (116) [17.60 / 444.04]	Overall (106) [19.57 / 893.29]
Real (97) [19.19 / 800.72]	Members (115) [17.25 / 386.40]	Keep (109) [19.42 / 824.92]
Share (106) [18.87 / 680.21]	Built (177) [12.68 / 77.79]	Fabric (99) [19.30 / 800.72]
Again (104) [18.48 / 598.16]	Exchange (54) [12.17 / 43.06]	Real (99) [19.28 / 795.43]

The number in parentheses indicate collocation frequency. The numbers in brackets indicate the MI3 score and the log likelihood score, respectively.
*Function words omitted and lemmas combined

In continuing to build upon these statistically descriptive findings, I next computed a concordance and examined collocates of the word "community." Table 3 displays the word clusters of three words that are associated with "community." A concordance word cluster is different than the word list word cluster displayed in table 2. Table 2 displayed a word cluster derived from the word list, showing which words are frequently associated with the term "community." In contrast, table 3 shows the phrases which commonly surround the term "community." Table 3 provides a different angle to the use of "community" in that the emphasis is largely on appeals to strengthen one's community through involvement with timebanking.

Exploring this descriptive data is useful, albeit limited. To quantitatively assess which words have the highest statistical association with "community" collocates were calculated for the -5 to +5 span (five words to the left of "community" and five words to the right of "community"), a span which is widely used in corpus linguistics analysis (Baker 2006; McEnery et al. 2006). Table 4 displays the top ten collocates of the word community, as ranked by the MI3 statistic.

Because my focus is on a high frequency lexical word – or words that carry meaning, as compared to function, or grammatical words (prepositions, adjectives, and so forth) – I calculated both the Mutual Information 3 (MI3) statistic and the log-likelihood (LL) statistic recommended by Baker (2006). While the MI statistic has been criticized for giving too much weight to low frequency words (McEnery et al. 2006) the MI3 score addresses this by giving more weight to high frequency words and less weight to low frequency words (McEnery et al. 2006). The log-likelihood score allows for a comparison of both high and low frequency words (McEnery et al. 2006). As per Baker (2006), using a combination of statistics allows for a more confident claim there is a strong, non-random association between the two words.

The collocates in table 4 are similar to the descriptive findings in that the top ten collocates are words that appeal to a person's belonging to a community (for example, "we" and its lemmas, "neighbors," "fabric," "share") and appeals to be an active participant in one's community (for example, "strengthen," "built," "help," "keep").

To better understand the role of these words in the timebanking discourse I turned from a quantitative analysis to a qualitative analysis of these collocates. In this phase of the analysis I drew heavily from the DHA approach to CDA as detailed by Reisigl and Wodak (2009). This allowed me to critically examine the various types of discursive strategies which surrounds these collocates.

Nomination Strategies

Per Reisigl and Wodak (2009) nomination strategies provide insights into how social actors and other phenomena are discursively constructed. This occurs through examining nouns, verbs, and tropes such as metaphors.

As displayed in table 1, the pronouns of "you/your/yours" and "we/our/ours" are the most frequently occurring words. Table 4 also shows that "we" and its lemmas ("our/ours") is a top collocate to "community" with the highest MI3 scores of all the collocates. "We" and its lemmas occurred primarily at the L1 position (444 times) as the word "our" as an adjective, such as "our community." Examples as to how these pronouns are used in the data include the following:

> *The Woodbridge Time Exchange (WTE) was started in 2012 with three main goals:*
>
> ** Strengthen the fabric of our community.*
> ** Serve people and give them a means to serve.*
> ** Establish new relationships and meet real needs of our community members.*
>
> *Thank you for the role you have played in making our community better through support of volunteerism.*
>
> *Helping each other, helping our neighbors, helping our community, by sharing skills and time.*

This use of "we" and its lemmas indicates an effort to personalize timebanking by appealing to individuals' sense of belonging to collective. Further, these appeals suggest that participating in timebanking is an effective way to build and strengthen community bonds.

Predication Strategies

Per Reisigl and Wodak (2009) predication strategies provide insights into how the subject is discursively described. This includes examining stereotypical or evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits, rhetorical figures such as hyperboles, and allusions. Table 4 indicates that predicates of the word "community" include "flourishing," "strengthening," "built," and "alive." I examine each of these words in more depth below.

