Those Who Work, Those Who Don't

Poverty, Morality, and Family in Rural America

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forces that created the situation. Theirs is a story of survival and adaptation in a place that was written off as unimportant, an acceptable casualty in a war between environmental interests and extractive industries. They rely heavily on cultural and moral discourses to help them survive its aftermath. As the following chapters will demonstrate, their beliefs in their own moral superiority allow them to defend their decisions to stay there and to make sense of their lives in their new context, bereft of many of the benefits that originally drew their families to Golden Valley.

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Workers and Welfare: Poverty, Coping Strategies, and Substance Abuse

Living with Poverty, Past and Present

As you drive south into Golden Valley on the narrow and winding Highway 7, the landscape unfolds majestically as you glide down off of Gold Mountain. The sharp, bare mountaintops give way to forests that frame the road, which then recede into the open fields and flat land of Golden Valley. The highway gradually straightens for the brief respite that Golden Valley provides from its otherwise nonstop hairpin turns. As you approach the valley floor, houses and homesteads appear. Some are lavish ranches, with large houses set back from the road amid acres of meadows. Others are dilapidated shacks surrounded by their own private garbage dumps. It is the gorgeous thousand-acre ranches that catch the attention, with cattle or deer grazing in wide pastures at dawn and dusk. The small, poorly kept-up houses often go unnoticed, somehow invisible and easy to ignore despite their closer proximity to the road. The eye has a hard time taking in their abstractionist array of tar paper roofs, boarded-up windows, broken appliances, old vehicles whose useful parts have long ago been scavenged, and garbage spilling out of bags into the yards.

It is easier for a newcomer to focus on Golden Valley's beauty than its chaos. Its residents, however, are well aware of the more run-down homes. Comments such as "I wish people took a little more care of their places" often expressed one of the ways in which they felt the community had deteriorated in recent years. When asked to pinpoint when exactly these changes had occurred, however, most people admitted that junker cars and refrigerators in the front yard had always been ubiquitous parts of the landscape in Golden Valley, as they are throughout much of rural America.[1] The following exchange occurred between Bud and Emily Richards, a married couple in their 40s, as they discussed the way the community had changed over their lifetimes:

BUD: You see a lot of stuff running down. Just—there's not that much money coming into this town, you know. It's hard to . . .

EMILY: Not a lot of pride in their places and things . . .

BUD: That's bad, yeah. . . . But most of those that are real bad have been here forever and they would'a been here if the mill would'a closed or not.

The closing of the woods and sawmills certainly have exacerbated unemployment and its effects in Golden Valley. However, poverty is not new to the valley, which has always had its share of people who lived marginally. A young woman named Christy declined to do an interview with me because she thought that I was interested only in hearing about how the mill closing had had an impact on people. She explained to me that her family hadn't been affected by it at all, because her parents had never worked. She had grown up in a remote cabin on an unpaved road that was inaccessible to vehicles at certain times of year and had lived without running water or electricity for most of her childhood. She said that she had grown up in an intergenerational welfare family and that she had broken the cycle by being the first one to get a job. It appeared from her description that there had always been two kinds of people in Golden Valley: those who worked and those who did not. It was also clear that she felt shame because her father was one who did not.

Yet Christy's story was not anomalous in Golden Valley. Many of my subjects grew up with fathers who were only marginally attached to the paid workforce, often because they had either chosen a subsistence lifestyle or had sustained debilitating injuries while working. Whether or not their fathers had worked, none of my respondents could recall a

time before poverty was commonplace in Golden Valley. The main thing that has changed since the closing of the woods and mill is the proportion of the population who do not work, particularly the proportion of men who are not working. The shacks with the poorly maintained yards have always existed, but now there appear to be more of them. As 48-year-old Eric McCloud explained:

> In the '70s, it was a booming town, but welfare hit it. But both sawmills were running and everything was cool. The sawmill kind of kept that all mellowed out. And you had two factions, three factions: You had a few retirees, you had the workers, you had the welfare. So then when the mill left, it became, I feel, retirement and welfare, but more welfare than retirement. So yeah, I'd say we went through big changes here.

Jeanie Mayer, a 45-year-old woman who spent most of her life in Golden Valley, was one of many residents who made observations similar to Eric's:

> I know that there's families here that haven't worked in three or four generations. They brag about the fact that, you know, they've never worked a day in their lives. Welfare.
>
> *So there are people here on welfare who have been here for a long time?*
>
> Yeah, yeah. There's cyclic, generation after generation of welfare people that don't want to work. Or they just work a little bit here or a little bit there, but for the most part they don't contribute. . . . So that's to me the biggest change that we've had that I don't like.
>
> *Because there's more of that than there used to be?*
>
> I think so.

Eric and Jeanie's comments, like Christy's refusal, suggest a strong social disgrace around unemployment and welfare receipt. Unemployed poverty has long been unacceptable in Golden Valley and is commonly blamed for most of the obvious problems in the community. Although as shown in chapter 1 welfare receipt has not actually increased, the perception of welfare as a problem and the stigma around its receipt has.

Working poverty, however, has historically had a different social interpretation. Like welfare receipt and unemployed poverty, working poverty has been a fact of life in Golden Valley for generations. A job alone has never been a guarantee of wealth here. Whether they were from working families or not, few of my subjects grew up in any kind of affluence and most recalled poverty being a part of their daily struggle to

some degree. Many subjects grew up with a working father whose salary barely kept the family afloat, and lacking electricity and telephones was as common for them as it was for those whose fathers didn't work. Women in the workforce were less common then than they are now and were particularly uncommon among the more stably married families. Without a second earner, even a mill salary afforded only the barest of middle-class lifestyles, as average annual earnings in the manufacturing sector were less than $17,000 in 1990, just about $3,000 over the poverty line for a family of four at the time.[2] A mill salary was considered a respectable one since it generally paid enough for a man to support his family and eventually own a home, even if it took years to reach this kind of comfort level. This did not mean that the family had any money to spare, though, and most residents recalled clothes, toys, and store-bought food being in short supply. As Eric McCloud recalled it, "When I was growing up, this was a community of poor working people. They were poor, and some of them stayed poor, and some of them saved every penny they made and ended up with a fairly nice retirement."

The key to respectability was thus not necessarily wealth, but rather having a male earner who provided as much as he could through hard work. As long as someone in the family was working for the money, there was little shame in living on meager wages then or now, and subsistence activities were highly valued as part of the culture of Golden Valley. Almost everyone I met who grew up there remembered subsistence activities being a part of everyday life to some degree, whether it was hunting and fishing to help supply the family's dietary needs or cutting and chopping their own wood for heat in the winter. Many people believed then (and now) that it spoils children to give them too many things for free and that boys in particular should work for their luxury items from a young age. Often the local environment supplied what salaries could not for the enterprising man and his family. Most men, as well as a lot of women, grew up helping provide for the family in nonmonetary ways from a young age. Forty-five-year-old Grace Prader remembers her childhood as being filled with subsistence work and tries to raise her sons to emulate the demanding work ethic of her own youth:

> Growing up I always had goats, and we had fair animals and stuff like that. We had a huge garden. There was five kids. And on a schoolteacher and a custodian salary we had to have the garden and the animals for freezer and table. And I can remember other kids going, "I don't know what I'm gonna do after school today, I'm so bored." I was like, "Shit, I wish I had time to get bored," you know? And so as a result, there's a lot of kids who are still that way, but my boys, I try to keep them pretty busy.

Thirty-year-old Rod Mitchell recalled a similarly tough childhood, although with a bit more anger than Grace. His family moved from the San Francisco Bay Area to Riverbend when he was 9 years old. His stepfather, whom he described as "old school," sold firewood for a living and expected his sons to pitch in whenever they weren't at school. As Rod recollected,

> It was an interestin' life growing up here because, I mean, we had to work for it. It's hard to make a living in this place. So basically I've been working since I was 9 years old. I kinda liked it when I was a kid. But I do have my resentments. Just the upbringing, the hard life.
>
> *Because you had to work?*
>
> Yeah, the work. A normal kid of 8 shouldn't have to go out and bust his tail after school and be working weekends. I just feel I grew up way too early. But you know, it helped me out, 'cause my work ethics are excellent. I mean, I think I've only drawn unemployment once in seventeen years. I mean, I've never gone more than a week without a job.

Like Grace, Rod found a feeling of respectability in the hard work demanded by poverty despite the sacrifices it required of him. I discovered the same sentiment among most respondents, for whom chores and responsibilities were simply part of the Golden Valley lifestyle during their childhoods and were vital in the purveyance of strong work ethics. The culture of Golden Valley was built around the value of hard labor for its own sake, with survival and masculine pride often being its only rewards. Poverty per se was not looked down upon, but rather poverty in the absence of work. It is this kind of poverty, the poverty of those deemed lazy and unproductive, that is symbolized for many by houses and yards that are in poor repair.[3] A man with a decent work ethic, whether or not he is poor, is expected to keep up the appearance of respectability.

Thus, the difference between the past and the present is not simply the existence of poverty. The main distinction between then and now appears to be the gendered nature of work and breadwinning. In my sample, 41 percent of all respondents had grown up with a mother who

worked at least part-time. However, of the women in my sample who were either married or parents, 83 percent were working. The ability of the male breadwinner to support the family, rather than the average standard of living, is in many ways what separates the present from the past. During the forest industry's heyday, a solid lower-middle-class lifestyle was more commonly achievable without a working wife, particularly if the couple had hardworking children to help with the family's survival.

Today, it is much harder for families in Golden Valley to achieve this same lifestyle without the addition of a working woman, and as discussed in chapter 1, women's workforce participation is on the rise. Meanwhile, unemployment and lack of workforce participation have become much more common for men over the decade. Given the cultural context, this presents a difficult challenge for the men of Golden Valley. Not only must they fight for material survival, but they must also fight harder than before just to retain respectability within the community. It is not easy for men to manifest their work ethics in the absence of work, and for many it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish themselves from the ranks of the intergenerational welfare families whom they were taught to scorn. It is thus not surprising that poverty has become more visible to those who live in Golden Valley. Among its most commonly cited personifications are the people waiting impatiently at the post office on the first day of the month for their welfare checks to appear in their mailboxes. Another is the state of disrepair and disregard of many of the valley's homes. While neither of these phenomena were unknown to previous generations in Golden Valley, they have apparently become harder for its current population to ignore. Thus the run-down houses that visitors can easily overlook have become for residents the most salient symbols of their beloved community's decline.

