

How should our society assign value research paper

[Economics](#), [Money](#)



The argument as to how much a life is worth is something that has plagued humanity ever since the trading of material goods. There are many questions related to that subject - what criteria is used to measure that worth? Who gets to decide the outcome? Is there more than money and things to use to determine the value of a person? In this essay, several different perspectives will be used to examine this subject from a metaphysical, material and accomplishment point of view.

First, in Shakespeare's Hamlet, the titular character gives his infamous "to be or not to be" speech, one in which he weighs the option of whether it is better to live or die. When living you 'suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,' meaning that you take what life gives you and make the best of it. Alternatively, you could 'take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them,' killing yourself so that you do not have to deal with the harsh realities of life. It is a powerful argument, as it wonders whether the terrible things that happen to people in life make it worth the journey. (3. 1 55-87) In Hamlet's case, this is a personal appraisal of the quality of life of a person, and as such should not necessarily be indicative of how society should value life. However, it happens all the time, with cases such as the Terry Shiavo case, where a person in a vegetative state is allowed to die rather than spend the taxpayer's money to keep her alive in the hopes that she might come out of a coma.

In Amanda Ripley's article "What Is a Life Worth?" the primary subject is the charity fund set up for families of people who were killed in the 9/11 attacks. It is meant to be a support system for these families in the face of this

terrible tragedy, but some families are being given more than others, based on their income. This places the worth of a person in terms of their income and what they provided to their families and the economy; however, it does not address the emotional and spiritual gap that has been left in the family as they grieve for their lost loved one. Already, the families of the victim are suing for more money, as they feel that the life of the person is worth more than \$250, 000, for example. (Plummer 2002)

Another way to look at the life's worth of a person is to examine their accomplishments, especially in the face of terrible circumstances. Lance Armstrong is a multiple Tour de France winner and sports celebrity - this made him feel on top of the world, according to his short autobiographical article " Before and After." However, finding out he had testicular cancer made him reconsider all of his prior accomplishments; his feeling of invincibility gave way to a crushing realization that he would not accomplish anymore, that no matter how much money he had, he could not buy his life back. He managed to overcome those obstacles as he has so many times before, and as a result is more appreciative of his life than ever. According to Armstrong, in life you have to measure it by your accomplishments - what you do with the time you are given. (Armstrong 2000)

These three perspectives shed a lot of light on the different ways by which life is measured. Society often dictates the worth of a life by giving them a monetary value; people often allow that to dictate how they feel about themselves. However, there are many other ways to measure a person's own life, such as the things they accomplish while they are alive, and their own

estimation of their place in the world. If there was a way for society to reflect that in its own estimations of people, quantifying humanity and the value of life would be far more equitable and accepted by everyone.

Works Cited

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