

# Discounting Human Lives

Maureen C. Cropper, Susan K. Ayshida, and Paul H. Portney

Over the last twenty years, economists have taken a leading interest in the evaluation of programs that save lives. The related evaluation focus of these programs, however, has been understanding individuals' willingness to pay for marginal reductions in annual mortality risk or, conversely, the compensation individuals would accept to have added risk (Ayshida-Lee, 1994a).

While it is certainly important to understand the valuation of slight changes in mortality risk, it is less clear how these understanding like saving that avoids children. Frequently, the strategies, arguments, approaches and techniques for saving lives appear to be almost identical. Thus, indeed, they evaluate life-saving programs using an identical framework precisely that is, they value programs on a cost-per-life saved (CPLS) basis. This issue is particularly timely given that, however, when different programs save lives at different times. For instance, suppose two hypothetical programs that would each reduce the rate of death for one thousand, one of which might save five lives immediately, the other one lives ten years after the program is made available. Suppose the two programs would not interact, that is, the two programs have the same CPLS. Should the lives saved by the first program be given less weight (leading to higher CPLS) because they are saved sooner? A reader may suspect that because the notion of willingness to pay might not be the appropriate theoretical approach involved in large part, around this seemingly simple question.

The general issue for this debate, and the subject of this paper, is individuals' temporal rates of substitution between lives saved at different points in time. By understanding temporal weights

of individuals and combining these with relative temporal opportunities costs of life-saving programs, we offer marginal rates of substitution that lives saved at different times. Among other things, we are interested in whether there is a better life-saving technique, or one program, which may be substantially more beneficial than other programs (hypothetical), and whether all lives saved individuals (hypothetical) have equal temporal rates between lives.

## Evaluating Hypothetical Rates of Substitution for Life Saving

To measure the quality of lives saved in the event that are equivalent to saving one life today, we conducted a survey of the economic costs of the following:

### Question 1

Hypothetical program: Individuals will die this year from pollution and 100 people will die. Suppose that now, the government has to choose between two programs that cost the same, but that is, they would saving 100 lives.

Program A will save 100 lives now.  
Program B will save 100 lives 10 years from now.

Hypothetical program: would you choose?

Two points about the question deserve mention. First, it is deliberately abstract. What such programs will accomplish is vague, except that it will reduce pollution and, thus, save lives. The program is so vague abstract, so the timing of lives saved, rather than the nature of the deaths avoided, is present. We found that respondents to such a hypothetical program made an implicit choice and treated each program (based on hypothetical choice) as having the same aspects of the question (that is, the number of lives saved and the time at which they were saved).

Second, the question asks the respondent to

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**Henry Smith Williams**



## **Discounting Human Lives:**

*Report on the Activity of the Committee on Energy and Commerce for the ... Congress* United States. Congress. House. Committee on Energy and Commerce, 1986      *Discounting Human Lives* Maureen L. Cropper, Sema K. Aydede, Paul R. Portney, 1990      WELFARE ECONOMICS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – Volume I Yew-Kwang Ng, Ian Wills, 2009-11-17 Welfare Economics and Sustainable Development theme is a component of Encyclopedia of Development and Economic Sciences in the global Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems EOLSS which is an integrated compendium of twenty one Encyclopedias This theme introduces welfare economics and sustainable development in four topics dealing with four important issues to be considered in implementing sustainable development These are the use of ethics and discounting and economic growth models in balancing the interests of future generations against those of the present the advantages and limitations of national accounting methodologies as means of evaluating sustainability the international dimensions of sustainable development arising out of environmental and economic linkages among nations and the nature of institutions required to promote sustainable development These two volumes are aimed at the following five major target audiences University and College students Educators Professional practitioners Research personnel and Policy analysts managers and decision makers and NGOs      **Environmental Justice** Peter S. Wenz, 1988-04-07 This book explores the philosophical background of questions on environmental justice It focuses on theories of distributive justice primarily those which concern the manner in which benefits and burdens should be allocated when there is a scarcity of benefits relative to people's wants or needs and a surfeit of burdens It is one of those rare philosophy books that is at once accessible and sophisticated as it introduces both philosophers and people interested in environmental studies law and economics to germane developments in the philosophical treatment of the question of justice Since environmental concerns are uniquely global theories of distributive justice are tested most thoroughly for their comprehensiveness when they are applied to environmental matters Consequently most illustrations and applications in this book are drawn from contexts of environmental concerns including property rights human rights animal rights general utility and hypothetical contracts      *FUNDAMENTAL ECONOMICS – Volume II* Mukul Majumdar, Ian Wills, Pasquale M. Sgro, John M. Gowdy, 2010-12-12 Fundamental Economics in two volumes is a component of Encyclopedia of Social Sciences and Humanities in the global Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems EOLSS which is an integrated compendium of twenty one Encyclopedias The Theme discusses on Fundamental Economics Walrasian and Non Walrasian Microeconomics Strategic Behavior The Economics of Bargaining Economic Externalities Public Goods Macroeconomics Decision Making Under Uncertainty Development Economics and many other related topics These two volumes are aimed at the following five major target audiences University and College Students Educators Professional Practitioners Research Personnel and Policy Analysts Managers and Decision Makers NGOs and GOs      **Public Preferences for Life Saving** Maureen Cropper, 1993-05      **Clean Air Act** United States. Congress. Senate.