This decline is not simply material in nature for most of them, however; it also is a decline in what they perceive as the moral value of hard work. Just as it is harder for the unemployed to manifest their own work ethics, they are also assumed to be unable to pass these values onto their children. A telling example comes from Dawn Bartlett, a 30-year-old teacher at Golden Valley Elementary School, who expressed what she saw as the major difference between her childhood and the experience of the children who are her students:

> I think about those things that were instilled in us very young, that made us—you know, strong work ethics—those things that I look around now and I'm like, whoa, I don't think they have it. Or they're not being modeled to work. Or unfortunately some teachers and I will talk about these kids that'll look at you and be like, "I don't need to work. I'm just gonna collect a check when I get out of school." And they are dead serious. That is their goal, and that is what they'll do. And that is so sad, but those are the models that they have. I had highly motivated working parents that were like, gung ho, you know, were always doing something, always.

Dawn herself had grown up in poverty, miles from town in a house without either electricity or running water. Her parents were "highly motivated" to work in unpaid subsistence activities that nonetheless ensured the family's survival and provided their most basic needs. When she remembered this past, she did not recall feelings of shame or guilt; instead she remembered learning strong work ethics and survival skills that strengthened her as a person and would sustain her regardless of what life threw into her path. This provided for her a sharp contrast with what she saw as today's growing problem of poverty in the absence of a proper work ethic. Dawn, like most of my respondents, felt that the community's biggest problem was not so much an increase in poverty as it was the increase in malaise and hopelessness that seemed to have accompanied the loss of the male jobs. Whether this increase in negative values is real or perceived is difficult to quantify, but its importance to social life translates into pressure on the poor to prove that they are not deadbeats, particularly if they hope to find work in Golden Valley. As this chapter will explore in detail, Golden Valley's small size and tight-knit community structure mean that no one is anonymous, and reputations and collective opinions can have a serious impact on people's social lives and labor market experiences.

Coping with Rural Poverty

> All the things I do for recreation either gain you money or help you not spend money. Hunting and fishing is meat coming in; gold mining and gemstone mining are money coming in. And money's pretty bad, but it's just part of living here. You have to understand that it swings in seasons. Winter is really, really bad, and you kind of go hungry sometimes. And then summer you put in a garden, which is essential,

> virtually. And things go better in the summer and fall, and then in winter it goes back. (Kenny Blake, 25-year-old gas station clerk and cohabitating father of one)

Moral Capital and Survival

There are a number of ways in which the experience of rural poverty is distinctly different from that of urban, inner-city poverty. Most notably, several of the options available for surviving poverty are unique to the rural setting. While on the one hand certain types of paid informal-sector work may be harder to find in a rural area than an urban one, on the other hand there are many more options for unpaid subsistence work to help sustain people in lieu of cash. The urban setting, with its ever-expanding underground economy, includes not only illegal work such as drug dealing and prostitution, but also a growing sector of work that is "basically licit but takes place outside the regulatory apparatus covering zoning, taxes, health and safety, minimum wage laws, and other types of standards."[4] This semilegal work includes everything from magazine vending to larger scale informal-sector work such as sweatshops, which may be permanent and full-time, albeit also unregulated and poorly paid. Dohan describes this type of informal work as "otherwise legal economic activities that took place outside the purview of government regulation," versus illicit work, "which produced and distributed goods and services that were themselves illegal."[5] His research looks in depth at two urban Latino communities in which the bulk of income comes from illegal work, illicit work, and welfare.

While the possibility of "under the table" paid work exists in rural areas as well, in Golden Valley it is on a much smaller scale and generally consists of short-term and/or part-time jobs such as child care, yard maintenance, fuel gathering, and temporary construction work. Consistent informal work opportunities like day labor are virtually unknown in Golden Valley, although a limited number of informal construction and maintenance jobs do emerge there from time to time. Similarly, the opportunities for informal vending such as flea markets[6] are scarce in Golden Valley, which lacks a permanent informal market of this kind. Occasionally individuals attempt to sell odd junk in a vacant lot in town, but this does not occur regularly and thus does not approach anything like a steady income or livelihood. The illegal economy is also underdeveloped in Golden Valley as compared to large urban settings.

There is little petty theft there, and I may have been one of the only people in the entire valley who regularly locked the doors to my house and car. While some illegal drug production and dealing (particularly marijuana and methamphetamines) does exist there, it is on a much smaller scale, and in 2003 it was mainly the realm of outsiders and social pariahs.

On the other hand, many people engage in significant amounts of subsistence work in Golden Valley, most of which is unheard of in urban settings. The bulk of this type of work is unpaid and heavily focused on self-provisioning in the forms of hunting, fishing, fuel gathering, growing gardens, and raising livestock. For many people these activities are simultaneously hobbies that they enjoy and serious work that is vital for their family's survival. Growing up in poverty or near-poverty conditions in Golden Valley helped prepare most of my respondents for the possibility of surviving it as adults. While few had hoped to be poor adults, most were grateful for the kinds of survival skills and abilities that their hard upbringings had provided them. Although most would happily become less reliant on these skills if they were to become unnecessary, they were appreciative of the security they felt in knowing they could survive on very low incomes.

Scholars of poverty in both the urban and rural setting have described the various ways in which the poor make do.[7] In urban settings these coping strategies range from those that are consistent with mainstream cultural norms to those that explicitly resist the mainstream.[8] Researchers who study urban drug dealers find that their behaviors and coping strategies are often based within a "backlash" culture that disdains white mainstream values in favor of street toughness and focuses on the perceived financial rewards of illegal activities such as the drug trade.[9] Economically, these strategies may be sensible, promising potentially higher earnings than most low-skill jobs in the legal workforce. The existence of the resistance culture allows individuals to preserve self-esteem and social standing while pursuing economic gain through ethically and legally questionable means.

In urban communities, heterogeneity in cultures, values, and activities allows for competing options for surviving poverty while retaining dignity. Social microclimates can influence which strategies are chosen and which are seen as inaccessible or irrational.[10] For some, the frequency and proximity of illegal activities allows them to be viewed as morally

appropriate.[11] For others, morality continues to be constructed in opposition to illegal pursuits. As Lamont argues, adherence to mainstream moral standards often allows individuals to maintain self-worth when they are unable to achieve success in economic terms.[12] Thus, despite the lure of illegal opportunities, many individuals in the urban setting prioritize mainstream morality over economic maximization. Edin and Lein[13] and Newman[14] found that poor single mothers and low-wage workers tended to choose the most legal and morally accepted coping strategies over more economically lucrative but illegal ones because these activities provided them with greater "self-respect." Gowan[15] and Duneier[16] found that, even among homeless populations, some individuals chose less profitable informal work activities over either drug dealing or panhandling because they provided greater self-esteem through the connection to mainstream American morality and work ethic.

As these diverse studies suggest, in the urban setting poor individuals are often able to choose between economic maximization and cultural optimization.[17] The same does not necessarily hold true in rural areas, in which mainstream American culture is often more pervasive and hegemonic[18] and alternative lifestyles such as illegal activities are less plentiful.[19] In rural communities, survival strategies tend to be heavily influenced by local cultural and gender norms,[20] which often dictate a preference for informal work and self-provisioning.[21] Such culturally appropriate provisioning activities as gardening, woodcutting, hunting, and fishing are often supplemented by barter and trade in rural communities.[22] Furthermore, struggling families will often choose only those coping activities that are consistent with local cultural ideals such as self-sufficiency, even when this means cutting back on what they consume.[23] Additionally, it is generally found that public assistance use is less common among the rural poor than the urban poor[24] and often carries with it a powerful stigma.[25]

Within the literature that looks at informal work activities and poverty survival, rural subsistence activities are relatively understudied,[26] as are the ways in which these culturally appropriate adaptations are encouraged and enforced through social support and sanction.[27] Wilson suggests that small rural communities are more cohesive than many urban communities.[28] As discussed in the introduction and chapter 1, Golden Valley is also much less diverse than most urban areas, both ethnically and economically. But as previous researchers have noted, even in the absence of clear class differences, social distinctions may arise based on noneconomic factors such as behavioral and moral norms.[29]

According to Lamont, morality can allow those of low social and economic status to locate themselves above others of similar or even higher status.[30] Sayer similarly argues that moral criteria are used by social groups to distinguish between themselves and that moral considerations often constrain economic activities.[31] In Golden Valley, moral worth has evolved into a form of symbolic capital. This "moral capital" allows the poor to create distinctions among themselves in the absence of significant economic capital.[32] Perceptions of individuals' moral worth are often based on their coping behaviors, including how much they do or do not work and their involvement in illegal activities. A person's moral status contributes to more than just his or her reputation, however. Those who are perceived as having lower moral worth are often denied access to the community's increasingly rare jobs, as well as to many forms of community-level charity. Thus, moral capital can be traded for economic capital in the form of job opportunities and charity or social capital in the form of community ties and social support.[33]

Although non-work-related behaviors such as drug and alcohol abuse also contribute heavily, a large component of moral capital comes from individual and family-level coping strategies. Such strategies carry with them varying degrees of social acceptance. As Wilson hypothesizes, unlike in the urban ghetto, in more cohesive and stable communities like Golden Valley, residents "may be able to exercise a range of illegal or unacceptable solutions to their problems, but the widely held mores of their community, reinforced by economic and social resources that keep the community stable, strongly pressure them to refrain from such activity."[34] Sayer suggests that values and the shame they can engender among those who do not adhere to them are common controlling factors in tight-knit communities. He explains that "the stronger the commonality of values, the greater the possibilities for shaming."[35] In Golden Valley the cohesion of the community results in the establishment of clear definitions of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, which translate into judgments of deserving versus undeserving poor. Consequences of being deemed "undeserving" range from shame and self-loathing to exclusion from many parts of social and economic life there.

My findings from Golden Valley suggest that the small size, cultural homogeneity, and lack of anonymity in a small rural community together

can create greater social pressure on the poor to be culturally acceptable according to the existing standards. For those whose coping strategies are not morally adequate according to local norms, the result is often community-level censure that further affects their quality of life and chances for eventually escaping poverty. On the other hand, as discussed above, those who have higher moral capital generally have more access to both social and economic capital. In this way the rural setting differs substantially from the urban, which allows for a greater range of survival strategies that are acceptable within separate subcultural spheres.[36] This constriction of acceptable possibilities with regard to economic survival has numerous consequences for Golden Valley's poor, including that many choose to exclude themselves from most of the nation's formal poverty-alleviation programs.

Coping Strategies

Those who either lack jobs or whose incomes are inadequate must choose between several available survival options in Golden Valley. By far the most popular and respected of strategies are those related to subsistence food provision. These include hunting and fishing as well as growing sizable gardens and raising livestock. The first two options are almost universally practiced as cherished pastimes by Golden Valley's men, whether or not they rely on them for sustenance. Hunting and fishing are important and pervasive parts of Golden Valley's culture and cited by almost every one of the male respondents as their favorite hobbies and main reasons for remaining there. They represent a man's first line of defense against economic problems as well as his tie to the land and to historic forms of the male provider role. Being the most highly valued of the local subsistence options, they are also the best way for a poor man to contribute nonmonetarily to his family's basic needs with little loss of respectability. They are practiced legally as well as illegally by people who cannot afford the proper licensing or who cannot limit themselves to the short designated hunting seasons. As the son of a game warden explained, enforcement sometimes ignores those infractions committed by people in need:

> Wintertime's hard for everybody, and things can be overlooked that make children's lives better. . . . When people don't have money for food, there's lots and lots of food just runnin' around the woods. And when you're truly broke, it's something that has to be done.

