

Economic Behavioral and Semantic Analysis of Generosity and Fairness in L'Arche Caregivers

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Abstract: Persistent virtue requires commitment to values not easily operationalized in the metrics of cognitive science. Caregivers living in L'Arche communities commit years and decades of their lives to compassion and social justice in caring for unrelated developmentally disabled adults. We examine generosity and fairness among 48 L'Arche caregivers using economic behavioral tasks and life and identity narrative interviews. Analysis of forced dictator economic behavioral tasks found heterogeneity in generosity and in approaches to fairness utilizing economic equity and efficiency. Latent semantic analysis of transcribed interviews showed a significant difference between probes measuring just, brave, caring, and interpersonal generosity characteristics for all participants. The integrative analysis of economic behavioral tasks and semantic analyses of life and identity narrative interviews illuminates challenges in using laboratory methods to examine qualities of exemplary virtue and demonstrates the fruitfulness of examining exemplars of caring for insight into moral cognition.