The word "flourishing" was located exclusively at the R3 position. This word was predominately associated with the standard phrase of instructions as to how to use the timebanking.org website to access one's timebank. This sentence followed the standardized set of instructions:

> *Do this again and again to help keep our community alive and flourishing.*

The word "strengthen" and its lemmas occurred in several places throughout the corpus. At the L2 position it was typically associated with the standardized instructions as to how to use timebank.org:

> *Don't hesitate to respond to an offer or request. This is exactly how new sharing and relationships are built which strengthen our community.*

It was also, in the L2 position, related to other, more personalized instructions as to how to get involved:

> *Join our network and strengthen our community. Our office hours are Monday - Wednesday, 9am - 2pm.*

> *At North Texas Time Bank we recognize that each person has talents to share, and that the overall community is strengthened when neighbors help one another.*

Other uses of the "strengthen" and its lemmas is found in the goals and mission statements of the timebanks. These were often based off the timebanking.org template, listed as one of the goals of the timebank:

> *Strengthen the fabric of our community.*

But often the mission statement and goals were personalized, such as the following:

> *The Eastside Timebank strives to strengthen our community by tapping into the diverse resources our neighbors have to offer.*

> *We intend to strengthen the bonds of our community by making it easier to know the needs of our neighbors and to give and receive service.*

Other predicates that were statistically significant, as shown in table 4, such as "alive" and "help," appeared primarily in the standardized instructions that the majority of timebanks opted to use.

> *Do this again and again to help keep our community alive and flourishing.*

Similarly, "built" and its lemmas (build, building) occurred with the standardized instructions.

> *Don't hesitate to respond to an offer or request. This is exactly how new sharing and relationships are built which strengthen our community.*

"Built" and its lemmas also commonly appeared as part of a discussion as to the core values of timebanks, such as in the following:

> *"How can we help each other build the world we both will live in?"*

> *Community is built upon sinking roots, building trust, creating networks.*

Taken together, a qualitative analysis of the predication strategies suggests that community is something that one must be actively engaged in, if it is something one values. Without active engagement, community will become weakened and not flourish.

Argumentation Strategies

Per Resigl and Wodak (2009) argumentation strategies include claims of truth or rightness, as well as fallacies. Building upon the prior findings, the following claims are utilized.

- Participating in timebanking is essential for building and strengthening community bonds.
- Community bonds are built and strengthened through sharing one's skills and helping others.

DISCUSSION

Understanding the processes by which timebanking uses notions of community as a discursive antagonism to capitalism, as per the theorization of Laclau ([1996] 2007), and Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001), provides an entry point into a better understanding as to how to more effectively create a counter-hegemonic discourse of a diverse economy, as conceptualized by Gibson-Graham ([1996] 2006a; 2006b). In extending Laclau's and Mouffe's ideas of a radical and plural democracy to the economy and thus building upon the work of Gibson-Graham, I argue for examining what I refer to as a radical and plural economy, or RPE.

Theoretically, an RPE requires two primary steps, or what Laclau refers to as a double movement. I discuss these two primary steps below.

Creating Discursive Antagonisms

The findings of this study indicate that, as per the timebanking movement, notions of community are being discursively constructed as being absent in capitalism exchanges. Timebanking is using what is being excluded from capitalism – the antagonistic empty signifier – and discursively labeling it as "community." Timebanking then constructs "community" as something that can be actively built and strengthened through participation in this economic activity.

It is important to note that antagonisms emerge from subject positions. According to Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001), subject positions may present themselves in two fundamental ways. First, a subject position may result from subordinate relations that are rearticulated as relations of oppression. This in turn leads to the emergence of an antagonism. Or, a subject position may result from certain social transformations which in turn lead to subordinate social relations that bear new forms of inequality, again leading to that subject position being a site of an antagonism. Laclau and Mouffe state that in every case the existence of an external discourse which impedes the stabilization of the subordination of difference allows forms of resistance to become collective struggles. The findings here suggest that timebanking, through its antagonistic discourse centered upon "community" is potentially rooted in individuals' experiences of lack of community / collective well-being. Future research should explore subject positions in timebanking, for examining the subject positions from which these antagonisms emerge is beyond the scope of this study.

Creating Discursive Chains of Equivalence

According to Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) alternatives "can only consist of the construction of a different system of equivalents, which establishes social division on a new basis…an expanding the chains of equivalents between the different struggles against oppression." (p.177, italics in original). Creating legitimate alternatives to capitalism thus requires the discursive construction of equivalents. Laclau and Mouffe's notion of nodal points is relevant here, as they function as key links in the chain(s) of signification. Identifying antagonisms related to free market capitalism creates a discursive space that can then be filled by a new chain of equivalence constructed by diverse economic relations, thus challenging the hegemony of capitalism.