For the truly poor, however, hunting and fishing are nonetheless insufficient to meet all of their daily needs. Thus, among those who are struggling financially, subsistence activities are generally combined with several other possible coping strategies, whose social interpretations cover the spectrum from acceptability to contempt (see Figure 1). Having women enter the workforce, either in addition to or in lieu of men, has always been one option among Golden Valley's poor, and it is becoming more and more commonplace and socially acceptable since the mill closure. In addition, particularly for younger couples, family support also plays an important role in keeping struggling individuals and families afloat. Although few people's parents have significant amounts of money to lend, a number of struggling young couples mentioned relying on family support with some frequency when their own resources were stretched too tight. Poor families in Golden Valley often create networks of support similar to those found in urban communities,[37] relying on one another for money, child care, and temporary housing. While receiving help from family members is not the same as working oneself, it does nonetheless keep one tied to the community's work ethic. Family help implies that someone in the family or extended family is a worker, and thus social capital in the form of family ties can also contribute to moral capital.

Also generally accepted and often used are the opportunities that Golden Valley offers for living rent-free or for very low rent. This strategy is generally available only to those with long histories and/or social ties in the valley, although occasionally newcomers like me manage to find such situations through networking. Many people have inherited their parents' or grandparents' properties and occupy them. For other financially strapped families, there is the curious but common custom of "caretaking." Caretaking generally implies little to no rent on a property that the tenants are allowed to inhabit in return for providing basic maintenance on it. My own living situation was considered a caretaking position, as the rent was well below market rates. The custom of allowing struggling families to caretake properties is one of the less openly acknowledged ways in which Golden Valley's more prosperous community members take care of its less fortunate. It is becoming increasingly more common since the mill closure as men who want to stay securely employed and make higher salaries generally have needed to move elsewhere to find better jobs. While many mill workers originally

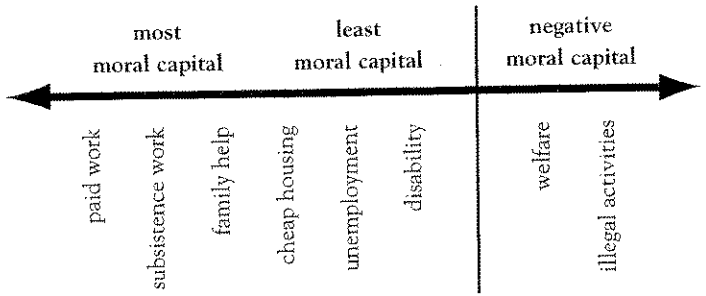

Figure 1. Moral value of coping strategies.

left their families behind in Golden Valley when they moved to follow the work, over time whole families ended up moving out semipermanently as well. Like my landlords, their plans were often to return to Golden Valley for their retirement and thus they chose to hold onto their homes and properties there. As those who could afford to move have left the valley, many of those who remain have benefited by having their cost of living greatly reduced through the discounted or nonexistent rents. While most of these caretaking properties are nowhere near as nice as the one I rented, they at least provide shelter to families who might otherwise be without it. Cheap housing does not necessarily contribute to a person's social capital, but is generally available only to those who already have significant amounts of social capital in Golden Valley.

For those who still cannot manage to make ends meet or who are unable to take advantage of other coping strategies, government assistance is the last resort. Not all forms of assistance are equal in the minds of Golden Valley residents, however, and there is a clear hierarchy of social acceptability imposed on the various income maintenance programs. The most acceptable of these is unemployment insurance, which a large proportion of local men receive at some point during the year. The few men's jobs that remain in Golden Valley are mostly seasonal. The U.S. Forest Service lays off most of its local employees in the winter. The rare logging and field and brush jobs in the area are similarly seasonal in nature. Even many of the jobs that do not have seasonality built into them are nonetheless unstable. The few small-scale sawmilling operations that remain have trouble retaining all of their employees and are constantly laying off those with the least seniority. For men who

are either seasonally unemployed or temporarily laid off, unemployment insurance is an acceptable way to survive until work reappears. It is rarely conceived of as government assistance as such, but rather is viewed as income that a person deserves and has basically worked for.

After unemployment insurance the most socially acceptable form of government aid is disability assistance. This benefit is provided by Social Security, mostly in the form of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as well as some Disability Insurance (DI). The two programs have the same eligibility rules but differ in that SSI is means-tested, while DI is available only to workers who have previously paid into it, regardless of income.[38] Together, they are known locally as simply "disability" and their receipt is exceptionally common in Golden Valley. Logging and sawmill jobs are exceedingly dangerous in nature, and almost all of the men I met who had ever worked in either had been seriously injured at some point. One 30-year-old former logger described it this way: "I don't know if you've ever even seen logging operations, but everything out there is tryin' to kill you. Everything." Many of the tasks required by both logging and mill work require the use of dangerous equipment, from heavy machinery to chain saws. Much of the work also includes heavy lifting and exposes employees to the risk of being struck by large, sharp, and heavy objects. Along with injuries to the hands and feet, severe back and neck injuries were common among my sample. Between the employees' typical lack of health care and the companies' resistance to paying for work-related medical concerns, injuries often did not receive proper treatment, causing them to progress into chronic and eventually debilitating conditions. Nearly 40 percent of Golden Valley's men between ages 21 and 64 are disabled, and 76 percent of the disabled are not employed. This compares to 21 percent disabled and 40 percent of the disabled being unemployed in the state of California as a whole.[39]

Although startlingly high, Golden Valley's disability rates have risen only slightly since 1990, and the percent of the disabled who are without work has fallen marginally over this time period.[40] Yet the belief locally is that the receipt of disability is on the rise and directly related to both welfare reform and the community's economic collapse. It is difficult to discern how many of the disabled might be able to work; while some "disabled" subjects admitted they could work but chose instead to receive disability assistance, others made many attempts to continue working despite serious injuries. While most recipients of disability

do have some sort of valid claim, it is likely that many of them would still work if there were more jobs available. Fifty-year-old Susan Elders, frustrated by her difficulties in finding reliable workers to do maintenance on her rental properties, explained, "[Since] they can only stay on welfare a couple of years, what I'm seeing now is all of a sudden there's an increase in disability. People are trying to find whatever excuses to get on disability."

Despite insinuations of its abuse, disability receipt is still much more socially valued than the receipt of welfare because disability carries with it the assumption of a dangerous, hardworking past. Because it is socially constructed as a "deserved" form of aid, disability allows a person to receive government assistance while still manifesting some degree of symbolic work ethic. But as Susan suggests, in many families it does seem as if disability assistance has evolved into a new form of welfare, suited to the conditions of Golden Valley's current economy. While women's workforce participation is becoming widespread and necessary, men are increasingly falling out of the workforce and remaining unattached to it. For many of these men disability assistance has become their main tactic for contributing monetarily to the household without holding a job. Women tend to be accepting of this scenario, and even those whose patience with out-of-work husbands was clearly beginning to wear thin made such comments as, "It's not his fault. He can't help it that he's injured." There is a growing incidence and acceptance in Golden Valley of stay-at-home fathers on disability, while the mothers go off to work and contribute substantially to the family budgets.

Means-tested welfare options are considered by most to be the last resort. While about a quarter of respondents admitted to having received some form of welfare (including cash assistance and/or food stamps) at some point, most considered the experience to be humiliating, particularly given Golden Valley's small size and insularity, which make it difficult to receive welfare anonymously.[41] Receiving welfare was so shameful and stigmatizing that many people in Golden Valley confessed to having traveled an hour or more to spend their food stamps in other communities just to avoid being seen by people they knew. The following exchange between employed couple Bud and Emily Richards provides an example of the community's typical stance toward means-tested assistance programs and of the distinction made between unemployment

due to "laziness" and that due to physical disability. They discuss the one time they accepted food stamps for two months while Emily was pregnant and Bud had been laid off from work:

EMILY: It was totally embarrassing, and we'd drive to Miner's Gulch to use our food stamps. We couldn't bear to use them in Golden Valley! Everybody knows everybody. So there's no way. I think we drove to Miner's Gulch and went to Hillview or something. It was only for a couple of months, but it was bad.

Why was it so bad if so many people use them here?

BUD: That's a good question . . .

EMILY: I don't know. I think it's because I don't want to be considered lazy or a freeloader or something like that. You just don't want that stigma.

BUD: I don't want to be one of them.

EMILY: You want people to think you're a hard worker—and, you know, we pride ourselves on that. There's no reason why we shouldn't work. We have not really any physical problems.

Welfare is viewed as qualitatively different from either unemployment or disability assistance, mostly because it does not carry with it the requirement of past work experience. As argued by Fraser, means-tested welfare programs position the recipient as "dependent clients" versus the "rights bearing beneficiaries" who receive unemployment or disability assistance.[42] In Golden Valley, while these latter forms of government assistance are deemed acceptable, welfare is almost always discussed with either disdain or shame, and welfare recipients are often characterized not just as deadbeats, but as alcoholics and drug addicts as well.[43]

In Golden Valley welfare is associated with run-down houses, children whose basic needs are not being met, and parents who are lazy and unproductive. The receipt of welfare is absolutely incongruent with the work ethics of Golden Valley, and thus those who consider themselves hardworking try desperately to avoid it or at least keep their tenure on it brief. Those who receive welfare for any length of time are quickly labeled and shunned, deepening their marginalization well beyond that caused by poverty itself in Golden Valley. People who dare to use their food stamps at the local grocery stores are often ridiculed by the checkout clerks within moments of exiting the store—a practice I witnessed multiple times over my year there. In the minds of most Golden Valley

residents, living off of welfare is only slightly less detestable than selling drugs, and most believe that the two go hand in hand to some degree.

Drug dealing is the most socially reprehensible of coping strategies in Golden Valley, particularly if the drug being pedaled is crystal meth (methamphetamines), the most commonly produced and abused local substance. Marijuana growing and selling was common for a time in the 1980s, but the federal crackdown during this period caused many local growers to seriously scale back their operations, if not quit the business entirely. Several people complained bitterly, without a hint of irony, that marijuana production in Northern California has been taken over by Mexican cartels that bring in their own illegal workers.[44] Those who still sell drugs on a large scale are generally isolated from the community, both as a form of self-protection as well as a result of social censure around their lifestyle choice. While the local marijuana industry has constricted[45] and become dominated by outside interests, methamphetamine production and selling in the area has been on the rise, and numerous subjects made reference to specific trailer parks that they believed housed crystal meth producers and dealers.

