The Effect of Money on Happiness

It is a common belief in today’s world that money is the key to happiness. People are narrow minded when it comes to the idea of what makes them happy. This stigma was created with celebrities showing off their wealth. By doing this, it has created a wrongful belief in people’s minds that their ultimate goal should be to be able to live like celebrities. People tend to think that the acquisition of money should be the main goal in their lives, causing people to be putting money in front of their relationships with other people. It may be true that having a large sum of money can make your life easier, but it does not necessarily relate to long term happiness. Being happy stems from the relationships of those around you, being able to connect with others, and using your resources for the betterment of others. This belief that money buys happiness is broken down through Justin Timberlake’s “Cry Me a River.” We credit our celebrity role models with their power to influence our culture, but we should not let them influence our understanding of how to achieve happiness. “Cry Me a River” shows the viewer that just because someone has accumulated wealth does not automatically mean that they are happy.

Having loved ones in your life contributes to happiness but loved ones will not always be around, even with money being in the picture. Justin Timberlake is portrayed with his assets in the music video, yet he is upset throughout the duration of it. He wrote the song after his breakup with Britney Spears, and it shows that he is sad, despite being a celebrity who has a lot of money.
At the very beginning of the video, he is shown with his nice cars, signifying that he has some sort of wealth. This framing of the music video makes the viewer notice the important and symbolic parts of the video, such as the cars. The lyrics put Timberlake’s emotions on display. The first line of the song is “You were my sun, you were my earth.” Later in the song, Timberlake sings “You don’t have to say, what you did I already know, I found out from him.” Timberlake had all the money he could ask for, yet his girlfriend still cheated on him with another man. Happiness is often followed by sadness, as is what happened in Timberlake’s case, and him, like everyone else, has their own ways of finding happiness.

Happiness comes from within, and money can only add or take away from that inner happiness. If someone is already a happy person then money can be a way to subtly increase that happiness. However, if someone is sad, then having money is only a short escape from their core mindset (Sabatier). Money is not the source of happiness. For many people having control of their lives, having time to do what they want and having time for family and friends, makes them the happiest. In the music video, Timberlake did not have control. When the Britney Spears lookalike came into the home, Timberlake tries reaching out to her but to no avail. He follows her throughout the house, but she does not notice him. This signifies that in his mind he was never that important to her. He was still happy in the relationship, but he never had full control of the overall situation. His money could not save his happiness from crumbling.

Having money affects short-term happiness and not long-term happiness. Going on expensive vacations, buying your dream car, or going to your favorite musician’s concert all make you happy, but they are all aspects of short-term happiness. Experiencing these things makes you happy in the moment, but they do not make you hopeful for the future. Companionship is a big component of long-term happiness. Being around loved ones
scientifically makes you happier. Being isolated kindles feeling of insecurity and doubt. Timberlake’s breakup made these feelings blossom, especially because of the way the breakup was caused. In the PsyPost article “How psychological distress from being cheated on can harm your physical health,” experiencing “depression, anxiety, and distress after being cheated on were associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in a variety of health-compromising behaviors” (Dolan). Being cheated on can cause someone to go downhill mentally and physically. The “health-compromising behaviors” could be eating less or not at all, working an excessive amount, or turning to drugs or alcohol to help them cope with their mental problems. In the song, Timberlake sings “All of these things people told me keep messing with my head.” Friends can have an impact on the way a relationship can end and how you feel after the relationship. They often know what is best for you because they have an unbiased view of the relationship. In this sense, friends and loved ones are more beneficial than money when it comes to long-term happiness.

Money can complicate the relationship one has with others. Obtaining money should not be the only goal in a person’s life. Life is more than having a big house and a nice car to impress others. In life, it is much more important to have a good relationship with people than to accumulate wealth. In the scholarly article “A socioecological perspective to understanding mental and physical health,” it states, “People’s mindsets and goals regarding social relationships affect their relationship quality and psychological well-being.” This means that those who strive for healthy relationships are happier in the long run due to their good psychological well-being. If you have money, others will try to smooch off your success. Also, money can make you a selfish person whose only goal is to make more money; not making time for you loved ones can lead to them be cold towards you. In the music video, Britney Spears’ representation, someone
who is supposed to have a lot of money, appears to be cold towards Timberlake. This is shown through the use of point of view. Timberlake follows her throughout the house, and the viewer sees from his eyes as she eventually takes a shower and finds the television playing the video of him and another girl hooking up. This exemplifies the fact that she was cold towards him. The presence of money in someone's life affects the relationships they have with others.

In Justin Timberlake’s “Cry Me a River,” the idea that money is the key to happiness is challenged. Timberlake has all the money he could ever need, yet he wrote this song after his breakup with Britney Spears to express his sadness. His sadness is not only shown in the lyrics but in the music video itself as well. This goes against the commonly held belief created through celebrities that money is the most important part of life. Money is not the key to happiness. Happiness is created through the relationships of other people and realizing that being in control of your own life is an important part for a strong mental health. Money can attribute to short-term happiness, but long-term happiness comes from the relationships you make with people.
Works Cited