Committee on Environment and Public Works. Subcommittee on Clean Air, Wetlands, Private Property, and Nuclear Safety, 2000      Congressional Record United States. Congress, 2002      *Super-engines of war* Henry Smith Williams, 1923

**Cost-Benefit Analysis for Public Sector Decision Makers** Diana Fuguitt, Shanton J. Wilcox, 1999-10-30 Fuguitt and Wilcox skillfully guide analysts public sector managers and students of decision making through a full range of the essential steps to perform interpret and assess cost benefit analysis Their book shows how to grasp the principles of cost benefit analysis and several related economic valuation methods how to apply them in undertaking an objective analysis and how to use the analysis as a decision making tool across a wide range of fields and applications An extensive knowledge of economic theory calculus or advanced graphical analysis is not needed to understand the principles or techniques Accessible to those who understand basic algebra and have a beginner's hold on statistics the book also provides a bridge to the more advanced literature in economics and to other analyses used to perform sophisticated valuations A unique much needed presentation of all that is required to gain an immediate useful understanding of the topic The authors explain basic economic concepts and show how they are relevant to understanding an analytical approach They enumerate principles and detail such technical components as with and without analysis discounting decision criteria and uncertainty assessment The book provides especially extensive coverage of the contingent valuation method along with market valuation the travel cost and property value methods human life valuation and cost effectiveness analysis They explain empirical methods used to perform these valuation techniques and cover survey and regression analysis as well Most importantly Fuguitt and Wilcox treat the topic within its real world context as a decision making tool to assess a particular policy's efficiency and to provide the decision maker with necessary information Trade offs between efficiency and other policy objectives are also addressed as is the interdisciplinary setting within which cost benefit analysis is interpreted enabling readers to understand that policy advocates and adversaries bring their own values and competing interests to bear on any decision making process      **The**

**Story of Modern Science** Henry Smith Williams, 1923      The Journal of Energy and Development , 1990      *Government Secrecy* Steven L. Katz, 1987 6 Stopping the presses      *The Life and Work of John Ruskin* William Gershom Collingwood, 1893      **The Environmental Forum** , 1998      **The Life and Work of John Ruskin** W. G. Collingwood, 1893

Environmental Policy Law Holly D. Doremus, Albert C. Lin, 2008 This casebook takes a very broad view of environmental law encompassing the regulation of private and public land use and protection of wildlife as well as pollution control and remediation It provides sufficient breadth for any introductory environmental or natural resources law course It also strikes a balance by focusing in detail on those portions of the statutes covered that raise particularly interesting or important conceptual issues Throughout it highlights perpetual controversies such as the nature of human relationships to nature and the appropriate extent of individual control over natural resource use The Fifth Edition includes problems that help students develop and test their facility with the materials in the text and the concepts underlying those materials The new edition will

also have new chapters on international environmental law issues and on enforcement issues      Why Do We Recycle? Frank Ackerman, 1997 Based on previously unpublished research conducted by the Tellus Institute a nonprofit environmental research group in Boston Massachusetts Ackerman presents an alternative view of the theory of market incentives challenging the notion that setting appropriate prices and allowing unfettered competition will result in the most efficient level of recycling      Urban Land , 1992      The Economist , 1885

## Whispering the Secrets of Language: An Mental Quest through **Discounting Human Lives**

In a digitally-driven world wherever displays reign great and instant transmission drowns out the subtleties of language, the profound techniques and psychological subtleties hidden within words frequently move unheard. Yet, located within the pages of **Discounting Human Lives** a fascinating literary value pulsing with fresh thoughts, lies a fantastic quest waiting to be undertaken. Penned by a skilled wordsmith, this wonderful opus encourages readers on an introspective journey, softly unraveling the veiled truths and profound affect resonating within the very fabric of each word. Within the psychological depths of the poignant evaluation, we shall embark upon a sincere exploration of the book is core styles, dissect their fascinating writing type, and succumb to the strong resonance it evokes serious within the recesses of readers hearts.

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### Discounting Human Lives Introduction

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