While many long-standing community members are believed to be users of crystal meth, the purveyors are generally believed to be mostly transient outsiders who moved there from urban areas. My ethnographic research, as well as the drug busts that occurred in Golden Valley and the surrounding region over my year there, substantiated this belief to a large degree. There were exceptions to this rule, however, including the largest scandal of my year in Golden Valley. A local man from a large and well-established family was charged with maintaining a drug house and providing marijuana, alcohol, and methamphetamines to minors, as well as requiring sex from teenage girls in return, leading to both statutory and forcible rape. The charges went back nearly a decade. This horrifying discovery came as a shock to most in the town, even though the family was known to have struggled with alcoholism and drug problems for generations. The desire to believe that only outsiders were capable of selling drugs led many to ignore and deny the existence of locally born drug dealers. But regardless of their roots in and ties to the community, the outsider status of drug dealers, along with the intense social disdain for their activity, made them such pariahs as to be generally absent from most of the more conventional social settings and personal networks. Their marginalization may also help explain why drug dealing was a survival strategy that was seldom chosen by those with long-standing community ties.

Unlike in the urban setting,[46] in Golden Valley there are no competing cultural norms that sanction the drug trade. Being associated with drugs in any way—including as a user—is hugely stigmatized in Golden Valley and considered antithetical to its work ethic. While it is not uncommon for teenagers to "party" during high school, adults are expected to quickly end this behavior. Continued use, and in particular any association with selling drugs, is highly damaging to an adult's reputation. Thus, most poor individuals who are integrated into the community do not consider drug dealing to be among their possible strategies for surviving poverty.

Because of the community's high cohesion, most people's coping activities are known in Golden Valley and substantially influence their status as upstanding citizens versus deadbeats. Maintaining reputations for high moral standing can be immensely important to the poor because moral status is tradable for social and economic capital. Those who are believed to be morally upright members of the community are much more likely to be beneficiaries of ad hoc community charity in times of need. As discussed in chapter 1, when asked why they stayed in Golden Valley, subjects commonly talked about feeling secure in the knowledge that "the whole town will stand behind you in a time of need." Twenty-five-year-old Nicole Goodman, whose husband is employed by a local business and has long-standing ties within the community, explained:

> If your house burns down, like somebody's did recently, everybody's like, "What can we do, what can we do?" They come right over and start donating and helping. There's not money here, but everybody teams together to take care of everybody.

But the charity is not equally available to everyone. Julie Mitchell, a 26-year-old day-care provider and married mother of four, talked at length about the community organizing pie sales and spaghetti feeds to raise money to help residents with serious health problems. But her husband interrupted her to explain, "But see, that's for only the known people in town. . . . You want to be known in a good way." In Golden Valley, social capital and moral capital can together be traded for economic

capital when a poor family or individual is truly in need. But the lack of either closes these doors to the community's generosity.

Similarly, perceptions of moral worth often play a significant role in deciding who gets jobs in Golden Valley, particularly among the low- and semi-skilled. Employers frequently complain about the lack of hardworking applicants who can be trusted to come to work each day. Those who are considered less than hardworking are seldom taken seriously. During my year in Golden Valley, I spent time observing at businesses in town. In multiple instances, employees commented to me on the likelihood of the applicant receiving a job. His chances generally rested on the impression they had of him, including his perceived work ethic, his known history as a drug user, or being from a "troubled family" that was known for long-term welfare receipt. While it is possible for individuals to transcend their families' negative reputations, this is generally done only through some combination of cutting ties and clearly manifesting behaviors that contrast with those of the larger family or clan. Generally, only those individuals who had better reputations and higher moral capital were considered for jobs in Golden Valley, regardless of how sincere they might have been in their desires to work. For those with low moral capital, the stigma of their pasts and presents became barriers to their futures.

The following three case studies illuminate the ways in which the poor struggle to survive and how the strategies they choose determine their moral capital in the community. The particular combination of work activities and government aid that an individual or couple chooses heavily influences their status within the community, which further influences their likelihood of receiving jobs and in-kind forms of community help. All three examples are married or cohabitating couples, the still-dominant family form in Golden Valley, and they are presented hierarchically from most to least social status. The three cases were chosen from among twenty-nine couples in the sample because they represent typical patterns that were found throughout the interview sample and ethnographic work in Golden Valley. Each case represents a different space on the continuum from most to least moral capital and helps illustrate the ways in which coping strategies combine with other behaviors to produce or reduce moral capital. The examples also illustrate the consequences of the addition or subtraction of this form of symbolic capital.

"Not Real into Handouts": Liza Wright and Tommy Patterson

Liza Wright and Tommy Patterson are a young couple in their late 20s who are well known and well liked in Golden Valley. They are not married, although they have a child together and they refer to one another as husband and wife.[47] They plan to get married someday but are waiting until they have enough money to afford a "real" wedding. Their names had been provided to me by several informants, who described them as nice people, good role models, and hardworking employees. Although both drank and used drugs during high school, they cleaned up as soon as Liza became pregnant, positioning themselves for responsible adulthood. This transition away from substance abuse occurred early and completely; by the time Liza was ready to look for work, she was known as a responsible and stably "married" mother rather than a partying teenager. They are now considered to be among the pillars of Golden Valley's younger generation, and their participation is often sought for community-organized events.

I knew Liza somewhat already because she worked as a clerk in one of the local grocery stores and was friends with a few of the women I knew in Golden Valley. When I arrived at their small house on a Saturday afternoon, Tommy was dressed to go riding on his ATV (all-terrain vehicle) with a friend, one of his favorite activities. Their 2-year-old son, Benjamin, and several of his cousins played in the front yard. Their rented house was small and dark, with sparse furnishings. It felt like the temporary home they planned it to be, since they hoped to buy a house of their own in Golden Valley in the near future. Both had lived in other places at times but planned now to stay. As Liza explained, "As long as we can survive here, we will."

Liza and Tommy survive through a combination of work and informal strategies that mostly exclude any form of government assistance. Liza works part-time as a receptionist in the local doctor's office and part-time at the grocery store. Tommy worked in logging like his father until the bottom fell out. Now he does construction work locally, which is seasonal and insecure but pays enough for them to survive most of the year when combined with occasional side jobs and Liza's income. There are times when they are not able to cover all of their expenses, but somehow they always get by. According to Tommy, who was raised to be independent and hardworking, the trick to survival in Golden Valley is really wanting to work and being willing to do even

the less desirable (men's) jobs. For the truly hardworking, there will always be work of some kind.

LIZA: There's been times when, you know, you kind of penny-pinch or wonder how you're gonna pay your next bill or whatever. But it's never been to the point where we said that we have to leave.

TOMMY: The people that have a hard time surviving here are the people that nitpick their jobs, that can't set their pride aside and do certain jobs because they're beyond that. If you pretty much do what's available, it's not that bad. You just gotta hit it every day, usually five or six days a week. But you can.

For a while Tommy worked in the Bay Area, where he made a great deal more money than he could in Golden Valley. However, when Liza discovered she was pregnant with Benjamin, he decided to move back to be with her. Now Liza is the one with the more stable employment, but Tommy doesn't worry about finding work despite the seasonality of almost everything he's ever done. There is always something for a man like him to do: "Somebody always needs their driveway shoveled, or some firewood, somethin' like that. You just gotta do it." Tommy believes that with the right work ethic and an open mind, anyone can find work in Golden Valley:

Well, everything's seasonal layoffs, but I haven't been without a job since high school. It's worked out pretty good. It's not easy. You gotta, like I said, you gotta just take what's available. You can't be real picky about what you'll do. You can't hold out for management, you know. You just do what's there, even if it doesn't pay as much as what you'd like to make or what everybody's making around the state. Everybody always says, "Well, I won't do that," you know, "Well, that's just too cheap." Well, you know, rent here, you can't compare it to the rest of the state either. It's so much cheaper to live here. So it all equals out.

For Tommy and Liza, there seems to be just enough work to get by. This does not mean that they can always afford to pay their bills, however. Seasonal work makes it difficult to stay on top of the expenses, since, as Liza put it, "unemployment [insurance] will never pay what your wages are gonna be like." They admitted that the seasonal unemployment to which Tommy is subject often makes it difficult for them to be self-sufficient. Luckily, they have their families to fall back on. Liza's mother provided all of their son's diapers and wipes until he was toilet

trained, an expense she estimated at $60 per month. And Tommy's parents often help them through crises, including bailing them out when Tommy incurred major fines and expenses due to a drunk-driving arrest. It was after this traumatic experience, and before Benjamin's birth, that Tommy and Liza decided to stop their drinking and drug use. His parents' support helped turn his accident into a catalyst for change rather than an event that pushed them over the edge. For Tommy and Liza, economic capital borrowed from family helped them to begin to access moral capital as independent adults. They are grateful for this kind of help, although since the accident and the birth of their son they have come to relish their roles as responsible and independent adults.

LIZA: His parents pulled through for us because they loaned us the money to pay off one of the fines, which really could've been, you know, meaning him going to jail. But for the most part, we just kind of made it on our own. And yeah, you know, every now and then you miss a bill and the collector will call. But you know, we always catch back up eventually on our own.

Although they try to take care of themselves and be independent, Tommy and Liza feel a certain security in knowing that their family will be there for them when they need it, and both are grateful: "We're fortunate that we have family that helps us in the real tough times." They compare their lives against those of people who lack this kind of support and feel that they are lucky. Like many young couples in Golden Valley, Tommy and Liza's needs are modest, and they feel privileged to have their basic needs met most of the time:

LIZA: On Christmas Day we were drivin' to the Bay Area, and we were on Route 7. And out in the middle of nowhere, Christmas morning, there's this guy layin' on the ground.

TOMMY: Yeah, this guy's sleepin' in the pullout on the side of the road.

LIZA: On Christmas morning.

TOMMY: And I just said, "We got it good. We're not layin' in the dirt on Christmas with nobody." You know, we don't know why he was there. It could'a been his fault, I don't know. But still, we're lucky. We're fortunate.

LIZA: Yeah. I mean, we're goin', drivin' down to the city to spend a big Christmas with my family. It could be a lot worse. Like, well, we didn't . . .

TOMMY: We're healthy. We have all our arms and legs, you know.

LIZA: We eat every night.

For Tommy and Liza, the good life is to be found not in material success, but in the security of knowing that they have social support, both from their families and the community at large. They can rely on this continued support in part because their choices and lifestyle provide them with high moral capital. The only government assistance they regularly accept is unemployment insurance, which in their minds is earned and deserved. They have never accepted welfare, disability, or food stamps, and had only briefly received Medi-Cal, California's subsidized health insurance, when Liza was pregnant. As soon as they could afford to, they purchased health insurance for Benjamin on their own. The same set of beliefs that lead Tommy to take any job he can find also make him wary of accepting government aid of any kind:

> It makes me feel better that we're buying insurance, anyway. I'm not real into handouts. But if my family needs 'em, I'll take 'em. But I'd rather not. I'd rather work an extra job or work a couple extra days or somethin' and take care of 'em myself. But that's just the upbringing I have.

