The Strength of Memories

Going to Disney World is a bittersweet vacation. It’s exciting to be there at first then the rushing and sweating happen. Walking up to the Magic Kingdom gates, I recall my past trips and my anticipation rises. I step on Main Street U.S.A. and pull out my itinerary I made a month in advance. Before I know it, I’m running to the first ride on my list and all I can think about is not the smell of freshly popped popcorn or the sight of hundreds of balloons filling the rarely empty space of the street but finishing my one-page typed itinerary.

In “The Sociology of Happiness and Contentment: An Interview with Dr. Jordan McKenzie” written by Stu Horsfield, it is clear to see that happiness comes not from the moment itself but from memories. Memories are extremely “strong” in a way that it influences society’s being of happiness. In the interview, Dr. McKenzie, sociologist and critical theorist, rightly explains how happiness relates to memories.

In the interview by Horsfield, Dr. McKenzie shows how obvious contentment relates to society. Socializing with others instead of oneself helps with understanding more about happiness
as a whole: “[…] Contentment is an aspect of your relationship with society and how you understand yourself through connecting with society, rather than a purely personal, individualistic thing.” (Horsfield 176) The problem with contentment is that because a person may enjoy a certain task, if it is not acceptable with society as a whole, happiness will less likely come from that specific task. Society controls a lot of how one’s contentment translates to happiness. Without the acceptance of others, happiness is more likely to not be there. If a person does some activity and it is not popular or “cool”, that person may not find that activity to be appealing, or could stop all together. Dr. McKenzie explains how relationships with others are important for happiness, but might be the reason why happiness is falling away for some people.

In the interview by Horsfield, one can see that expectations alter our sense of happiness. Dr. McKenzie states, “I think one of the reasons happiness is a bit problematic today is really tied to expectations.” (Horsfield 176) Because of all the music and movies one listens to, happiness is hard to come by. Today’s music and movies play a huge part in controlling the happiness of society. Happiness is usually unnoticed because society is always looking for a better experience. By seeing a celebrity with the “perfect life”, the rest of society usually expects greater events to happen but never really show up.
Happiness can’t be compared to others because everyone has different experiences in their lives.

While commenting on a question, “Does happiness emerge from contentment?” (Horsfield 177), Dr. McKenzie clearly shows that while looking back on a “happy moment”, the event truly wasn’t “terribly enjoyable while we were doing them.” (Horsfield 177) He goes on to say that, “Happiness only really exists in memories…” (Horsfield 177) The activity that people may do might not be the most pleasing, but after that task is over, one can see that the activity actually brought on happiness. A person practicing piano for many hours a day could see that the repetition is boring and not enjoyable, but at the recital while hitting the notes right on time one after the other, the piano player can then see that going through those long hours makes one happy. Just because happiness isn’t present in the current situation, doesn’t mean one won’t be happy about that moment later.

Happiness is indeed involved with memories as Dr. McKenzie states in his interview with Stu Horsfield. The contentment we as society have is directly related to society and how society influences our way of happiness. The expectations of a modern society alter our sense of happiness thus making happiness harder to come by. Happiness ultimately comes from the memories one makes so he can look back and understand all the less
pleasurable times and how those times better our experience. While at Disney World, I complete my long itinerary. After running around and focusing on checking off every little ride and show of the day, I lie down in the resort bed just thinking of how great of a day I had. After the long hectic day of what I thought was torture, I soon realized that if I didn’t go through the entire list, I might not have had a “happy” experience.
Work Cited