

Beyond WEIRD Morality

I got my Ph.D. at McDonald's. Part of it, anyway, given the hours I spent standing outside of a McDonald's restaurant in West Philadelphia trying to recruit working-class adults to talk with me for my dissertation research. When someone agreed, we'd sit down together at the restaurant's outdoor seating area, and I'd ask them what they thought about the family that ate its dog, the woman who used her flag as a rag, and all the rest. I got some odd looks as the interviews progressed, and also plenty of laughter—particularly when I told people about the guy and the chicken. I was expecting that, because I had written the stories to surprise and even shock people.

But what I didn't expect was that these working-class subjects would sometimes find my request for justifications so perplexing. Each time someone said that the people in a story had done something wrong, I asked, "Can you tell me why that was wrong?" When I had interviewed college students on the Penn campus a month earlier, this question brought forth their moral justifications quite smoothly. But a few blocks west, this same question often led to long pauses and disbelieving stares. Those pauses and stares seemed to say, *You mean you don't know why it's wrong to do that to a chicken? I have to explain this to you? What planet are you from?*