Living near the edge is a source of some stress but not a source of humiliation for Tommy and Liza. By focusing only on survival strategies that are consistent with Golden Valley's ideal work ethics, they are able to provide for themselves not a life of affluence, but of self-respect and social standing. Their strategies tend toward the most socially acceptable; they combine seasonal work and family support with unemployment insurance and Liza's full-time, low-wage work. The result for them is access to both economic capital in the form of jobs and social capital in the form of community ties and support. They still have trouble making ends meet at times. But because they stay firmly tied to the paid labor market and avoid the more stigmatized coping strategies, they are able to maintain good reputations and high self-esteem as well as high moral capital within the community (see Figure 2). They are proud of themselves and happy with their lot and are well respected in Golden Valley. Their high moral and social capital mean that both Liza and Tommy are able to feel secure in their abilities to find jobs there, and neither has ever been unemployed for longer than a few months in Golden Valley. Because they are so well liked and their work ethics are so admired within the community, it is unlikely that either will ever be out of work for long. Although they are happy with their situation, they hope that their hard work will pay off someday in the form of a home of

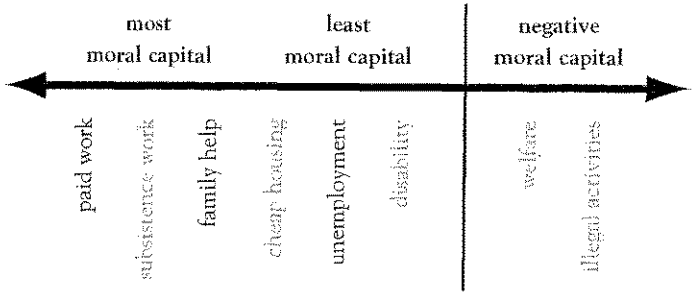

Figure 2. Tommy and Liza's strategies: high moral capital.

their own, in which they can manifest their pride outwardly. As Liza explained, buying a house takes priority over having a wedding: "You know, if we get a house, we'll be able to do [the wedding] in our backyard, and how cool would this be?"

"You Worked for What You Got": Joyce and George Woodhouse

When Joyce Woodhouse returned my call about sitting for an interview, she told me that she and George had just come back from a five-day salmon-fishing trip. I asked her what might be a good time to do the interview and she replied, "Well, we're home now." A half hour later I approached the Woodhouse home, a small, boxy cabin with additions tacked onto it on several sides. The siding was not painted to match, giving the house a patchwork effect from the outside. The front yard was filled with several vehicles that appeared to be in working condition, including a camper, a truck, a large SUV, and a dune buggy. The backyard was littered with heavy equipment, the remains of George's failed construction business. The neighbors on all sides were trailer homes. Inside, the house was cluttered and crowded, and we sat in a small living room area that wasn't fully distinct from the kitchen. Clothes hung along one wall in the open room. Several windows had blankets drawn across them rather than curtains. The wall above the couch was filled to capacity with pictures of their family, including children of their own as well as numerous children they had helped raise and shelter over the years. George and Joyce were both in their early 50s, and their large frames contrasted with the low ceilings and tight rooms of the small house.

Neither Joyce nor George has ever known a life much different than this one. Joyce grew up in this very house, and they are proud of the

additions they built, which took it from a single-room cabin into a house with a separate bedroom and bathroom space. She inherited the cabin from her parents, and thus the additions represent most of what they have ever invested into their home. Joyce and George have always lived in cramped conditions but consider themselves to be among the respectable and hardworking poor. When they were younger, Joyce worked as a waitress and George worked in the mill. Eventually an unfortunate series of car- and work-related accidents forced Joyce out of the workforce and onto disability. She fought hard to continue working despite the string of health problems, but eventually gave in and accepted her disability. As George sadly observed, "So now she sits home and watches TV."

George also worked for most of his life, and for a while his mill salary kept the family afloat. Unfortunately for the Woodhouses, the "family" grew to unmanageable sizes at times and his salary was not sufficient for feeding so many extra mouths. Like many other poor but morally upstanding couples in the community, George and Joyce regularly took in children whose parents were physically abusive or drug and alcohol addicted. The question "How many kids did you have?" elicited the following response:

JOYCE: I had two kids, a girl and a boy. They were four years apart. How many kids did we raise? About two hundred or more.

GEORGE: That's no exaggeration. That's, we were the—didn't drink and do drugs and stuff like that. So everybody that was havin' drug problems and alcohol problems [at home] and domestic violence, stuff like that, would come to our house because they could sleep here and eat.

The Woodhouse home became known as a safe place for teenagers to go to to escape from troubled families. Joyce and George remembered during holidays like Christmas and New Year's having as many as thirty-five children staying with them at one time. I had a difficult time imagining how the small home could have possibly accommodated so many people. The Woodhouses accepted their roles as community parents with some ambivalence, but it was clear through their stories that they cared deeply for the children they took in. However, providing food for so many people put a strain on them financially, to which Joyce responded by increasing their subsistence activities. Without a job, she

contributed to the family's diet by catching as many fish as she could, even when it meant exceeding the legal catch limit:

GEORGE: I would go to work at the mill. And most all of my paycheck was going for groceries and stuff to feed all of 'em. Well, Joyce would go up to the reservoir, the lake, and fish. If she caught fish, then we'd have fish and, like, potatoes and stuff like that. If she didn't fish, then we'd have potatoes. Well, then the kids got started gettin' her up in the morning and sayin', "Let's go to the reservoir." So they'd go up and fish and stuff, you know, as a family-type deal.

JOYCE: To tell you the truth, I was goin' to the reservoir [at] six in the morning. I set there till dark. And there was some older men that was settin' there, and they knew I was catchin' more than what I should. The kids would come up and check on me and everything, and they'd take the limit home with them. And I'd just stay there and fish.

As they got older and their own children moved out, the Woodhouses stopped taking in other children as regularly, although they still continue to help feed and occasionally house the children of their poor, alcoholic neighbors. Even with fewer mouths to feed, though, their financial situation has not improved. There were better times in the recent past, during which a number of the vehicles in their front yard, including the camper, were purchased. Their days of relative security and ease turned out to be short-lived, however, and Joyce and George now regret having spent so much of their money rather than saving it for the future. George worked at the mill for twenty-five years until an accident there forced him to take a year off. By the time his back healed enough for him to return to work, the mill was preparing to close and would not rehire him. Instead, George invested in construction equipment and tried to start his own business. While he had enjoyed some success at first, by 2003 there was little work left and the Woodhouses were seriously struggling again:

GEORGE: [We've got] no money, we're broke. Well, we got, we got our own business, a backhoe business, but there's very little backhoe business anymore since they put the sewer system in. So it's getting tough. We were considering halfway moving to Hillview or something like that, just to get employment.

Joyce and George are getting older now, and George worries that it is too late for any change in career. He has looked for other jobs but was unable to find anything locally and complained that no one would hire

him to do decent work. Their finances are being stretched thinner than ever, and both worry about how they will survive retirement, particularly with Joyce's failing health. But for now they survive as they always have. Their house is paid for, although there is no extra money available for upkeep or improvements. George still makes a little money with his backhoe business here and there. As for food, they rely heavily on deer they shoot in their yard and fish they catch on trips like the one from which they had just returned. Particularly for Joyce, fishing for food is an integral part of the only lifestyle she has ever known:

JOYCE: Now, when I was a kid, I was raised on salmon and deer meat. And last year we brought home twenty [salmon], and one of 'em was fifty-four pounds. So we had about six hundred pounds. But that was why we went, was to smoke it and can it so we had it for the winter, to help, you know, with things.

George and Joyce survive poverty through a strategy that focuses on the more highly regarded and traditional of Golden Valley's options. They rely on subsistence food, low-cost housing, and disability assistance in addition to sporadic work—strategies that even when combined are barely enough to keep them clothed and fed. Joyce and George remain among Golden Valley's more respected and valued community members and are active in several local organizations. Joyce accepted disability assistance only after multiple attempts at working proved her unable to continue. And the Woodhouses still work for their food and take care of themselves as best they can, as well as continuing to help those even less fortunate and proactive than themselves. In Golden Valley, manifesting this kind of work ethic, even while living in poverty, is enough to be considered productive community members, although they do not receive quite the same respect as more stably employed couples like Tommy and Liza, nor does George have the same faith in his own ability to be hired locally. His age, combined with his recent time out of the workforce, makes him less attractive to local employers. And while they may contribute to self-esteem and social standing, informal charity activities are not considered on par with work activities. Paid work still remits the highest amount of exchangeable moral capital, and the lack of it is stigmatized by Golden Valley's choosy employers.

Yet despite their obvious poverty and need, their pride and loyalty to local cultural norms compels the Woodhouses to avoid the most stigmatized types of government assistance:

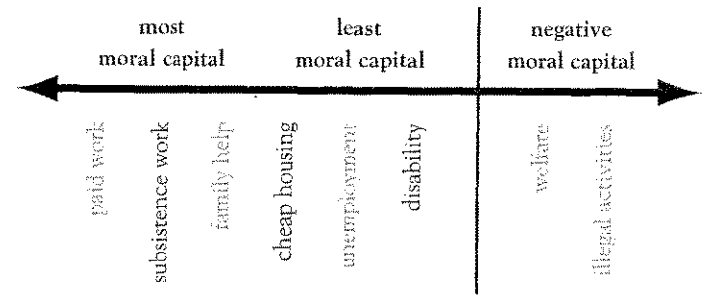

Figure 3. Joyce and George's strategies: medium moral capital.

GEORGE: We don't try to get food stamps or welfare or anything like that. I mean, basically, we probably could. But I don't know—we were always brought up that you worked for what you got, you didn't have welfare and stuff like that. If you didn't work, then you cut back on what you was eatin' until you got a better job.
JOYCE: It's embarrassing.

The Woodhouses' strategy for survival is socially rational despite seeming economically irrational. While they could live more comfortably on welfare, they believe—with some reason—that to do so would lessen their worth as individuals and community members. Although they are short on cash, their strategy does pay off to some degree in the form of social capital. They know they can rely on help from the community in times of need, whether it is the local deputies helping them to deal with troublesome neighbors or friends helping out when Joyce is ill or injured. For Joyce and George, being fully accepted members of the community and the self-esteem that comes from being self-sufficient outweigh the benefits that welfare income or food stamps might bring. Ultimately, their strategy pays off in terms of social support, if not economic support as well.