Identifying the antagonisms associated with different economic exchanges provides insights into the equivalences associated with a radical and plural economy. Figure 1 shows nodal points arising from the analysis from which a new chain of equivalence is being constructed by timebanking. The two nodal points appeal to different aspects of community – a self-interested appeal ("your community") and one that appeals to the collective ("our community"). These appeals are then linked to the ideas that supporting timebanking will strengthen one's community, build one's community, and make the community flourish.

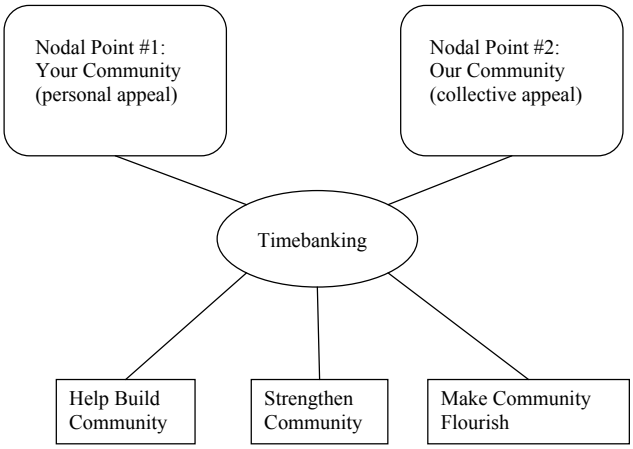

Figure 1: Chains of Signification

It is important to note that according to Laclau and Mouffe, a logic of equivalence simplifies political space whereas a logic of difference expands and increases the complexity of political space. The findings of this study indicate that timebanking makes the discursive space of economic relations more complex by highlighting needs that are not being filled under capitalism – needs rooted in notions of "community." Extending these ideas, an RPE doesn't renounce capitalism, but coexists with it by constructing a new system that that defines what had previously been an empty signifier. This is also consistent with Gibson-Graham, who argue diverse economic activities coexist with capitalist activities.

Further, and as Gibson-Graham identify, diverse economic practices have different forms; timebanking is but one form. All these struggles can be partially articulated into very different discourses, with "community" being just one nodal point within a counter-hegemonic discourse. The articulation points between the diverse economic activities should be, to use the words of Laclau and Mouffe, "constantly re-created and renegotiated, and there is no final point at which a balance will be definitively achieved." ([1985] 2001:188). This would result in a radically open economy that cannot be fixed or unified.

CONCLUSION

Examining the discursive processes underpinning timebanking's efforts to present itself as a viable, legitimate economic activity provides insights that are useful for both advocates working to advance timebanking and other community currencies, and for researchers.

For advocates working to advance timebanking and other sustainable economic alternatives, the results of this study suggest that the discursive use of "community" may be a useful strategy for attracting diverse participants. The find-

ings of this study indicate that "community" is being neglected or otherwise being worked against by capitalism, and that timebanking is actively seeking to fill this void. This is consistent with work that asserts the quest for community – in its many forms – is fundamental to late / post-modernity. Bauman (2007a) argues in advanced industrial societies social problems such as poverty are no longer seen as being best addressed by collective means, but have now become individualized. In managing these uncertainties and fears in an increasingly individualized, consumer-oriented society, individuals are seeking to find community in a disembedded, ambivalent world which is always on the move (what Bauman refers to as liquid modernity) (Bauman 2000; 2007a; 2007b). Further, Bauman argues that an increasing focus upon "making a difference" at the local level stems from an attempt to gain security in an uncertain world over which it appears the individual has little control (Bauman 2007b).

Research should build upon these ideas and continue to explore how community, in its various forms, is understood by participants in timebanking and other community currency efforts. Research on economic subjectivity, which utilizes Gibson-Graham's framework, would be useful here (e.g. Cameron and Gibson 2005; Gibson-Graham 2006; Rice et al. 2011; Rice 2013). Questions that could be considered include the following. How do participants understand "community"? What aspects of the various notions of community, as related to timebanking or another community currency, are most appealing to participants? What types of negotiations are involved in these notions of community? How has participation in a community currency changed members' relationships with others in their community/ies?

This study suggests other avenues for future research, including the following questions. How are other community currencies discursively constructing antagonisms to capitalism? In turn, how does this inform a chain of equivalence for a diverse economy? From what subject positions are these antagonisms arising? What discourses do participants use to legitimize or validate their participation in timebanking and other alternative economic activities? A better understanding of these questions will, in turn, provide insights into strategies that those working in community development can use in their efforts to make their local economies more robust, diverse, and inclusive.

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