The Taste of Poverty: Angelica (and Jim) Finch

Thirty-eight-year-old Angelica Finch has lived on both sides of the social acceptability line and has experienced firsthand the ways in which welfare use and substance abuse are often entwined. Angelica met me alone as her husband, Jim, did not want to be interviewed. She is a thin woman with an infectious laugh and an incredibly positive attitude despite all that she has lived through. Angelica's childhood was difficult,

and both her father and later her stepfather were alcoholic and abusive. As a teenager she drifted between her divorced parents' households in Golden Valley and Hillview, eventually settling in Golden Valley for good when she got pregnant at age 17. She soon dropped out of high school under pressure from the school administration that feared, she joked acridly, that pregnancy was contagious. While pregnant she met the man she would eventually marry. Jim Finch was twenty-seven years her senior, had been married and divorced twice already, and had four children with his previous wives. He had worked in the woods for years, but by the time she met him he had gone on disability due to a serious injury. He has never worked much in their twenty years together, and thus any income beyond the disability check has been earned by Angelica herself. Since the couple later had two additional children together, and at times supported his children as well, a disability check alone was never enough money for them. They also had serious drug and alcohol habits to support for their first decade together, which added further expense to their strained budget. According to Angelica, such habits were a common part of life in Golden Valley.

> There's nothing else to do in this valley but drugs and sex. That's how I got knocked up at 17, you know? Really, there's just nothing else to do around here. Even in Hillview you could go to a skateboard park or a movie, or pizza parlor, bowling—there's options.

Despite her substance abuse problems, Angelica was no stranger to work. But as many researchers have found, low-wage work often isn't enough to support an individual, let alone a family.[48] It was difficult for her to find fulfilling and well-paid work, particularly since she had not finished high school. She eventually did get seasonal work with the U.S. Forest Service, which she loved. Unfortunately, after the spotted owl ruling, she was permanently laid off. At that time she began working at one of Golden Valley's remaining grocery stores. Although she hated the environment and the work, she remained in the low-wage and thankless job for nearly a decade. She eventually became so depressed there that she quit working, partially to spend more time with her children. Meanwhile, she had also been attending community college in Hillview and Miner's Gulch to finish her high school equivalency and begin work toward her associate's degree. Pursuing her education put an incredible strain on the family, yet she steadfastly clung to her dream of

improving herself. The eventual receipt of her degree boosted both her self-esteem and her earning potential and helped her to land her current job as a low-level administrator at Golden Valley Elementary School. With the higher-paying job, she was able to pull her family out of intense poverty. The worst of her experiences with poverty were now behind her, but she was still haunted by the memories of her days at rock bottom.

Angelica described her life in deep poverty, when her meager salary and Jim's disability check were simply not enough to meet their family's needs. In the beginning their home had been a frequent hangout for her husband's heavy-partying friends, an environment that she felt was conducive only to substance abuse:

> We were so poor. Our home was so miserable. It was just a mobile. My husband owned it free and clear, but it was just a nasty, old, thrashed mobile. It had been the party house. I can remember coming home from the hospital with my daughter, and they had moved a foosball table into the kitchen. And here I am, a brand new mom, 18 years old. If I hadn't had a friend stay with me that first week, I don't know if we would've made it.

In those early years, survival was a constant struggle for Angelica and Jim, particularly while she was going to school full-time. While Jim never worked in the formal sector, he did contribute to the household in the form of subsistence activities, although not all of them were legal, let alone respectable. According to Angelica, his contributions included gathering wood for heat and providing them with stolen electricity:

> He would climb this tree, and he spliced this wire and tied into the other—not anybody else's bill, just the main pole. And he would be out on this limb in the rain. Yeah, because when it would get windy and stormy, it would blow it loose. So he'd go up this tree and out on this limb in the rain, in the winter. It was so scary. It was so awful. And it was the first thing I changed as soon as I could. But for four years all we had was some food stamps and, I don't remember, like $100 in cash aid or whatever. I was trying to go to school in Hillview. I would hit the top of Gold Mountain and turn my engine off and just coast down into the valley to save. I mean, it was that—we were that poor, you know—it was that desperate. If it hadn't been for food programs, the WIC program, food stamps, Medi-Cal, we wouldn't have made it at all. Or I wouldn't have been able to get my education. You know, I would've had to work year round. And I worked seasonally as it was. So, but, oh man, there were some hard times.

In addition to these less socially sanctioned survival strategies, Angelica and Jim also augmented their diet through hunting. Although it was a source of less shame and humiliation, she nevertheless recalled their subsistence diet with distaste:

> And that was one of our other survival tricks, was that deer out the back door. Back when times were hard we had to eat venison. In most places, venison is like a delicacy, a treat. Up here—and I'm not the only one who feels this way—venison is what you eat when there's nothing else to eat, and then that's all you eat. It gets real old real fast.

Therein perhaps lies the difference between hunting as a sport and hunting for survival. For Angelica, deer meat would always be a symbol of poverty, and she hoped never to have to taste it again.

During those hard times, Jim and Angelica's drug and alcohol problems both resulted from and contributed to their misery. When asked if being poor had been stressful for them as a couple, she replied, "Yeah, yeah, and it just leads to that desire to go medicate because you can't see any way out. You're so destitute and struggling, and it's such a struggle." Between the substance abuse and the desperate survival strategies, Angelica suffered much shame during those years. She described feeling marginalized by the community and internalizing a self-hatred so intense that she did not want mirrors in her house, because she could not stand to look at herself. While poverty was the main source of their struggle, and her ultimate goal was to end it, she was well aware that their drug and alcohol abuse would prohibit them from achieving the lifestyle reversal that she desired. For Angelica, ending their addictions was the prerequisite for the substantive changes that occurred afterward. It was not an easy thing for her or Jim to do, as it entailed isolating themselves from all their former friends in addition to quitting the addictions themselves. It was a transition that took four years before it was complete, but in the end it allowed her to make other necessary changes in her work life, her relationship, and eventually her physical environment.

Angelica focused first on ending their addictive habits one by one, then improving their financial situation by seeking better-paid work, and finally improving the conditions of their home. For her, the journey out of addiction and poverty was also a passage from non-personhood into humanity:

> When I got our credit all straightened out we got a HUD loan, a $40,000 HUD loan, and we built an addition and brought our trailer up to code. And this was after, this was way after, the major changes in our life. This is what brought us up, brought us up into society, instead of being down pretty much in the gutter—brought us up to be a part of society.

The combination of her education and her current job, along with the changes in their lifestyle and the improvement of their home, meant Angelica and Jim could move from the margins of Golden Valley society into the mainstream. It also meant she could finally come to accept herself:

> In the last—since I left the grocery store three years ago, took this job, I have mirrors in my house. I never had a mirror in my house except in the bathroom, ever. And now it's like, they're in every room. I—well, it's trying to lighten the environment, and also I don't mind seeing myself now. I really don't.

Unlike the Woodhouses and Tommy and Liza, the Finches had relied on strategies that were not socially sanctioned in Golden Valley (see Figure 4). Although like the Woodhouses they had relied on subsistence food and disability assistance, and like Tommy and Liza they had relied on unemployment insurance and Angelica working, they had also relied heavily on illegal strategies and means-tested welfare programs. Despite combining all of these strategies at times, they still had endured grinding poverty along with social disdain that made it difficult for them to garner either social support or economic opportunities. With such low moral capital, they were denied access to both living-wage job opportunities and social capital within the community. Changing her lifestyle meant that Angelica could eventually find some acceptance and respect within the community. Had she not invested in her moral capital, she would have faced more barriers to cashing in on her upgraded human capital; it is highly unlikely that Golden Valley Elementary School would have hired a known drug user. Despite her schooling and her many years as a reliable worker for the grocery store, she was unable to find a better-paying job while still using drugs. It was only after clearly establishing herself as clean and sober for several years and cutting most ties to her drug-addicted friends that Angelica was able to find a more respectable job. Although she described the process as lonely and difficult,

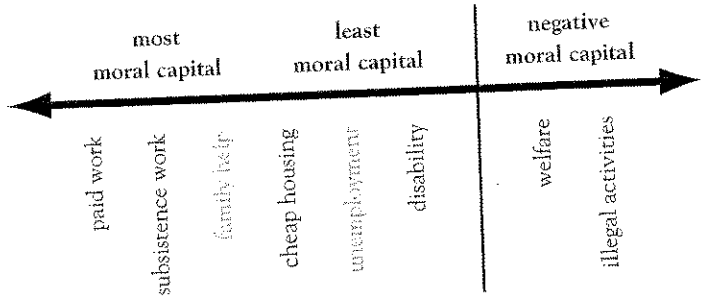

Figure 4. Angelica and Jim's strategies: low moral capital.

she believed it was worth it. While she and Jim now have few friends, they have greater access to economic and social capital than ever before. Over time Angelica has felt increasing acceptance and support from the community and is now less afraid to appear in public. Angelica and Jim's history remains a scar on their reputations, but Angelica has at least finally proved herself worthy of a decent job in Golden Valley.

A Place on the Continuum: Behaviors, Social Status, and Family Background

> *When Andrew left the office, the personnel manager commented to me that he was from a troubled family, but that he was different from the rest of them. She said he was a good, responsible guy, a hard worker, and the kind of person they might want to hire.* (Field Notes, April 15, 2004)

> *Andrew told me that word had gotten back to him that he was likely to be offered the job that he had applied for, but that his brother James was not. He had heard through a friend that while he was considered responsible and trustworthy, James was seen as a partier with a reputation for having problems. Andrew reacted angrily to this information, explaining to me that his brother was trying hard to clean up his act and be responsible, especially now that he had a child on the way. Andrew, on the other hand, had already decided that he didn't want the job—or any job.* (Field Notes, May 1, 2004)

The Value of Family and Social Ties

As the preceding comments and stories suggest, individual behaviors are important factors determining the social acceptance of poverty in Golden Valley, and behaviors that are considered immoral or inconsistent with local work ethics can seriously damage one's moral capital in the community. Yet while individuals' or families' access to moral capital is heavily influenced by their behaviors, behind each set of behaviors is a combination of personal choice and agency as well as preexisting family status and social ties. Thus, it is not random that Tommy and Liza, who both had relatively supportive families, made a much quicker transition from teenage partying to adult moral capital than did Angelica and Jim, whose families were abusive and neglectful. On the other hand, both Joyce and George came from families plagued by alcoholism, neglect, and shifting adult relationships, which nonetheless did not cause them to repeat the same behaviors. A person's place on the continuum is clearly influenced by his or her starting point but not fully predetermined by it. While acquiring moral capital was much easier for those who came into the world with it, the bulk of subjects with high moral capital did not come from families with high amounts of it.

Particularly in this time of transition, in which the meanings of drug and alcohol use have changed rapidly, multiple factors affect people's chances to build or destroy moral capital. These factors include the social ties and economic advantages provided to them, but also personal strengths and choices and their strategies for coping with challenges wrought by the changes the community has been through. One of the hardest pitfalls for many to avoid is the cycle described by Angelica, in which poverty, desperation, and self-hatred coalesce into a spiral of substance abuse and retreat from social and civic life. Substance abuse—and particularly alcohol abuse—is not new to Golden Valley, and both have been endemic for as long as anyone can remember. Nonetheless, as the economic landscape has changed, so has the acceptance of alcoholics and drug addicts, who are now demonized much more than in the past. The shame engendered by being an addict in the community is often similar to that experienced by welfare recipients and drug dealers there, and often similarly isolates individuals from mainstream social networks. Known drug users and alcoholics like Angelica and Jim often find themselves accepted only by others with similar problems and lifestyles, and thus lacking support for ending their addictions as well as for securing better jobs in Golden Valley. Regardless of where or how their substance abuse issues originate, for those with less family and social support to begin with this cycle can be extremely difficult to break.

Spiraling Out of Control: Jeremy Fletcher

I first met Jeremy when he arrived unexpectedly at my door on a Saturday afternoon, looking for my house's owners. He was a scruffy-looking man in his mid-20s, with long, matted hair and a beat-up down jacket that he would be wearing every time I saw him subsequently, regardless of the heat or cold of the day. Jeremy grew up in one of the neighboring houses and had long known my landlords and their daughter. Being as vulnerable and isolated as I was out in Deer Run, I did not open the door for Jeremy but spoke with him through the glass. Despite my refusal to open the door and my curt answers to his questions, Jeremy engaged me for quite a while through the glass door, asking me about myself and sharing with me random details of his own life. The information he volunteered included the story of how he had been incarcerated for marijuana growing soon after finishing high school. He had been away from Golden Valley for years, but had recently returned and wanted to settle down and make a life for himself there. He spoke optimistically of finding a job and a place to live. When I told my landlords about the encounter, they expressed great concern. They explained to me that they had known Jeremy since he was a child and had witnessed his sad decline into drugs and alcoholism since his high school years. They further confessed that one of the main reasons that they wanted a caretaker in their house was that they had long been worried about Jeremy returning to Golden Valley and trying to move into it. They said that he was troubled and dangerous and that I should not allow him to come near the house again.

Although I did not, in fact, encounter him again at my home, I did continue to run into Jeremy throughout my stay in the area. I picked him up as a hitchhiker one day on my drive from Deer Run to Golden Valley. As I drove him into town, he spoke rapidly with the manic cadence of someone high on methamphetamines and told me in a disjointed, unfocused way of his struggles to get himself together. He began to describe how upon returning to Golden Valley he had immediately fallen back into his old habits, namely partying too much. He said he knew that his behavior was destructive, but that he wasn't able to resist the pull of drugs while living there. He described his current living situation as unstable. For the moment he was staying in his father's house in Deer Run, but it wasn't a long-term situation since the house was actually being rented to another family who wouldn't tolerate him squatting there for much longer. Before that he had been staying at his stepgrandparents' house in town, and he expected to return there soon. He did not think that it was a good living environment, however.

Former friends of Jeremy's, who worried about him, concurred with regard to his stepgrandparents but did not step in to help. Most felt that he was in bad shape and untrustworthy and they wanted to avoid interacting with him. Jeremy's family had few resources with which to help him, be they economic, social, or moral. His father was widely considered to be mentally unstable, and no one seemed to know his current whereabouts. Jeremy himself told me that the stepgrandparents with whom he had been staying were also drug and alcohol users, and said he worried about their preteen granddaughter, who lived with them. He expressed a desire to get his own place as soon as he found work, although he couldn't quite articulate what kind of job he expected to find. First, he explained, he had to focus on fixing his broken car. Then he would worry about finding steady work.

Over the months that followed, Jeremy did not appear to get himself together as he had hoped. I often saw him at the bars in Golden Valley and Riverbend, both on weekend nights and during the middle of the day on weekdays. He began to put in applications for work locally. At one business, where he applied for summer field and brush work, I witnessed prospective employers laughing at him after he left the office. They then explained to me that they would never hire someone like him. Their reasons included his history of welfare receipt, along with his basic appearance and poor hygiene and lack of known work history. They also mentioned awareness of his jail time and the reputation for instability that preceded his entrance into their office. To my knowledge, he received no job offers in Golden Valley.

As the months went on, Jeremy continued on his self-destructive path. His appearance continued to deteriorate, and it alone signaled to almost everyone who interacted with him that he was unreliable and untrustworthy. The last time I saw him, he was in line in front of me at the grocery store, paying for his groceries with food stamps. A liquor bottle protruded from the shoulder bag he carried. When I asked him how he was, he immediately launched into a long story about his recent car accident and DUI arrest. He was driving home drunk on the narrow

and winding road from Riverbend when a police car approached him from behind. Jeremy panicked and took a turn too fast; he ended up driving his car over the riverbank and destroying it. His injuries didn't stop the police officer from charging him with drunk driving and revoking his license. When I asked him his plans for the future, Jeremy was less certain than ever about what to do next. He said he was seriously considering skipping his court date and leaving town and mentioned both Florida and Alaska as possible destinations. With no car and no money it was unlikely he would make it that far. However, it was also unlikely that he would pull himself together in Golden Valley. The community, which will do so much for its well-respected members in times of medical crisis, often has little help to offer to those with obvious drug and alcohol addictions and seemingly poor work ethics. With little family support and no one else who seemed interested in helping him get his life back on track, it seemed unlikely that Jeremy would ever cross back over from the side of the drug-addicted welfare recipients in Golden Valley.

Changing Conceptions of Substance Use

Stories like Jeremy's are not unusual in Golden Valley, and he was certainly not the only person I met there for whom substance abuse led into a cycle of desperation that deepened his marginalization and further cut him off from sources of both social and economic capital. In this way the connection between substance abuse and welfare use is often reinforced. As his negative moral capital helped to cut him off from the paid workforce and made community members uninterested in helping him, welfare became the only option left for Jeremy. Thus the cycle continues, and the connection between the two behaviors is further solidified in the minds of Golden Valley's residents.

As discussed earlier, welfare and drug and alcohol use constitute the antithesis of Golden Valley's moral norms. Substance abuse, once common among the hardworking, is now a stigmatized behavior that diminishes the moral value of the individual and separates the deserving from the undeserving poor. While Joyce, George, Liza, and Tommy provide examples of poor families who do not use drugs or alcohol, substance abuse is nonetheless common among Golden Valley's poor and unemployed. A number of my subjects referred to "partying" in their testimonies. When Angelica Finch used the term several times, I asked her to explain what it meant to her. She replied:

> It's the whole Golden Valley thing. I don't know how many people you've interviewed, but we have huge problems with drugs and alcohol in this community.

Drug and alcohol problems were pervasive in the lives of my subjects. Nearly half said that they had grown up with at least one alcoholic or drug-addicted parent or stepparent. Nearly half had also at least gone through a phase of partying themselves, although most of the more socially integrated subjects had stopped early in their adult lives, like Tommy and Liza had. Most had quit their substance use for similar reasons, believing it would damage their marriages or family lives.

This incompatibility between alcohol and respectability did not always exist in Golden Valley. According to my subjects, back when the woods and sawmills were in full production, Golden Valley's then multiple bars were frequented religiously by the community's hardworking men. At this time, regular drinking was not viewed as antithetical to work ethics in the same way that it presently is. Fifty-five-year-old Jake Robbins grew up with an alcoholic father who was physically and verbally abusive to his wife and children. As an adult, Jake has purposely tried to be a different kind of man than his father. But when asked if he considered his father to be a negative role model, he replied, "Yeah, in a lot of respects. But he did teach me good work ethics." For working men of his father's generation, even serious drinking did not necessarily undermine respectability and was directly connected to the workingman's masculine image. As George and Joyce Woodhouse explained:

> GEORGE: It used to be, when you worked in the woods and all that stuff, you got off work and you went to the bar, and even if you didn't drink you went to the bar. And that's where everybody and all that stuff was.
>
> JOYCE: You worked hard, you knew how to work hard to make money for the family things, but then again you knew how to play hard, you know. Because you had one way, you did the same the other way. You just had a good time at everything you did.

For the loggers and mill workers of Golden Valley's recent past, masculinity was wound up securely in work. As long as a man worked hard

in the woods or mill or similar types of "honest" manual labor, neglect and abuse of family, as well as frequent drinking and even alcoholism, were tolerated as acceptably, and even respectably, masculine flaws.

Vestiges of this form of masculinity are still alive in Golden Valley, although the shifting nature of work in the community has changed the relationship between masculinity and work, as well as the meanings of drug and alcohol use. Alcohol use was once part of a workingman's leisure time and thus synonymous with the work ethics that are still so important to social standing in Golden Valley. Use of stimulant drugs such as methamphetamines, while not widely talked about in those days, was also common among men trying to stay awake through long, tedious mill shifts. Nowadays, however, these activities have taken on new and darker meanings. They are no longer the accepted vice of the workingman, but rather the dysfunction of the deadbeat who lacks sufficient drive and work ethic to compete for the few remaining jobs. As Joyce Woodhouse put it, nowadays "alcohol is basically involved more in the situation of not having a job, not being productive, not being able to have good shoes and clothes for your kids, and food and things." Methamphetamine use, which has grown substantially over the years, is considered even more deplorable than alcoholism. To be respectable, it is now less imperative than before that a person have a paying job (although work status is still important), but he or she must nonetheless have a proper work ethic. Escaping into drugs and alcohol is viewed as giving up on oneself and taking the easy way out, which is inconsistent with hard work.

There was a strong tendency by the sober to create a social distance between themselves and the drug addicted, which had deleterious consequences for individuals like Jeremy Fletcher. The two groups seldom interacted, and the addicts and alcoholics were so often pointedly ignored in public that many were reclusive, and those who did venture out were easy to spot. They would look down when meeting others, thus avoiding eye contact and the friendly greetings that were requisite parts of Golden Valley's social etiquette. The social separation was so entrenched that many of my respondents argued, and seemed to truly believe, that the bulk of drug- and alcohol-addicted people were newcomers to Golden Valley and thus not similar to themselves at all. This was despite abundant evidence to the contrary, and common knowledge that

many of Golden Valley's most established families also had the most established drinking and drug problems.

For many residents of Golden Valley, both old and new, partying is a way of life and can be both a response to and a cause of unemployment and poverty. The connection between poverty and substance abuse is well established by researchers[49] and generally taken for granted in Golden Valley, although subjects differed in their opinions on cause versus effect. Research has linked poverty to a number of abusive behaviors as well as to higher incidences of child abuse and neglect, which are then translated into higher risks of substance abuse in adults.[50] While many respondents believed that unemployment and lack of motivation caused people to turn to substance abuse, I also found evidence that having a drug or alcohol problem contributed to unemployment. Not only are the drug and alcohol addicted less likely to be reliable employees, but in a town as small as Golden Valley, they are much less likely to be hired in the first place. Particularly now, in the community's constricted labor market, moral capital plays an important role in deciding who gets the available jobs. Once a man has garnered a reputation for being morally degenerate, it is hard for him to find anyone to invest in him as an employee. In a place of this size, almost everyone's story is known and low moral capital can be a serious deterrent to finding a decent job there. While a recognized family name might help to some degree, if the family as a whole is known to be troubled, name recognition will only hurt a man's chances of finding decent work.

Although this kind of labeling does keep people out of the workforce, it is clearly not the only reason that people are unemployed, and unemployment does appear to be a factor that sometimes contributes to drug and alcohol abuse as well. Jake and Barbara Robbins are in their early 50s and have lived in Golden Valley for most of their lives. Unlike many of Jake's coworkers, he kept his job with Northwest Timber when the mill left and moved with it to Adams, a suburb of Sacramento five hours away, for several years before returning to Golden Valley. When I asked them how the community had changed over their lifetime, Barbara replied that they had fewer friends now than they used to. I asked if this was because people had left, and she replied that the ones who remain are also different now:

Some have left, some have changed their lifestyle, and it doesn't fit ours.

What do you mean by that?

How do you put that? Drugs and stuff.

People you were friends with got into drugs?

Oh, yeah. A lot of them. I don't think—they didn't go [to Adams], a lot of them, and they were too young to retire, you know. Didn't know what to do . . .

What caused them to turn to drugs in your opinion?

Lack of jobs, I think. Yeah—hard on people. It's not that easy, you know.

Jake and Barbara had watched a number of their high school friends' lives deteriorate into drug and alcohol abuse after the mill closed. According to them, these people had once had a decent standard of living and a good work ethic but were unable to cope once they lost their jobs. Most had never known any kind of work other than the mill and didn't know what to do next. Having witnessed their friends' lives fall apart, Jake and Barbara, like many in Golden Valley, believed that substance abuse was a common effect of unemployment there.

On the other hand, many people, including many of Golden Valley's employers, believed that drug and alcohol abuse were the causes rather than the effects of unemployment and clear signs that an individual lacked a proper work ethic and was unworthy of a job. Regardless of where the cycle begins for people, substance abuse creates and reinforces barriers to social and economic capital in Golden Valley. These barriers are then frequently augmented by the lowered self-esteem that many marginalized individuals felt, further contributing to a cycle in which welfare becomes a more viable option. With fewer social ties, individuals are less able to access certain morally acceptable coping strategies. Others, such as paid work, are also inaccessible for most known drug addicts and alcoholics. For some, even subsistence work becomes difficult, as substance abuse inhibits both their health and the motivation necessary to do the required physical labor. Meanwhile, since low moral capital is already established, the perceived repercussions of welfare receipt are further eroded, making it less odious as a remaining survival option. The tendencies of the drug addicted to choose welfare and welfare recipients to turn to drugs contribute to the stigma of both activities, further entrenching the cycle.

Conclusion: Poverty and Moral Worth in Golden Valley

> There are those ones that, just their history and what their family's done and what they're doing, you know, you just see the same pattern of going the wrong way. It's kind of hard, especially since you know the families so well. . . . They're just fallin' into a route, into a hole that they'll never get out of. 'Cause nobody'll ever in this town give 'em a chance. (Jeff Taylor, 33-year-old mechanic and married father of two)

Golden Valley is a community in which hard work is believed to be its own reward and is infused with moral value. Although culture is no more static than are structural conditions,[51] Golden Valley's current culture focuses hard on perceived continuity with the community's past. Unlike in the urban setting, within this small community there are few competing cultural repertoires from which to choose. Thus work ethics have come to define who is and who is not an upstanding member of the community, particularly with regard to who is worthy of employment. Behaviors that are inconsistent with the current understanding of what constitutes hard work decrease a person's moral value in the eyes of the community. As this chapter has illustrated, these behaviors include both welfare use and drug and alcohol abuse. Although these are two different issues, in the collective understanding of the community they are inextricably linked through their similar associations with laziness, dependency, and passivity.

As the stories presented here suggest, often the desperately poor and unemployed turn to drugs and alcohol as a solace when things are at their worst. However, they also suggest two mechanisms by which preexisting substance abuse acts to deepen and exacerbate the experience of poverty and unemployment. It is generally assumed that the substance addicted will be unable to be reliable, steady workers, and my research definitely uncovered numerous cases in which this was true. Often when a drug- or alcohol-addicted individual was hired, he would be less likely to show up to work regularly and more likely to be belligerent and uncooperative with his supervisors. In a tight job market like Golden Valley's, individuals who do not prove to be the best workers rarely keep their jobs for long. On the other hand, as stories like Angelica's illustrate, not all drug addicts or alcoholics are necessarily poor workers. For many it is not their work performance as such, but simply their perceived lack of moral capital that means they are unlikely to be

considered for most jobs. For these stigmatized individuals, the combination of unemployment and social contempt undoubtedly helps reinforce whatever substance abuse problems they may have already developed. Over time they are marginalized not only from the formal labor market, but also from the mainstream culture that links hard work with masculine and moral values. Whether or not they originally desired a life without work, they often end up on that side of the divide, permanently identified as deadbeats who are not worthy of the few work opportunities Golden Valley has to offer.

On the other hand, for those people—particularly those men—who are sufficiently tenacious in their desire to work and to prove themselves hardworking, there are social rewards even if their economic situations are not substantially better. A common saying among Golden Valley's working men is, "I was looking for a job when I found this one." This obscure aphorism means simply that the jobs in Golden Valley go to those who are active in their pursuit of work, not to those who sit around waiting for something to find them. Thirty-four-year-old David Lewis, who works at the local hardware store, moved back to Golden Valley in 2002 without fearing that he would be unable to find work. When asked why he had been so sure of himself, he answered:

> Just because I know a lot of people and I'm not afraid to work. That's the biggest thing. You can get work anywhere if you're not afraid to work.

Hard work, combined with moral and social capital, often pays off in Golden Valley in the attainment of more hard work, as well as the increased moral, social, and economic capital that work provides.

However, in this simple equation, personal agency on the part of the worker is taken to be the only important variable, and the roles of preexisting social status and economic resources, as well as mental conditions and physical addictions, are considered unimportant. Golden Valley's more successful residents have come to conceive of the local labor market as a Darwinian fight in which only the strongest and most morally superior survive. Rather than looking critically at the larger macro forces that have created an environment in which only those with the most resources—be they social, economic, or moral—can find jobs, they instead blame the individuals who are out of work for their own unemployment. Lost is any real conception of just how few jobs are truly left, and the obvious but easily ignored fact that in such a tight labor market

there will necessarily be some people who cannot find jobs. Men like George Woodhouse, for example, end up being judged as inferior for the simple fact of not having a job, when in fact they are willing and able to work as hard as those who have been fortunate enough to find one. There *are* people who truly are looking for a job but still haven't found one.

Blaming the victims is often easier, and seemingly more productive, than lashing out at invisible hands that cannot be controlled. Furthermore, in a community as racially and economically homogeneous as Golden Valley, there are few other means available by which to create distinction among members of the community. It is for this reason that culture and its moral norms have evolved into a moral form of capital that functions in much the same ways as do other forms of symbolic capital.[52] It separates the deserving from the undeserving and creates social boundaries that can be policed and controlled. When employers have to decide between numerous job seekers, it can be called upon to help distinguish between similar applicants with basically identical human capital and work experience.[53] An individual's perceived moral worth can thus be translated into both social and economic capital. While it does nothing to address the underlying forces at play, it at least provides Golden Valley residents with a sense of control and agency over their lives.

These findings suggest that community setting can affect the behavior of the poor in numerous ways, including dictating appropriate means for surviving economic hardships. Although we are long past accepting culture of poverty theories that blame the cultural characteristics of the poor for their own poverty,[54] we have not invested much into newer theories to explain how culture and setting interact with poverty, particularly in the rural setting. The evidence from Golden Valley suggests that rural areas may operate according to very different social rules than urban areas. It further suggests that in order to alleviate poverty, we must first understand the different social milieus in which poverty is prevalent and the ways in which setting interacts with culture and behavior. Assumptions based in evidence from very different types of communities—or sometimes in no evidence at all, but simply popular stereotypes—lead to poverty policies that are inadequate for addressing the needs of a community like Golden Valley. To effectively address poverty in such places, it is necessary to understand both their structural conditions and their cultural preferences.

The preoccupation of the rural poor with such issues as moral and family values often seems perplexing to both academics and political analysts.[55] Popular mainstream books often question why working class and poor populations vote against what we perceive as their interests and describe middle-American voters as ignorant victims of a false consciousness imposed upon them by conservative elites.[56] When the rural poor prioritize issues such as gun control over economic concerns, they are often dismissed as uneducated and backward. But in marginalized places like Golden Valley, economic issues often seem distant and untouchable. Rightfully so, most of its residents feel that their economic concerns are largely ignored by politicians on both sides of the fence. They see that the political right prioritizes the interests of corporate industries, such as the large logging companies that clear-cut the woods in previous decades. On the other hand, the political left prioritizes the interests of urban liberals, such as the reviled environmentalists who are blamed for Golden Valley's current impoverishment. Most residents feel that neither side has much interest in their material well-being and economic sustenance. However, the right-wing agenda, with its focus on moral and personal issues, hits much closer to home. When your hunting rifle is a major source of your ability to engage with your children in a masculine activity, reproduce your unique culture, and provide for your family, gun control will likely seem a serious threat. Similarly, when moral capital is one of your main sources of tradable capital, the agenda that stresses moral issues will be the one that resonates better.

3

Family Life: Tradition and Safety

The Family as a Social Structure

> I came from a family of seven. So yeah, I wanted [kids]. I just wanted a boy and a girl. Because, you know, you want that. I mean, that's part of life, I guess. Like, most people have kids, you know, and lots of people that don't have kids are schoolteachers or they're around kids. I mean, they're fun. (Emily Richards, 40-year-old secretary and married mother of two)

> I think everybody figures that they will have a family. (Ted Dorsey, 42-year-old small business owner and married father of two)

One of the hardest aspects of moving to Golden Valley for me was the lack of a peer group. Single, childless, 30-somethings like me were rare there. The community lacked appropriate activities and social spaces for someone in my stage in life. Even the two bars, once centers of adult social activity, had been quietly abandoned since the mill closure. I quickly discovered that most social and leisure time in Golden Valley was focused expressly around children and family. While the exceptional single or childless adults did exist there, they generally felt somewhat isolated in this community in which family was so highly prioritized,